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Research in Medieval Culture and Art

Vol. VIII, No. 2 - November 2021

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Research in Medieval Culture and Art

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[www.anastasis-review.ro](http://www.anastasis-review.ro)

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

The Research Center of Medieval Art "Vasile Drăguț"

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

Volume VIII, No.2/November 2021



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Printed with the support of Iași City Hall

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# **MEDIEVAL ART AND CIVILIZATION**



# **The Motive of the Ram in the Architectural Decoration of the Christian Churches in Caucasus between the 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

**Endoltseva Ekaterina\***

**Abstract:** *The article deals with the motive of the ram's head in the Christian art of Caucasus. The origins of iconography have been traced back to the ancient local archaeological cultures (Coban-Colchis) in Caucasus and in the Mediterranean region to the Neolithic period. This motif is among the most ancient sacral signs still in use in the traditional culture of the region. It appears on the façades of the Christian churches between the 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries due to the influence of the traditional culture. Represented on the façades of the churches, it has attained protective and apotropaic functions.*

**Keywords:** apotropeia, ram, fertility, Farn, architectural decoration.

The research is dedicated to the motive of the horned skulls and their meaning in a system of the sacral signs of Caucasus. A preceding publication of the author dealt with the motif of the bull's head in the architectural decoration of the Christian churches in Caucasus in the medieval period<sup>1</sup>. The basic methodological approaches to the problem have been formulated therein.

The main point of this image's difficult interpretation by Christian canons is its possible affiliation to a system of sacral signs of the traditional culture. The typological proximity of the image to the motifs of the ancient local archaeological cultures is highly probable<sup>2</sup>. The conservatism of the material culture of Caucasus has been noticed by many ethnographers. They have argued about the methodological possibility of using the ethnographical

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<sup>1</sup> E. Endoltseva, *A Motive of the Bull's Head as a Decoration of the Medieval Churches in Southern Caucasus* // Anastasis. Research in Medieval Culture and Art. Vol. IV. No. 1 / May 2017, pp 128-142.

<sup>2</sup> N. A. Aladashvili, *Monumental'naya skul'ptura Gruzii [The Monumental Sculpture of Georgia]*, Moscow, 1977, pp. 217- 234.

material of the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries for the interpretation of the objects that belong to the ancient archaeological periods and cultures. A. A. Miller constated the stability of the material culture of the different peoples in Caucasus, in particular those living in the mountainous regions (the Avars, the Laks). He pointed to the exceptional preservation of the “archaisms in an everyday life at least in the material culture”<sup>3</sup>. The researcher has been the first to formulate the key element of the antiquities of Caucasus: “a continuity in the development of the principal forms” of the material objects in “Caucasian Japhetic world”, “with insignificant variative changes”<sup>4</sup>. This thesis has been illustrated by the ancient sacral signs (different rosettes, horns, ornaments etc.) concerning their use in the modern traditional material culture of Dagestan. A. A. Miller also stressed a special part played by the Coban culture in the process of formation of these sacral signs system. The researcher has applied these observations to the study of the image of the dog. He has proved a possibility to trace the transformations of the image of the dog on the objects from the ritual Coban axes (the 10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) to the different steles that can be dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This outstanding scholar has managed to demonstrate the continuity of the representations of this animal in Caucasus. He has also defined the main characteristics for the later images, that is stylization and convention. Besides, A. A. Miller has for the first time noticed and described another principal characteristic of the zoomorphic images in the region. Of particular interest is a part the Coban archaeological culture played in their formation. “Coban culture is determined by the intensive development of the images of animal form, this very aspect could give an abundant material for both studies of the artistic treatment of these themes and a justification of them by the data of Japhetidology”<sup>5</sup>. Another important idea formulated by A. A. Miller is essential for the studies of the zoomorphic images in the region i. e. emphasizing the “Abkhazo – Svan – Mengrel milieu” as a territory especially rich in “relict forms”<sup>6</sup>.

The idea of the continuity and conservatism of the forms in the traditional everyday culture of the Northern Caucasus has also been endorsed by Y. Y. Karpov<sup>7</sup>. The same author stressed the meaning of horns

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<sup>3</sup> A. A. Miller, *Drevnie formy v material'noy kul'ture sovremennogo naseleniya Dagestana* [Ancient Forms of the Material Culture of the Modern population of Dagestan]. *Materialy po etnografii* [Ethnographic Materials]. Leningrad, 1927, p 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 294.

<sup>7</sup> Yu. Yu. Karpov, “*Rogatye*” *derevyannye sosudy zapadnogo Dagestana* [“Horned” Wooden Vessels of the Western Dagestan]. *Etnograficheskie tetradi* [Ethnographic papers], № 12. St. Petersburg, 1998, p. 5 – 12.



(horned skulls of different types) in a system of the traditional sacral signs in Caucasus. Meditating upon the sacral meaning of the symbol (horns), the scholar underlines its connection with “the ancient cultures of the Near and Middle East”<sup>8</sup>. G. Movchan expressed similar concerns as for the abundance of archaisms in the decoration conception of the traditional house in the mountainous regions of Caucasus (for example: the traditional Avar house)<sup>9</sup>. Analyzing these objects, the scholar noted a “really phenomenal state of preservation of ancient relict features, whose origins and the living conditions that engendered them are traceable through thousands of years”<sup>10</sup>.

V. Bardavelidze made similar conclusions concerning the continuity of forms in the traditional culture and the latter’s archaism in analyzing graphic art and a system of the decorations of the traditional house in the mountainous North-Western part of Georgia, Svanetia<sup>11</sup>.

Regarding the mountainous regions of Dagestan, the author witnessed the archaisms abundance in the material culture of those who lived there.

Meditating upon the methodological applicability of ancient archaeological artefacts to interpret the later ritual sketches, the scholar has noticed that “there are petrified forms of the most ancient motifs in Georgian folk art that have absolutely lost their original meaning, yet there are ethnographic and folk relics that, on the one hand, belong to the most ancient phase of cults’ development ; on the other hand, their form and more or less, their full conception could be reconstructed”<sup>12</sup>.

The same idea concerning the continuity of forms in the traditional culture from most ancient times to the present day has been demonstrated by R. Gagloiti by the Ossetian materials. “The Ossetians kept to their old pre-Christian cults and beliefs longer than their neighbors. It has been expressed by venerating community cults, making sacrifices, and by communal feasts”<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> G. Ya. Movchan, *Staryy avarskiy dom v gorakh Dagestana i ego sud'ba. Po materialam avtorskikh obsledovaniy 1945–1964 gg.* [An Old Avar House in the Mountains of Dagestan and its Lost. Based upon the Author's Surveys, 1945–1964]. Moscow, 2001, p. 368.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 370.

<sup>11</sup> V. V. Bardavelidze, *Drevneyshie religioznye verovaniya i obryadovoe graficheskoe iskusstvo gruzinskikh plemen* [The Most Ancient Religious Beliefs and the Ceremonial Graphic Art of the Georgian Tribes], Tbilisi, 1957.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 244.

<sup>13</sup> R. Kh. Gagloyty, *O nekotorykh kul'takh (barana, kozla, loshadi, ryby), dominiruyushchikh na territorii Yuzhnoy Osetii v pozdneantichnyy i rannesrednevekovyy periody (po arkheologicheskim materialam)* [On Certain Cults (of the Ram, Goat, Horse, and Fish) Dominating the Territory of South Ossetia in

There have been methodological attempts to connect not only folk art with its ancient archeological prototype,s but also this art with that of monotheistic religions, in particular with Christianity<sup>14</sup>.

The present research deals with the motif of the ram's head in the architectural decoration of the Christian churches in Caucasus in the medieval period. It has been determined that this motif is found mainly in the churches situated in the high mountainous regions (Racha in Georgia, Karabakh, Southern Ossetia).

For example, the head of the ram along with other protomes (the bull, the lion, and the eagle) decorate the cornice of the Southern and Northern façades of the church in Zenobiani (Georgia, the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries) (fig. 1)<sup>15</sup>.

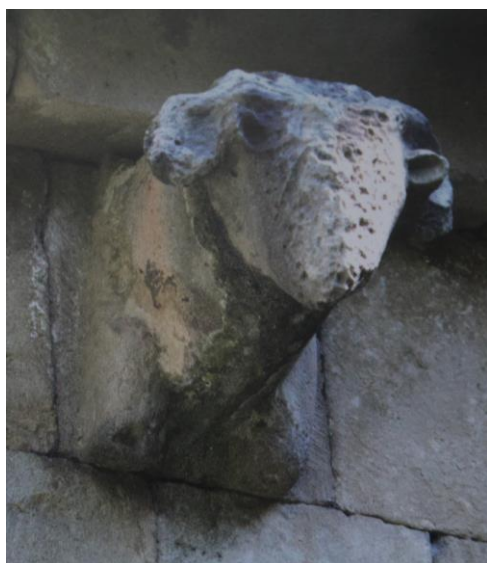


Fig. 1. The protome of the ram. Cornice on the façade of the church in Zenobiani (Georgia), X – XI c.

The façades of certain churches in Svanetia from the same period are also decorated with the protomes of animals, among them the ram. Besides, the head of the ram with the unusually depicted horns (as two circles on both

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Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period (Based upon Archaeological Materials)]. *Izvestiya [News]*, # XXXVI. Tskhinval, 2000, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Yu. Yu. Karpov, *Gorsko-kavkazskaya bozhestvennaya triada [The Highlander Caucasian Divine Triad]. Khristianstvo v regionakh mira [The Christianity in the World Regions]*. St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 172 – 179.

<sup>15</sup> T. Dadiani, T. Khundadze, E. Kvachatadze, *Medieval Georgian Sculpture*, Tbilisi, 2017, p. 118. Fig. 291–294.

sides of the head)<sup>16</sup> is represented on the east façade of the church in Yeli<sup>17</sup> (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The ram's head on the eastern façade of the church in Yeli (Georgia).



Fig. 3. The ram's head. Zemo Krikhi, the annex. X (left)

Fig. 4. The ram's head. Zemo Krikhi, X c. (right)

<sup>16</sup> The difference from the horns of the bull is that the latter are represented in form of the crescent moon.

<sup>17</sup> T. Dadiani, T. Khundadze, E. Kvachataдзе, *Medieval Georgian Sculpture...* Fig. 297.

Such decoration may be considered typical for the region<sup>18</sup>. The head of the ram appears several times in the sculptural decoration of the church in Zemo Krikhi (Western Georgia, Racha) from the same period, the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>19</sup> ( fig. 3, 4).

On the territory of Georgia, the head of the ram also appears in a later period, in the interior of the annex of the church in Didi Khorenia (the Late Middle Ages)<sup>20</sup> ( fig. 5).



Fig. 5. The protomes. Interior of the Annex. Didi Khorenia. Late Middles Ages. The ram's head. Zemo Krikhi, annex. X c.

The ram's heads decorate the four corners of the quadrangle of the belfry in the monastery near Zemo Monasteri village (Southern Ossetia) (fig. 6); the belfry was constructed a bit later than the church, to be more precise, at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>

The ram's head decorates the capital of the column in the gavit's interior in Gandzasar monastery (1266, Karabakh)<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, . Fig. 307, 308.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem Fig. 628.

<sup>21</sup> R. Mepisashvili, V. Tsinladze, *Arkhitektura nagornoy chasti istoricheskoy provintsii Gruzii – Shida-Kartli* [The Architecture of the Mountainous Part of the Historical Province of Georgia – Shida Kartli], Tbilisi, 1975, 130.

<sup>22</sup> A. L. Yakobson, *Iz istorii armyanskogo srednevekovogo zodchestva (Gandzasarskiy monastyr' XIII v.)* [From the History of the Armenian Medieval Architecture (Gandzasar Monastery of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.)]. *K osveshcheniyu problem istorii i kul'tury Kavkazskoy Albanii i vostochnykh provintsiy Armenii* [The Coverage

The motif of the ram's head was widespread on the territory of Caucasus (especially on both sides of the Great Caucasian ridge) in ancient times<sup>23</sup>.



Fig. 6. The ram's head. Belfry of Zemo Monasteri. XIV c.

In particular, this motif was one of the most important sacral signs in the Coban-Colchis cultural historical community (the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age). As R. Gagloiti has noticed, "the special veneration of the ram (sheep) might be connected with the leading part of small cattle in the pasture breeding, which had been generally formed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC in the mountains of Caucasus"<sup>24</sup>.

From the period of the Early Neolith, the cult of ram was gradually shaping parallel to the increase of the economic importance of the sheep. Its cult was closely connected to the idea of fertility<sup>25</sup>.

There are numerous representations of the ram's heads and its stylizations on the cult objects of different types in the burials on the territory of Ossetia (Digoria) and Western Georgia.

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*of the Problems of History and Culture of Caucasian Albania and the Eastern Provinces of Armenia*], Yerevan, 1991. p. 447.

<sup>23</sup> A. Moshinsky, *The Cult of the Double-edged Axe in Northern Caucasus. Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia. An International Journal of Comparative Studies in History and Archaeology*, vol. 7, № 1–2, 2001. pp. 71, 74.

<sup>24</sup> R. Kh. Gagloyty, *O nekotorykh kul'takh (barana, kozla, loshadi, ryby)*... p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.



For example, the ram's heads with the characteristic spiral horns decorate the bronze plate plaques from Galiat and Kumbulta (Southern Ossetia, the second rotocoban period, the 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) and the ritual bronze axes from Faskau<sup>26</sup>.

Besides, there are different pendants and details having the shape of the ram's horns frequent among the female jewelry from the burial complexes of central Caucasus (the 12<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> centuries . BC) along with the famous pins from the period of the Middle Bronze Age. Special hooks referr to the elements of the male ritual costume of the Late Bronze period (the 14<sup>th</sup>- the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC), made of bronze wire of circular section with bilateral spiral roundings (the burial of Stirfaz in Southern Ossetia)<sup>27</sup> ( fig. 7).



Fig. 7. The bronze hooks. Late Bronze Age (XIV – XII c. BC). National museum of the Republic Southern Ossetia in Tshinval.

Analyzing the meaning of the objects with the motif of the ram's head, A. P. Moshinsky has noticed that the origins of the cult of the double axes can be traced back to the ancient civilizations of the Near East (Chatal-Huyuk, the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC)<sup>28</sup>. "During several millennia, this symbol was typical for the world of the Near East. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC, the motif of the double axe was widely used on Trans-Caucasian pottery"<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> A. Moshinsky, *The cult of the double-edged axes...*, p. 78.

<sup>27</sup> From the exhibition of the National Museum of the Republic Southern Ossetia in Tskhinval.

<sup>28</sup> A. Moshinsky, *The cult of the double-edged axes...* p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

The scholar shows that the image of the hovering bird with the wings stretched on both sides with the pommel in form of the ram's head (as on the bronze plate plaques) is an allusion to the double axe. He also points out the similarity in the interpretation of the images of the bird and of the ram in Trans-Caucasia and in Asia Minor using the Iranian concept of *farn*, offering the following explanation. "The *farn* in the mythology of Iranian-speaking peoples could assume the form of either a bird of prey or a ram. The actual concept of *farn* is not clearly defined: it can be the sun, water as a gift of the sun, abundance and a symbol of royal power. We do not, of course, assert that these Iranian ideas had already made their way to the Caucasus at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. It is possible that what we have here is a mythology shared by a variety of peoples, including the Indo-European ones. Judging based on the available materials, variations of the myth are also to be found in Greek mythology. Let us recall the myth of the Golden Fleece, in which we find the golden ram flying across the sky... to the Caucasus, to the land of Aetes, son of Helios (Apollodorus 11, 9, 1). ... The golden ram, a gift from Hermes,...figures unequivocally as a symbol of royal power (Apollodorus, Epitome, II, 11). ... Robert Graves has convincingly demonstrated that the golden ram acquired this significance in connection with the cult of fertility, or rather with *heavenly dew*"<sup>30</sup>.

Subsequently, A. Moshinsky makes an interesting assumption concerning the spiral horns of the ram on the objects from the Coban-Colchis cultural historical community (in this case, on the plate plaques from Digoria). He supposes that they can be regarded as the symbol of the sun (as well as the spiral images). Besides, the goddess of fertility -, as a particular facet of the goddess of the animals could be made zoomorphic is represented in the shape of a hoofed animal, in particular a mountain ram<sup>31</sup>. In this context, as the scholar notices, the ram's head on the plates from Digoria can embody the head of the goddess<sup>32</sup>.

In addition, A. Moshinsky states that "the plates contained a complex system of symbols permeated with the idea of fertility, which in its turn was linked to the solar cult, the cult of the goddess of animals or the goddess of fertility and of the creature who personifies her, namely the winged ram, who at the same time was a model for an attribute of that cult – the double axe. The cult of the double axe continued to exist in Northern Caucasus right up until medieval times... (the plates of this type were still found in Ingushetia until the 8<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD)"<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p 82.



V. Miller meditates as well upon the possible links between the cult of the ram and the cult of fertility and female goddess<sup>34</sup>. The same idea has been supported by R. Gagloyty<sup>35</sup>.

To confirm the observations concerning the meaning of the image of the ram, considered a very important sacred sign in the spiritual culture of Caucasus during many millennia, a limestone head of the ram which decorated the Paleochristian church in Tigranokert (Karabakh), dated between the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (fig. 8) should be paid attention to. It is of note that in the Paleochristian period, even on the territory of the Byzantine empire, the ram's head appeared in the decoration of churches<sup>36</sup>.



Fig. 8. The ram's head. Limestone. Archaeological Museum of Tigranokert. V -VI c.

There are numerous fragments of clay water vessel handles having the shape of a ram's head in the collection of the above-mentioned museum in Tigranokert, dated as belonging to different historical periods (Nor Hajkajur, the 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, medieval vessels from the 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD).

<sup>34</sup> V. F. Miller, *Osetinskie etyudy [Ossetian essays]*, Vladikavkaz, 1992, p. 252.

<sup>35</sup> R. Kh. Gagloyty, *O nekotorykh kul'takh (barana, kozla, loshadi, ryby)...*, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> P. Niewöhner, *Byzantine Ornaments in Stone. Architectural Sculpture and Liturgical Furnishings*, Berlin, 2021, p. 51. Fig. 118, 119.

There are the images of the ram's head along with the solar signs and the wings in the culture of Urartu. We give as an example the ritual bronze situla from the tumulus MM (about 740 BC)<sup>37</sup>.

The motif in question was of importance for the Alans as well. The representations of the ram's heads are found on the amulets and earrings from Northern Caucasus between the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD<sup>38</sup>.

Here are examples chosen among many others. In Ediss burial ground (the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, Dzaus region of Southern Ossetia), in the burial complex #8, a zoomorphic vessel shaped as a ram has been discovered near the buried person<sup>39</sup>. The neighboring burial complex #10 contains a silver pin with the volute-shaped pommel<sup>40</sup>.

The sacred significance of the ram's head or its derivative in shape of two symmetric spiral roundings is preserved in the traditional everyday culture of the peoples from Northern Caucasus. For example, the horned skull (or an object/image symbolizing the characteristic spiral horns of the ram) decorates the overhead post and the beam in the traditional house of the Ossetians.

The same motif can be found in the iron upholstery of the door of one of the most venerated sanctuaries of Ossetia, Recoma Uastardzi<sup>41</sup>.

The representation of the ram is also found in the carvings that decorate the wooden armchair of the elders from the National Museum of the Republic of Southern Ossetia in Tskhinval<sup>42</sup>.

According to Robert Gagloyty quoting the findings of many ethnographers and experts in Caucasian studies, "the cult of ram is preserved in certain parts of Caucasus during a very long time up to the present day. There is a tradition of nailing the ram's horns to the wall or pillar in the sanctuaries and holy houses. The other custom is to cut out the tombstones in

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<sup>37</sup> E. Simpson, *The Furniture from Tumulus MM. The Gordon Wooden Objects*, Vol. I. *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 32. 1. Leiden–Boston, 2010, p. 10. Tab. VII B.

<sup>38</sup> V. B. Kovalevskaya, *Khronologiya drevnostey severokavkazskikh alan [Chronology of the Antiquities of the North Caucasian Alans]*. *Alany: istoriya i kul'tura [Alans: History and Culture]*, vol. III, pp. 123–183. Vladikavkaz, 1995. pp. 161 - 176.

<sup>39</sup> R. Kh. Gagloyty, R. G. Dzattiaty, *Pamyatniki Sarmato-Alanskogo vremeni v Yuzhnoy Osetii [Monuments of the Sarmato-Alan period in Southern Ossetia]*, . Tskhinval, 2019. p. 67. Fig. 182, Tab. 128.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem. Tab. 129, Fig. 184.

<sup>41</sup> R. G. Dzattiaty, *Kul'tura pozdnesrednevekovoy Osetii [Culture of the Late Medieval Ossetia]*, Vladikavkaz, 2002, p. 419, Fig. 99:3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem p. 424. Fig. 104: 1.

the shape of a ram (in certain regions of the central Caucasus up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century)”<sup>43</sup>.

The veneration of the ram in Caucasus is possibly caused by the fact that Caucasus is one of the regions where the process of domestication of the sheep first occurred<sup>44</sup>.

Along with the above-mentioned cosmogonical meaning of the ram as the *Farn*, the deity of abundance and fertility, the Alans and the Ossetians regarded the ram as “the first and the best sacrificial animal for ritual ceremonies. Many Ossetian feasts were connected with the pilgrimage to the sanctuaries where sacrifices of rams took place”<sup>45</sup>.

The veneration of the ram in the traditional culture of the Ossetians was closely linked to the cult of fire and to agricultural cults. Special ritual pies were cooked for the New Year celebrations in honor of the ram, its figures were molded from paste, ram-like masks were put on during the singing of Christmas carols. The representations of the ram’s heads on the luminaries in houses and in sanctuaries are numerous<sup>46</sup>.

There are special sanctuaries of the ram in the mountains of Ossetia, Fari dzuar, pilgrimaged by infertile women. People go there on wedding days to plea for a male offspring. “The cult of the ram was so popular among the Ossetians, that even separate pieces of it were venerated. In mountainous Ossetia, the houses where the ram’s heads did not hang inside for magical purposes were rare. ... The ornaments in shape of the ram’s head with its horns were very popular among the Ossetians as vessel decoration as well as on other objects”<sup>47</sup>.

There is a tradition up to the present day to hang the fleece of the ram after the sacrifice by the sanctuary (which is often the Christian medieval church, where Liturgies are not served) on the tree. As soon as it is dried, it is taken to the house and used as a talisman until the next year’s celebration. I saw such a fleece by the church near Kobet village during my trip to the Christian churches of Southern Ossetia in October 2020.

It is possible that due to the influence of the traditional culture on the architectural decoration of Christian churches, the motif of the ram’s head (in stylized form) appears on the drum of the church in Largvis (fig. 9). The western façade of this church is decorated around the portal with the other apotropaic motifs popular in the traditional culture of the Ossetians (like the hand with the iron object, the flower rosettes etc.). The church is situated in a remote mountainous region near the merging of the rivers Ksani and Churta.

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<sup>43</sup> R. Kh. Gagloyty, *O nekotorykh kul'takh (barana, kozla, loshadi, ryby)*... p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> L. A. Chibirov, *Traditsionnaya dukhovnaya kul'tura osetin [Traditional Spiritual Culture of Ossetians]*, Moscow, 2008, p.184.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem p. 185.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem p. 186.

According to historical witnesses, the monastery with the church inside has been built there in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by Eristav Kuenipneveli<sup>48</sup>. The church was damaged during the time of the Tamerlan invasion, it has been completely reconstructed in 1756 by Eristav David<sup>49</sup>.



Fig. 9. The stylized motif of the ram's head on the drum of the church near Largvis. XVIII c.

Despite the fact that the lamb (the ram) in canonical Christian art is always regarded as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice and of the Eucharist, in this case, it is included into a large multfigured composition placed in the central part of the church interior. Besides, the image of Christ as a lamb is typical for the western Christian art of the medieval period, while in Byzantine art, this type of Christ's representation is very rare. "The representation of Christ as a lamb was not recommended in the Byzantine empire from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century as stated by the canon 82 of the council of Trullo (Quinisext), which took place in Constantinople in 692. This image, however, appears in the middle Byzantine period in the fresco decoration of some churches in

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<sup>48</sup> R. Mepisashvili, V. Tsinladze, *Arkitektura nagornoy chasti istoricheskoy provintsii...*, p. 140.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem p. 141.

Cappadocia. In this case, it can be regarded as a motif specific to the region, associated with the Word incarnated”<sup>50</sup>.

If the ram’s head appears in the architectural decoration of the churches separately from other figures, it is possible to interpret it as the influence of the local traditional culture, its images originating in deep antiquity (sometimes found in the local ancient archaeological cultures). It is actually especially found in the remote mountainous regions of Caucasus (for example, Western Georgia, Southern Ossetia, Racha, Svanetia), where the influence of the traditional culture is very strong. Some elements of this traditional culture originate from the Coban–Colchis cultural historical community. In the churches of Karabakh, the influence of the traditional culture is evident, originating from common archetypes born in Asia Minor and the Near East in the very remote antiquity. As archaeological witnesses demonstrate, the cult of the ram was widespread in Caucasus from the Bronze Age on. Considering the traditionality and archaism of the material culture in Northern Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia, an apotropaic function of the appearance of the ram’s heads in the architectural decoration of the Christian churches of the medieval period may be supposed (along with other horned heads of animals – for example the bull).

Such images usually appeared in the remote mountainous regions, where the influence of the higher level art of the Byzantine type was minimal.

The research is financed by the Russian Fund of Fundamental researches. Project n. [20-512-07001](#).

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<sup>50</sup> Vanderheyde C., *La sculpture byzantine du IX au XV siècle. Contexte. Mise en œuvre. Décors. [Byzantine Sculpture between the 9<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries., Context. Implementation. Decorations]*. Paris, 2020. p. 69.

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## The Category of Light in Ukrainian Art. From Byzantium to Baroque

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Oleksandra Shevliuga\*

**Abstract:** *The article is dedicated to the concept of divine light, which has always been a matter of particular attention in the Orthodox religion. Since the earliest monuments of the 11th century, it has been clearly remarked in Ukrainian art, both in mosaics and certain icons. Over the centuries, the artistic language has changed and the light acquired a different manner of realisation. It became particularly evident in the monuments of sacral art of mature baroque, which was also connected with the development of theological and scholastic scholarship in Kyiv. Then, icon painters have found some new ways of depicting divine light, rendered by applying different artistic means.*

**Keywords:** *divine light, Tabor Light, Hesychasm, mosaic, icon.*

*For a Byzantine citizen, gold was the image of light as truth and glory, and thus - the image of divine energies running in substance.*

Sergey Averintsev

Sergey Averintsev has paid a lot of attention to studying the meaning of the idea of divine light communicated by Byzantine theologians . Thus, we have used his concluding phrase as a sort of epigraph for our article.

After the iconoclasm had been defeated, the idea of visual realisation of divine light inside a church became important both for architects and artists. For instance, the new dome placed onto the Church of Hagia Sophia (994 AD) is sublime . It looks as if it has covered the whole church with itself

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(31 m in diameter) . However, it feels like it does not have physical weight as if it is hovering over the church. The architects managed to achieve this feeling due to the dome drum being cut through with 40 windows, shining with light, and elevated the dome thereby “binding” it with the sky. The dome became something like an antenna, transmitting movement of a layman’s prayer, which was said in the church, up to the Most High.

In the architecture of a church having a Greek-cross plan, however, the dome is displaced to the east and located above the transept. Therefore, some new artistic means appeared to render divine light. Among them was a mosaic in the first place. Otto Demus used to emphasize the fact that such techniques as golden-smalt mosaics have the best effect on a spherical surface . It is also worth noting that light twinkling occurs due to the tesserae being laid at an angle to one another. We shall add hereto that the artists have even foreseen such a delicate aspect as “picturesqueness” of gold, since gold has its own range of colours depending on its fineness . Despite the fact that Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv (1037 AD) has been the subject of many monographs , there have been few researchers who had the opportunity, like us, to observe the church’s mosaics in different seasons and time of day without artificial electric lighting, which accompanies every visitor of this museum church. The image of Christ Pantocrator in the central dome is enclosed into a medallion of a skouphos (Fig. 1). This Pantocrator image in the dome is always illuminated. Due to the sphere, the twinkling of the golden background becomes dynamic, depending on natural lighting from the drum windows. It constantly changes the effects of light and shade, and it seems as if its shining proceeds from the Pantocrator himself, whose himation is covered with big gold hatching. G. Logvin’s tactile studying of the haloes in the mosaics of Saint Sophia Cathedral has shown that all of them are sunk and appear to be a sort of a lens reflecting light, even during twilight. It is hard to tell how the archangels surrounding the Pantocrator used to look like originally (there is only one left, dressed in a blue attire), and the apostles have not remained intact either, except for Paul. On the other hand, the central apse with images of the Virgin Mary Orant, the Eucharist and the Church Fathers (upper parts of the figures have endured) is in an excellent condition. The Virgin Mary Orant, occupying the entire conch of the apse (Fig. 2), is not only on a spherical surface, but she also has three embossed waves in the background , which enhance the picturesqueness of the golden background in various places. The image of the Virgin Mary Orant itself changes right before our eyes at different times of day. She dominates with her firmness, with her full volume, skilfully modelled by means of the pleats of the maphorion and stola, which synthesize her shape, with the spread sides of the maphorion merging with the background, and with emphasized straight golden lines. Sometimes, the Virgin Mary Orant begins looking flat and is perceived as a clear silhouette, which at the same

time is changing its colour. Instead of the purple colour, the maphorion acquires a violet shade. So does the tunic, which is light-blue at one time and navy blue at another. Occasionally, an illusory source of light appears behind the right shoulder of the Virgin Mary Orant for a short time, especially in the morning.

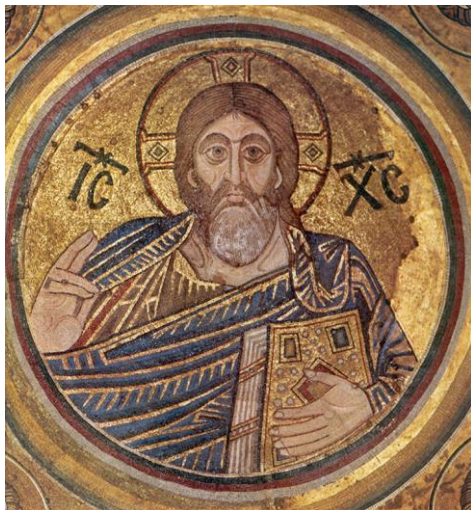


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

Yu. Korneliuk has shared his observation with us. Using the framing scaffolds, constructed by restorers, he placed four candles at the level of the Mother of God's face (as if imitating a church chandelier). What he saw afterwards surpassed all his expectations. It is well-known that all parts of the body in the mosaics are made from cubes of marble, limestone and sandstone, whereas faces, hands and legs are only laid with smalti tesserae. In the candlelight the latter ones started phosphorescing! Therefore, even all our observations without artificial lighting cannot reproduce completely those mystic experiences encountered by a person during even a single liturgy. Many "surprises" await us when we consider the Eucharist located in the apse under the Virgin Mary Orant. G. Logvin draws our attention to the fact that the two identical figures of Christ from the Eucharist, dressed in identical blue himations (Fig. 3), acquire a different colour at different angles - on the right and on the left of the communion table. This colour changes along with one's movement within the church. The constantly shining haloes over the heads of the apostles, who are walking in golden space, remind us of their sanctity and weightlessness (despite the reduced proportions). Thus, the idea of divine light in Saint Sophia Cathedral acquired the most unexpected and sometimes unpredictable effects due to experience, perfect taste and ingenuity of Byzantine masters.

The interior space of the cathedral is almost always shaded because of twelve massive cross pillars. However, what is particularly interesting to observe in summer is that the light beams penetrate through the drum windows and, moving in the course of time, illuminate both walls and pillars as if exhibiting alternately the assemblies of saints who are depicted on them. One part of the interior is being overshadowed, while another one is contrariwise being illuminated. This effect of moving light space can rarely be observed in other structures having cross-dome plans.

Fighting religion, the Soviet government used to destroy churches ruthlessly across the whole territory of Soviet Ukraine. In Kyiv, they destroyed everything - from churches of the dawn of the 12th century to the ones erected at the beginning of the 20th century. St. Michael Golden-Domed Cathedral (1108-1114 AD) fell under the atheist sword of Damocles as well. The cynicism of the Soviet government was expressed by the fact that consent to such demolition had to be given by experts. M. Makarenko, who was the member of the committee, has paid with his life for refusing to sign a corresponding certificate. Understanding the fact that there was no way to save the church, Igor Grabar managed to ensure a resolution under which the remaining mosaics and wall paintings discovered by that time were to be removed prior to demolition. The restorers headed by V. Frolov have performed an actual exploit by removing a part of the mosaics and wall paintings onto prepared walls in the galleries of Saint Sophia Cathedral, in Kyiv. The Eucharist mosaic and the Annunciation wall paintings were placed

there. Once, during their visit to the cathedral, L. Miliaieva, along with the artist T. Silvashi, encountered an extraordinary phenomenon. While they were examining the Eucharist mosaic from St. Michael Golden-Domed Cathedral (Fig. 4), a beam of sunlight fell onto the image of Christ on the left of the communion table. And the image seemed to disappear right in front of their eyes, for it started shining and sparkling in the bright sunbeam. Christ's himation from St. Michael Cathedral mosaics, unlike the ones from St. Sophia Cathedral, is coated with quite broad golden streaks, which cover a significant part of his attire. (It should be noted that in this Eucharist all the apostles have no haloes, unlike the ones in the Eucharist of Saint Sophia Cathedral). We were not able to observe this effect again. It is hard to tell if it was only designed for St. Michael Golden-Domed Cathedral in situ.

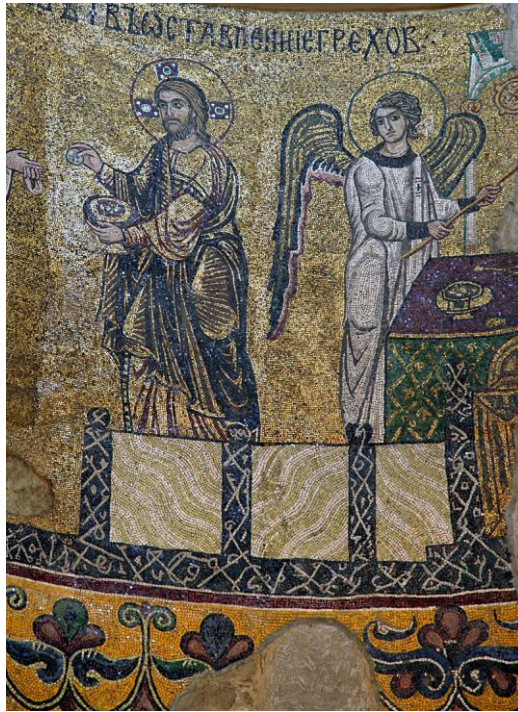


Fig. 4.

Since Antiquity, Byzantine artists have inherited the usage of combinations of white and gold in their art. In mosaics, however, this combination has further acquired a special meaning, as both gold and white in Byzantine fine art represented mystic and divine light. The mosaicists who have worked in Saint Sophia Cathedral had a special and delicate sense of light. It was undoubtedly based on high dedication to the idea of Hesychastic and divine light, with which God, the Mother of God and beings of higher rank are endowed. In order to enhance this heavenly illumination, the artists



skilfully used the white colour, which has a remarkably powerful light effect when combined with gold. A golden mosaic skilfully laid by Byzantine masters demonstrates quite pronounced twinkling, imitating the higher heavenly world. However, all this did not suffice for the masters of Saint Sophia Cathedral. They strived to enhance this stream of light. This could be accomplished through highlighting the colourful outlines of the golden haloes with a thin line of white tesserae. That was the technique which allowed, so to say, tearing a shining golden halo off the golden background. This is how the haloes of the Virgin Mary Orant in the apse conch (Fig. 2), the Mother of God on the pillar from the Annunciation, the apostles and angels in the Eucharist (Fig. 3), and the archangel in the dome are depicted. Christ Pantocrator in the dome has a bright, multi-coloured mandorla medallion (Fig. 1), but here white light is used as well. It is found in the outline of the medallion three times and, which is quite peculiar, right beside gold: the white colour fringes the medallion on both sides, and there is also a white streak inside, situated next to the golden one.



Fig. 5

One of the icons of the pre-Mongolian time, which is most saturated with light, is The Virgin Platytera (Great Panagia), the so-called “The Orants of Yaroslavl” (Fig. 5). The image of the Mother of God of Incarnation type has the same maphorion, spread in the background, with vertical golden streaks as the one on the Virgin Mary Orant in Saint Sophia Cathedral (Fig. 2), although stylistically it is from a different time period. However, it is noticeable that in the golden background of the icon all the haloes are white. From an aesthetic perspective, this chryselephantine technique is impeccable. Taking into account the experience of the Saint Sophia Cathedral mosaic masters, who undoubtedly left their mark on the Kyiv artistic environment of the 11th century, it is justified to assume the development of this artistic technique of rendering light. Moreover, it is justified to assume that this icon is the pinnacle of rendering divine shining in the Byzantine-Kyivan art.

In the times of Hesychasm of the 14th century, the nature of Tabor Light became the focus of attention. It was specifically reflected in the artistic monuments of that era. In the Kyiv Psalter of 1377, numerous marginal miniatures were illuminated with golden divine light. Thin gold hatching enhances the sublimity and solemnity of the colourful tiny figures, raising them to a more subtle and mystic level. However, this shining marginal images probably seemed insufficient to the creators and requester of the manuscript, since the text itself, written in solemn semi-uncial script, is illuminated with gold: nearly each parchment page contains golden lines and separate letters, which fill all the pages of the Psalter with twinkling. It is this saturation of the manuscript text and marginal miniatures with golden light that produces the feeling of “extensive” shining and indicates the fact that the masters who created this outstanding work of art came from the Kyiv community of artists. They were familiar with the extensive shining of the golden mosaics of Kyiv cathedrals, for Kyiv was the only city across the entire Rus’ wherein the churches had been decorated with mosaics since the end of the 10th century, and no other artistic school of Rus’ had such long-lasting visual experience.

In those cases when gold was not used in the Ukrainian fine art, most often the light was rendered through white, light-blue and blue colours, in accordance with the Byzantine tradition. Here we can point to the Transfiguration icon of the 14th century from Busovisko village, where the almond-shaped Christ’s mandorla with sharp needle-like beams is performed with thin white strokes on it. In the icon, Christ is dressed in a light-blue chiton and a dazzling white himation, which imitates the brightness of Tabor Light here.

Another technique used by Ukrainian artists of the 16th century for rendering divine light was probably borrowed from monumental art as well (the multi-coloured outline of Christ’s mandorla). This technique was well-known among both Byzantine and Ukrainian artists (Christ Pantocrator in the



dome of Saint Sophia Cathedral). Quite often we find monuments with similar shining of Christ's mandorla in the icon painting of the 16th century, such as the Transfiguration from Yabluniv village (Fig. 6) and a range of icons with the iconographic type of Christ in Glory, popular in the Ukrainian church (e.g. Szklary village, mid- 16th century (now in Poland) (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6

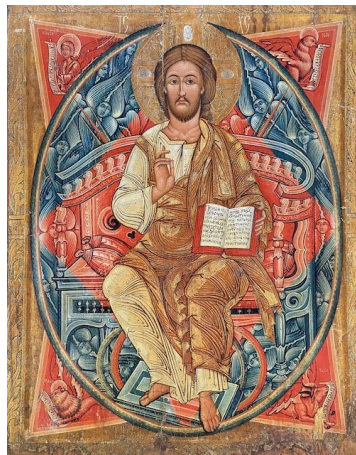


Fig. 7

Besides gold, this divine uncreated light used to be associated with silver as well. In the Annunciation icon of 1576 by master Fedusko from Sambir (Fig. 8), the Mother of God is dressed in a golden tunic and maphorion, while the archangel Gabriel has a silver attire (today the silver is blackened). Here, the icon painter used the opportunity of dressing the icon characters, considering the matter of divine light in its medieval meaning.

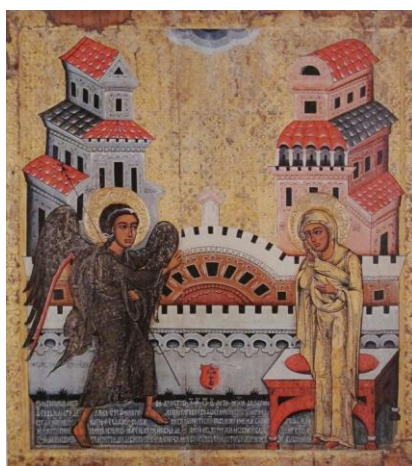


Fig. 8

Golden and silver relief icon backgrounds, which were popular in the Ukrainian icon painting and are found from the dawn of the 16th century to the 18th century, are more “picturesque” - effects of light and shade - compared with flat golden icon backgrounds that had been wide-spread in the countries of Byzantine area since ancient times. Their non-uniform surface brought about a feeling of changeable twinkling, vaguely resembling the changeable shining of golden mosaic backgrounds of churches, which enhanced the depth effect when lit candles and icon lamps were near the icons. Let us provide several examples of such icons: The Eleousa Virgin Mary by master Olexius of the second half of the 16th century, the Deesis tier from Nakonechny village of the 1570s (Fig. 9), icons painted by Ivan Rutkovych, Job Kondzelewicz, the great martyrs Barbara and Catherine of the 1740s and many others. In order to enhance the effect of divine shining, the artists depicted sun-like beams or flame tips on the haloes shining with gold or silver (for example, Michael - Fig. 10 - and Gabriel archangels, Holy Great Prince Volodymyr and Emperor Constantine in the icons of Ivan Rutkovych, apostles from the iconostasis of the Nativity of Christ Church in Zhovkva, the Dormition of the Mother of God from Lebedyn and many others).



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

The use of the light category in the middle of the 18th century is a unique phenomenon, even considering the fact that within those years theological literature had an advantage over secular literature. The school theatre was mainly governed by it. The tragicomedy “Volodymyr” by Theophan Prokopovych is rather an exception from this rule.

The Transfiguration Church in Velyki Sorochyntsi village has a complex theological programme, interpreting the dedication of the church in its own iconological way . Since pre-Mongolian Rus' (since the 11th century) none of the churches has ever shown anything like it. Usually, the Transfiguration theme was realised in an icon of the local iconostasis register of a church (the most ancient Ukrainian icon from Busovisko has been known since the 14th century), and maybe in wall paintings and iconostasis that have not been preserved into the present day.



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

In the aforementioned church, the Tabor light theme dominates, starting from the facade, where pagan symbols were used for the first time (starting from the 17th century it was usually antique mythology). The portal is decorated with several types of rosacea: ordinary type, “Jupiter’s wheel” and six-pointed, which is the symbol of natural and divine light. The fact that they are not ornamental is attested by their single use above the windows, or on the vaults - in the interior, like on beams of peasant huts, up to the 19th century. We can agree with the hypothesis of P. Beletsky, who assumed the participation of archbishop Raphael Zaborovsky (Archbishop of Kyiv and Galych, since 1731), Metropolitan of Kyiv, Galych and Little Russia (since 1743) for the creation of the iconostasis, who came to Ukraine in 1731, reformed the Kyiv Theological Academy and paid great attention to education. It was he who could afford to change the idea of an iconostasis. In



Velyki Sorochyntsi village, the iconostasis is so to speak ternary: considering the cruciform plan of the church, it has a central part and the most solemn eastern part covering the central apse, whereas its southern and northern parts are at an angle from the centre to the lateral sides of the architectural cross, thereby forming side chapels. They are connected by two large icons dedicated to titular saints of the churchwardens - St. Uliana and Daniel the Prophet (the churchwarden of the church was Danylo Apostol - Hetman of Zaporizhian Host (1727-1734), Hetman of Left-Bank Ukraine).

Behind the icon of St. Uliana, there is a Mariolatrous side chapel dedicated to the Laudation of the Mother of God. Behind Daniel the Prophet, there is a Christological Trinity side chapel. Without dwelling on the unusual character of the icon composition, we will only point to one feature - the centre does not have a "Deesis", which has been removed to the Trinity side chapel. The baroque central composition filled with pathos is not only notable for its sophisticated through-carved work, but also for its composition wherein the apostle tier is ascending at an angle, while above it there is Christ dressed in golden attire and sitting on his throne (Fig. 11). Behind him, there are archangels "holding mirrors" in the form of sparkling suns, i.e. there is a depiction of the Transfiguration of Our Lord in an unconventional iconography – "The Transfiguration Triumph".

In order to make Christ and Mother of God (Fig. 12) shine in the local iconostasis register, the artist has painted their attire on gold foil pre-glued onto gesso instead of usual gold hatching, and that is how the shining-body effect was created.

In "The Trinity of the Old Testament" icon of the southern side chapel, there is a shining golden solar disk above the images of angels (Fig.13).



Fig. 13

One cannot find anywhere else such a solution regarding the iconostas. However, such a programme could have only been created by an authoritative person of the church, so that he could venture to do it. At the same time, we should keep in mind the craftsmanship of the artists, who were able to use the means that helped them implement new ideas.

The originality of theological programmes is also observed in high iconostases of the 17th century. In the aforementioned case, however, it is the unconventional character of the solution that amazes most.

Probably, this is the last (unexpected) surge of realisation of the Tabor Light category by means of art.

Thus, we have observed the original character of rendering divine light in the mosaics of Kyiv - in Saint Sophia Cathedral and Saint Michael Golden-Domed Cathedral, which has been done for the first time. Among sparse icons of the pre-Mongolian times in Ukrainian history, we have also managed to find original solutions for rendering light in the icon of the dawn of the 12th century – “The Great Panagia” (The Orants of Yaroslavl). To a large extent, the special understanding of the Uncreated Light in the 14th century is connected with the revival of the Tabor Light idea in Hesychasm. Naturally, it is observed in the Saviour Transfiguration icons. Within the following centuries, the rendering of this Uncreated Light lost a little of its mystic tension; nevertheless, it is still present in the symbolism of the mandorla around the image of Christ and in the silver and golden backgrounds of icons as well. During the baroque period, experiencing mystic divine shining reached its pinnacle in Ukrainian sacred art due to the new artistic means and techniques.

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## **La pluie de sang au Moyen Âge. Perspectives culturelles sur une expérience cosmologique**

**Andrei Mirea\***

**Abstract:** *Observed here through the lenses of the history of mentalities and the environmental history, the meteorological phenomenon of red rain appears to have been discerned from several points of view by the medieval man. Due to its reddish colour, this peculiar rain was most often perceived as real blood. Although generally associated with a range of rather negative emotions or events, the shower of blood meant an experience felt differently by various communities: predicting death and war, blood rain could also signify the injuries of the combatants, the bodily suffering of Christ, the end of the world, God's anger and his divine punishment, or simply a natural phenomenon caused by material and physical factors. If, for the Early Middle Ages, only brief passages from chronicles inform us about these phenomena, beginning with the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries a scientific discourse concerning the blood rain is formulated in Europe. In some illuminated religious manuscripts, biblical episodes depicting showers of blood and fire were represented at least since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, the iconography of the blood rain diversifies and, at the same epoch, the motif of the rain of blood appears in some private devotional books. The 16<sup>th</sup> century amplifies the means of expression on the rains of blood, through brochures and flyers, a rich compendia of prodigy, or through scientific and popular works devoted to this phenomenon. In the Renaissance, the blood rain turns into an artistic and literary motif. By looking at some biblical accounts that echoed in the medieval culture, at the discourses articulated by several chroniclers, or by trying to grasp the evolution of the learned discourse addressing the blood rain, this article aims to assess the medieval perspectives touching the phenomenon of red rain.*

**Keywords:** *blood rain, red rain, medieval culture, Bible, history of mentalities, prodigy.*

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« Quant au sort qui est arrivé à la Reine des Villes, aucun signe céleste ou terrestre n'a été envoyé, comme cela est souvent arrivé dans le passé, laissant présager les calamités de l'humanité et les attaques pernicieuses des maux. Les gouttes de pluie sanglantes ne sont pas tombées du ciel, ni la récolte n'est devenue rouge-sang, ni les pierres brûlantes ne sont tombées du ciel, et rien de nouveau n'a été aperçu ; mais la Justice, avec de nombreuses jambes et de nombreuses mains, s'est fait voir, sans le bruit des pas ou des mains, comme un vengeur zélé, elle s'est abattue sur la Cité silencieusement et sans se faire entendre, et a fait de nous les plus misérables des hommes »<sup>1</sup> (n. t.).

Ce passage accompagne la description dramatique, tirée de la chronique de l'historien byzantin Nicéas Choniates, des circonstances qui ont conduit à la conquête de Constantinople par les croisés en 1204. Ce printemps-là, avoue Choniates, Dieu, en proie à la colère, n'avait envoyé aucun signe annonçant la calamité qui allait s'abattre sur la Cité de la Vierge. La reprise insistante de la couleur rouge, sous forme de pluie de sang, de champs de céréales rouges ou de météorites, dont se sert le chroniqueur, n'est pas accidentelle, car elle anticipe le bain de sang que Choniates, témoin des événements qu'il raconte, décrit après l'entrée des croisés dans la Ville<sup>2</sup>. Dans les pages suivantes, nous essayerons d'analyser la manière dont les gens du Moyen Âge ont entendu décrire, représenter ou expliquer un phénomène météorologique assez rare, mais non pas moins réel et effrayant : la pluie de sang. L'idée principale développée dans notre étude est que, bien que les gens du Moyen Âge aient eu affaire à un seul phénomène météorologique, ils l'ont perçu, compris et expliqué sous des angles et perspectives différents.

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\* Je remercie Mme Luminița Diaconu, maître de conférences à l'Université de Bucarest (Faculté de Langues et Littératures Étrangères), pour sa lecture attentive. Les suggestions qu'elle m'a faites ont ciselé mon texte, tout en le rendant plus clair.

<sup>1</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, éd. par Harry J. Magoulias, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1984, p. 322: « As for the fate which befell the Queen of Cities, neither celestial nor terrestrial sign was given, as happened often in the past, portending the calamities of mankind and the pernicious attacks of evils. Bloody rain drops did not pour down from heaven, nor did the harvest turn blood red, nor did fiery stones fall out of the sky, nor was anything new observed; but many-legged and many-handed Justice appeared without the sound of footfall or handclap as a zealous avenger, fell silently and inaudibly upon the City, and made of us the most ill-starred of men ». Pour une pluie de cendres à Constantinople, en 469, voir *Chronicon Paschale 284-628 AD*, éd. par Michael Whitby et Mary Whitby, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1989, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium...*, p. 323.

## **Les pluies de sang de l'époque médiévale dans l'historiographie moderne**

Dans un article publié en 1914, John S. P. Tatlock<sup>3</sup> propose un compte rendu chronologique des cas de pluies de sang en Angleterre, France, Irlande et en Islande et, pour certains d'entre eux, il cherche à faire la distinction entre les pluies de sang authentiques, historiques, et les pluies de sang imaginées, légendaires. À cette occasion, Tatlock remarque également des similitudes entre l'Antiquité classique et l'époque médiévale en ce qui concerne l'attitude générale à l'égard de la pluie de sang.

Fondée sur une sélection arbitraire de sources historiques, la théorie de Paul Edward Dutton soutient qu'il y a eu un développement linéaire de l'attitude médiévale envers la pluie de sang : à partir d'une lecture religieuse et symbolique de l'événement qui suscite l'inquiétude, la peur, la superstition et le besoin de repentir chez les hommes, spécifique du début du Moyen Âge jusqu'au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle, jusqu'à l'élaboration d'explications rationnelles, à la recherche des causes matérielles et physiques de la pluie rouge, au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>4</sup>. Cette interprétation, comme nous le verrons, ne peut plus être retenue, parce que la réalité historique semble plus complexe que précédemment supposé.

Une tendance historiographique récurrente dans l'étude du phénomène des pluies de sang est la distinction quantitative entre les quelques mentions documentaires connues pour le Moyen Âge (on prétend, par exemple, qu'aux XIII<sup>e</sup>, XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles, en Europe, il y a moins de 30 cas attestés) et les nombreuses mentions existant pour l'âge prémoderne (90 cas ont été dénombrés pour le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et 100 pour le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle). De plus, cette tendance insiste sur l'idée que, à partir de l'ère de la Réforme protestante, et en particulier dans les régions qui se convertissent au protestantisme, on voit s'intensifier l'attention avec laquelle les gens perçoivent et enregistrent – peut-être d'une manière systématique – les épisodes de pluies rouges<sup>5</sup>. Certains chercheurs parlent d'une sensibilité

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<sup>3</sup> John S. P. Tatlock, « Some Mediaeval Cases of Blood-Rain », *Classical Philology*, 9-4, 1914, p. 442-447.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Edward Dutton, « Observations on Early Medieval Weather in General, Bloody Rain in Particular », in Jennifer R. Davis et Michael McCormick (dir.), *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*, Burlington, Ashgate Press, 2008, p. 167-180. Déjà dans le même recueil d'études, un point d'interrogation a été soulevé sur la validité de cette théorie (Danuta Shanzer, « Representations and Reality in Early Medieval Literature », p. 209-215, ici 211).

<sup>5</sup> Voir, en particulier, Gerhard Jaritz, Verena Winiwarter, « On the perception of nature in a Renaissance society », in Mikuláš Teich, Roy Porter et Bo Gustafsson (dir.), *Nature and Society in Historical Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 91-111, ici p. 99-101. Il y a aussi des statistiques (par exemple, voir P.

protestante spécifique à ces phénomènes<sup>6</sup>. En ce qui concerne le Moyen Âge, une série de préjugés historiographiques persistent qui s'avèrent, à un regard plus attentif, fausses : à savoir que l'homme médiéval ne sait pas que la pluie rouge est un phénomène naturel, ou que le Moyen Âge n'a pas prêté attention à ce phénomène.

En ce qui nous concerne, nous devons également tenir compte de la nature des sources dont le médiéviste dispose pour étudier les pluies de sang. Du point de vue de la longue durée historique, les sources ont tendance à se diversifier et à se multiplier progressivement, mais beaucoup de ces types de documents apparaissent avant la Réforme protestante. Si, pour le début du Moyen Âge, nous n'avons que de brefs passages dans les chroniques historiques, à partir des XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles un discours scientifique et physique sur la pluie de sang a commencé à se construire en Europe. Dans les manuscrits religieux enluminés, des épisodes bibliques avec des pluies de sang et de feu – comme celui mentionné dans l'*Apocalypse* 8:7 – sont représentés au moins depuis le XI<sup>e</sup> siècle. À partir du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, les représentations iconographiques de la pluie de sang dans les chroniques historiques se multiplient et, à la même époque, le motif des pluies de sang apparaît dans certains livres de dévotion privés<sup>7</sup>, de sorte que le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle poursuit les évolutions déjà existantes en amplifiant les moyens d'expression sur les pluies de sang, à travers des brochures et des flyers, une riche littérature des collections de *prodigia*, des ouvrages scientifiques et

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McCafferty, « Bloody rain again! Red rain and meteors in history and myth », *International Journal of Astrobiology*, 7-1, 2008, p. 9-15, ici p. 10, fig. 1) qui ont conclu que pendant certains siècles, comme les X<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles, il n'y avait pas eu de pluies de sang en Europe, ce qui est une erreur évidente.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Sperl, « Vom Blutregen zum Staubfall. Der Einfluß politischer und theologischer Theorien auf die Wahrnehmung von Umweltphänomenen », in Gerhard Jaritz et Verena Winiwarter (dir.), *Umweltbewältigung: die historische Perspektive*, Bielefeld, Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1994, p. 56-76; Christian Rohr, « Macht der Sterne, Allmacht Gottes oder Laune der Natur ? Astrologische Expertendiskurse über Krisen und Naturrisiken im späten Mittelalter und am Beginn der Neuzeit », in Carla Meyer, Katja Patzel-Mattern et Gerrit Jasper Schenk (dir.), *Krisengeschichte(n). « Krise » als Leitbegriff und Erzählmuster in kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013, p. 361-385, ici 377-380. D'autre part, Rohr soutient que l'interprétation de la pluie de sang est progressivement passée d'un signe naturel miraculeux à une expression de la colère de Dieu, bien qu'une telle évolution soit difficile à soutenir, car les deux interprétations existent depuis l'Antiquité.

<sup>7</sup> Un tel cas a été étudié par Silke Tammen, « Rot sehen-Blut berühren. Blutige Seiten und Passionsmemoria in einem spätmittelalterlichen Andachtsbüchlein (Brit. Libr., Ms. Egerton 1821) », in Monika Schausten (dir.), *Die Farben imaginierter Welten: Zur Kulturgeschichte ihrer Codierung in Literatur und Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2012, p. 303-322.

populaires consacrés à ce phénomène<sup>8</sup>. Pendant la même période, la pluie de sang se transforme en motif artistique et littéraire.

Avant de voir ce que les gens du Moyen Âge croyaient de la pluie rouge, voyons brièvement ce que les spécialistes contemporains pensent de ce phénomène. Actuellement, la communauté scientifique a proposé, à partir d'analyses informatisées en laboratoire, plusieurs explications pour différents cas spécifiques et bien localisés de pluies rouges. Dans de nombreuses situations, la couleur de la pluie s'explique par la présence de certaines particules de poussière et de sable, de couleur rougeâtre, qui ont été soulevées des zones arides (par exemple, la poussière rouge saharienne) et transportées sur de longues distances par les vents avant d'être dispersées sur le sol sous forme de précipitations<sup>9</sup>. Dans d'autres cas, lorsque les vents violents d'une tempête arrivent, ils soulèvent dans les nuages certains organismes microscopiques, différents types de spores et de champignons, des espèces locales d'algues, qui sont ensuite emportés par les nuages de pluie<sup>10</sup>. Mais l'hypothèse explicative la plus surprenante relie la pluie rouge à certaines substances rouges mélangées dans les nuages de pluie, qui proviennent de l'explosion et de la désintégration de météorites dans l'atmosphère, arrivant de l'espace cosmique<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> On peut consulter à ce sujet un petit livre de six pages: Antoine de Blégier de la Salle, *Brief discours de quelques pluies de sang advenues au Conté de Venaissin, ensemble d'un tonnerre prodigieux advenu sur la fin de janvier 1574*, à Lyon par Jean Patrasson, 1574.

<sup>9</sup> Anna Avila, Josep Peñuelas, « Increasing frequency of Saharan rains over northeastern Spain and its ecological consequences », *The Science of the Total Environment*, 228-2, 1999, p. 153-156; Constantino Criado, Pedro Dorta, « An unusual 'blood rain' over the Canary Islands (Spain). The storm of January 1999 », *Journal of Arid Environments*, 55, 2003, p. 765-783; Joshua R. White, Randall S. Cerveny, Robert C. Balling Jr., « Seasonality in European Red Dust/ 'Blood' Rain Events », *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 93-4, 2012, p. 471-476; Michael Allaby (dir.), *A Dictionary of Geology and Earth Sciences*, quatrième édition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Sasi V. Kumar, S. Sampath, C. N. Mohanan, T. K. Abraham, « Colored rain falls in Kerala, India », *Eos Transactions American Geophysical Union*, 83-31, 2002, p. 341-344; Barry E. DiGregorio, « What made the rain red in India ? Isotopic analysis points to a terrestrial origin for the unusual organic particles that colored the rain like blood », *Analytical Chemistry*, 79-9, 2007, p. 3238. Voir aussi Ian Goddard, « The Colored Rains of Kerala: An Exploration of Possible Causal Mechanisms », *Noesis. The Journal of the Mega Society*, 180, 2006, p. 9-18.

<sup>11</sup> Godfrey Louis, A. Santhosh Kumar, « The Red Rain Phenomenon of Kerala and its Possible Extraterrestrial Origin », *Astrophysics and Space Science*, 302-1, 2006, p. 175-187; P. McCafferty, « Bloody rain again... », p. 9-15; Rajkumar Gangappa, Chandra Wickramasinghe, Milton Wainwright, A. Santhosh Kumar, Godfrey Louis, « Growth and replication of red rain cells at 121°C and their red fluorescence », *Proc.*

## Le savoir antique au Moyen Âge

Cependant, ces derniers détails sont complètement insignifiants pour les expériences des gens à l'époque prémoderne. Le Moyen Âge n'a pas reçu beaucoup d'explications sur le phénomène de pluie de sang de la part des penseurs de l'Antiquité. Du livre d'Aristote intitulé *Meteorologica*<sup>12</sup>, *Naturales Quaestiones* de Sénèque<sup>13</sup>, tous les deux redécouverts au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, des traités de Théophraste d'Eresos, *De Signis Tempestatum* et *De Ventis*<sup>14</sup>, qui n'ont commencé à circuler qu'au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, ou de celui de Pline l'Ancien, *Naturalis Historia*<sup>15</sup>, jamais perdu au Moyen Âge, on n'apprend presque rien sur la pluie de sang. Par exemple, l'encyclopédie de Pline rappelle brièvement que *praeter haec inferiore caelo relatum in monumenta est lacte et sanguine pluisse M. Acilio C. Porcio cos. et saepe alias, sicut carne P. Volumnio Servio Sulpicio cos.*, et la description continue par le récit des pluies de morceaux de fer, de laine ou de briques brûlées<sup>16</sup>, interprétés comme des signes inquiétants. Certains passages de poèmes et d'épopées grecques<sup>17</sup>, tout comme Ovide<sup>18</sup>, Tite-Live<sup>19</sup>, Pétrone<sup>20</sup> ou Dion

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SPIE, Instruments, Methods, and Missions for Astrobiology XIII, 2010 (<https://doi.org/10.1117/12.876393>, consulté le 19.04.2021).

<sup>12</sup> Aristote, *Meteorology*, éd. par E. W. Webster, in Jonathan Barnes (dir.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. I, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 555-625.

<sup>13</sup> Sénèque, *Natural questions*, éd. par Harry Morrison Hine, Londres, The University of Chicago Press, 2010; Roland Mayer, « Seneca Redivivus: Seneca in the Medieval and Renaissance World », in Shadi Bartsch et Alessandro Schiesaro (dir.), *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 278.

<sup>14</sup> Théophraste d'Eresos, *On Weather Signs*, éd. par David Sider et Carl Wolfram Brunschön, Leyde-Boston, Brill, 2007; *Id.*, *On Winds*, éd. par Robert Mayhew, Leyde-Boston, Brill, 2018; Nigel G. Wilson, « The Manuscripts of Theophrastus », *Scriptorium*, 16-1, 1962, p. 96-102; Charles B. Schmitt, « Theophrastus in the Middle Ages », *Viator*, 2, 1971, p. 251-270.

<sup>15</sup> Pline l'Ancien, *Historia Naturalis*, Livre II (Cosmologie), éd. par Gerhard Winkler et Roderich König, Munich, Artemis und Winkler, 1997, p. 120.

<sup>16</sup> Pour une traduction en français, voir Pline l'Ancien, *Histoire naturelle*, Livre II (Cosmologie, astronomie et géologie), Texte établi et traduit par Jean Beaujeu, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 2003 (2.57.147). Pour une autre interprétation donnée à certains cas anciens, voir D. Justin Schove, « Sunspots, Aurorae and Blood Rain: The Spectrum of Time », *Isis*, 42-2, 1951, p. 133-138, mais surtout Richard Stothers, « Ancient Aurorae », *Isis*, 70-1, 1979, p. 85-95.

<sup>17</sup> Hésiode, *Le Bouclier d'Héraclès*, in vol. *Théogonie, Les Travaux et les Jours, Bouclier*, Texte établi et traduit par Paul Mazon, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1947, p. 147, n. 2, 383-385; Homère, *Illiade*, 11:54 (*Illiade*, Tome II, Chants VII-XII, Texte établi et traduit par Paul Mazon, avec la contribution de Pierre Chantraine, Paul Collart et René Langumier, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1965, p. 111) et aussi 16:459 (*Illiade*, Tome III, Chants XIII-XVIII, Texte

Cassius <sup>21</sup>, qui évoquent ce phénomène, rappellent la manière des chroniqueurs médiévaux d'établir des liens entre les signes anormaux du ciel et les événements malheureux de la vie humaine. Néanmoins, parmi les anciens, peu nombreux d'ailleurs, que nous connaissons pour avoir critiqué les superstitions de leurs contemporains, tout en essayant de proposer une explication plus équilibrée, il convient de retenir Cicéron. Dans son traité *De divinatione*, écrit entre 45 et 44 avant Jésus-Christ<sup>22</sup>, la couleur rouge de l'eau de pluie est décrite par Cicéron comme effet du contact de l'eau avec certains types de terre (*ex aliqua contagione terrena*)<sup>23</sup>, opinion qui semble avoir influencé au fil des siècles certains des naturalistes et physiciens français du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle ; mais, au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le scientifique français Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc rejetait cette explication (*Physici referrent hujusmodi pluviam ad vapores è rubra terra sublimè evectos*)<sup>24</sup>. Il semble que l'explication de Cicéron n'ait pas influencé les naturalistes des XII<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles. De même, les connaissances anciennes transmises dans l'Occident

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établi et traduit par Paul Mazon, avec la contribution de Pierre Chantraine, Paul Collart et René Langumier, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1961, p. 117). Voir aussi Carol Wight, « A Note on the Red Rain in Iliad 16.459 », *The Classical Weekly*, 14-23, 1921, p. 183.

<sup>18</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Tome III (Livres XI-XV), Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1966, p. 147 (15:788).

<sup>19</sup> Tite-Live, *Histoire romaine*, 24.10.7-8, 39.46.5, 39.56.6 (Tome XXIX, Livre XXXIX, Texte établi et traduit par A.-M. Adam, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1994), 40.19.2 (Tome XXX, Livre XL, Texte établi et traduit par Ch. Goullart, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1986), 42.20.5, 43.13.5 (Tome XXXI, Livres XLI-XLII, et Tome XXXII, Livres XLIII-XLIV, Texte établi et traduit par Paul Jal, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1971-1976).

<sup>20</sup> Pétrone, *Le Satiricon*, Texte établi et traduit par Alfred Ernout, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1962, p. 141 (122:140-143).

<sup>21</sup> Dion Cassius, *Histoire romaine*, 51.17.4 (Livres 50 et 51, Texte établi et traduit par Marie-Laure Freyburger, Jean-Michel Roddaz, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1991) et aussi 63.26.5.

<sup>22</sup> Cicéron, *De Divinatione*, Livre I, éd. par David Wardle, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 43; John O. Ward, « What the Middle Ages Missed of Cicero, and Why », in William H. F. Altman (dir.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Cicero*, Leyde-Boston, Brill, 2015, p. 307-326.

<sup>23</sup> Cicéron, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Divinatione Liber Secvndvs*, éd. par Arthur Stanley Pease, University of Illinois, 1923, p. 447-448; *Id.*, *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, éd. par William Armistead Falconer, Londres, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 436-437 (2.58).

<sup>24</sup> Transmis à nous à travers sa *Vita*, écrite par Pierre Gassendi, *Viri illustris Nicolai Claudii Fabricii de Peiresc Vita*, La Haye, Sumptibus Gottlob Ernesti Strunzii, 1651, p. 154-156. Voir également René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des insectes*, tome premier, Paris, Impr. Royale, 1734, p. 637-639.

médiéval par les encyclopédies d'Isidore de Séville, comme *Etymologiae* ou *De natura rerum*, ou bien par Bède le Vénérable, à travers son ouvrage *De natura rerum*, ne mentionnent pas la pluie de sang<sup>25</sup>.

Il faudra attendre la Renaissance du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle pour que les premières explications sur la pluie de sang, que nous pouvons appeler scientifiques pour l'époque, apparaissent en Occident, énoncées par certains philosophes naturalistes, et nous reviendrons sur ce contexte culturel.

## Interprétation biblique des phénomènes naturels

Si la tradition physique relative aux sciences naturelles, héritée de l'Antiquité, ne fournit pas de connaissances particulières sur les pluies de sang, pour l'instant au moins, les gens du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance se sont tournés constamment vers la Bible, la première source d'explications et de significations à l'époque, pour essayer de trouver des réponses. En effet, quelques passages bibliques, comme nous le verrons ci-dessous, ont eu un impact considérable sur la manière dont les penseurs de l'Europe d'autrefois ont imaginé les représentations et les conséquences de ce phénomène. En ce qui concerne la pluie de sang, la Bible contient des associations significatives pour sa perception collective, à savoir l'association entre l'eau et le sang ; entre la pluie, le sang et le feu ; et, finalement, entre la pluie comme signe des péchés humains et la colère divine. Par exemple, l'eau des rivières d'Égypte, qui se transforme en sang, tuant les poissons et assoiffant les sujets de Pharaon, comme dans le livre de l'*Exode*, 7:20–21. La juxtaposition de la pluie et du feu est fournie par l'épisode biblique du châtiment des habitants des villes de Sodome et Gomorrhe, sur lesquelles Dieu fait tomber une pluie de soufre et de feu, qui détruit les foyers et les fortifications des villes, soulevant une fumée assez forte et étouffante (*Genèse*, 19:24–25, 28), épisode évoqué aussi dans *Luc* 17:29 : « mais le jour où Lot sortit de Sodome, une pluie de feu et de soufre tomba du ciel, et les fit tous périr ». Un manuscrit contenant environ 180 dessins en couleur montrant des scènes de l'Ancien Testament, réalisé par Konrad Schlapperitzin vers 1445, englobe une miniature présentant Moïse et Pharaon sous une pluie de sang, ainsi qu'un autre représentant une pluie de feu et de sang qui brûle les villes de Sodome et Gomorrhe<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, éd. par Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach et Oliver Berghof, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Bède le Vénérable, *On the Nature of Things, and On Times*, éd. par Calvin B. Kendall et Faith Wallis, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2010; Isidore de Séville, *On the Nature of Thing*, éd. par Calvin B. Kendall et Faith Wallis, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Le manuscrit provient de la bibliothèque publique de New York, sous la cote Mss Col 2557.

Symbole ambivalent, la pluie, bénéfique au travail du champ, peut signifier également, lorsqu'elle tombe violemment ou sous la forme d'un déluge, une peine sévère envoyée par Dieu (voir, par exemple, *I Samuel*, 12:17–18). Mais le passage biblique le plus célèbre qui décrit la pluie comme une calamité est celui dans lequel l'Éternel envoya des tonnerres, de la grêle et le feu sur la terre d'Égypte (*Exode*, 9:22–24). Dans l'Évangile selon Matthieu, dans le contexte d'une dispute entre Jésus-Christ et certains chefs religieux locaux, le Sauveur leur reproche de ne pas pouvoir faire la distinction entre les signes de la vraie présence de Dieu, considérés comme les plus importants, et les simples signes naturels visibles dans le ciel, qui annoncent seulement le changement climatique (*Matthieu*, 16:1–3).

Enfin, l'image effrayante de la pluie de feu, avec la grêle et le sang, apparaît dans *Apocalypse*, 8:7 : « Le premier sonna de la trompette. Et il y eut de la grêle et du feu mêlés de sang, qui furent jetés sur la terre ; et le tiers de la terre fut brûlé, et le tiers des arbres fut brûlé, et toute herbe verte fut brûlée ». Le manuscrit enluminé, contenant un commentaire sur le livre de l'Apocalypse écrit par Beatus de Liébana à l'abbaye de Saint-Sever au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle, plus précisément vers 1060, illustre ce passage biblique au fol. 137v, où nous pouvons voir une pluie de sang et de feu, qui commence à tomber au son d'une trompette et qui brûle ensuite la végétation. Sur la voûte céleste, peinte en rouge, on a écrit : *Et primus angelus tuba cecinit. Et facta est grando et ignis mixtus in sanguine, et missum est in terram*, et sur le sol, peint en jaune, on peut lire les conséquences de cette pluie acide : *ubi t[er]cia pars arboru[m] combusta est, ubi t[er]cia pars terre combusta est*<sup>27</sup>. Souvenons-nous bien de ces associations et images bibliques, car d'après les exemples que nous discuterons tout de suite, provenant de l'Europe des VI<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles, nous verrons que les thèmes bibliques mentionnés sont associés souvent à la pluie rouge tombant du ciel, considérée pendant longtemps comme du vrai sang, idée qui revenait assez régulièrement dans les représentations textuelles et visuelles.

## **Le discours des chroniques médiévales**

Si l'on parle des chroniqueurs médiévaux, la pluie de sang devient, d'une part, une question de perception<sup>28</sup>, et, d'autre part, un problème concernant la signification spécifique attachée au phénomène lui-même. Par conséquent, dans cette section, nous chercherons des réponses possibles à deux questions principales. Quels sont les détails de ce phénomène les plus fréquemment perçus et enregistrés au Moyen Âge ? Comment les chroniqueurs médiévaux ont-ils compris la signification de la pluie de sang ?

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<sup>27</sup> Ce manuscrit est actuellement conservé à Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, sous la cote Lat. 8878.

<sup>28</sup> Gerhard Jaritz, Verena Winiwarter, « On the perception of nature... », p. 100.



Commençons par la perception de la pluie de sang, qu'on retrouve dans les expressions latines comme *sanguinem pluere*, *pluvia rubra ut sanguis*, ou tout simplement *pluvia rubea*, expressions dans lesquelles on souligne parfois le fait qu'il s'agit de vrai sang (*verus sanguis*, *veri sanguinis guttas*)<sup>29</sup>. À plusieurs reprises, les chroniqueurs médiévaux conservent l'attitude collective d'émerveillement, de peur ou d'étonnement des gens face à ce phénomène. Le lexique latin utilisé pour décrire les réactions collectives est fortement illustratif : *admirantibus multis* ou bien *admirantibus universis*, *stupentibus* ou *obstupentibus* (être frappé de stupeur, étonnement profond qui empêche de réagir<sup>30</sup>). Parfois la pluie rouge tombait soudainement (*repente*), comme celle de 1198 à Andeli, en Normandie<sup>31</sup>. À d'autres occasions les gens levaient les yeux vers le ciel, souvent le ciel était plein de nuages (*nubibus*), mais d'autres fois le ciel était dégagé et clair (*sereno*), comme ce fut le cas d'une pluie de sang à York, en Angleterre, à la fin du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>32</sup>. La plupart du temps, les gens se sont rendu compte de la couleur rouge de la pluie en regardant les éclaboussures sur leurs vêtements clairs. Ainsi, Grégoire de Tours, au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, note que la pluie de sang *super vestimenta multorum hominum caecidit*. Plus tard, au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Guillaume de Newburgh mentionne également que des gouttes rouges ont été aperçues sur les vêtements de ceux qui étaient présents (*in suis vestibus veri sanguinis guttas conspicerent*). Il arrivait rarement qu'il neige avec du sang, un tel événement est attesté dans les *Annales Fuldenses* sous 860 (*nix quoque sanguinolenta in plerisque locis cecidisse reperta est*)<sup>33</sup>. À Prague, en Bohême, le 22 février 1416, une pluie de sang est tombée sur une couche de neige, puis de nouveau de la neige est tombée<sup>34</sup>.

D'autres constituants de la perception visent la durée de la pluie, l'intensité du phénomène ou son association avec les rivières rougeâtres. Les

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<sup>29</sup> Grégoire de Tours, *A History of the Franks*, éd. par Lewis Thorpe, Londres, Penguin Books, 2010, p. 346; *Sigeberti Chronica*, éd. par Ludwig Conrad Bethmann, MGH SS 6, 1844, p. 317.

<sup>30</sup> Pour les définitions, voir

<https://www.dicolatin.com/Francais/Mot/0/stupeur/index.html>, consulté le 19.04.2021.

<sup>31</sup> Guillaume de Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, in *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores. Chronicles of the reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, vol. II, éd. par Richard Howlett, Londres, 1885, p. 500.

<sup>32</sup> *Alcuini Epistolae 16*, éd. par Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4, 1895, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> *Annales fuldenses, sive Annales regni Francorum orientalis*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS rer. Germ. 7, 1891, p. 54.

<sup>34</sup> Rudolf Brázdil, Oldřich Kotyza, *History of Weather and Climate in the Czech Lands I: Period 1000-1500*, Zurich, Geographisches Institut Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, 1995, p. 121; Ernest Denis, *Huss et la guerre des hussites*, Paris, Leroux, 1878, p. 188: « En 1416, il y eut une pluie de sang et la neige tomba par dessus, une croix rouge étincela au milieu des nuages et vers le soir se changea en glaive, frappante image de la guerre religieuse qui allait couvrir la Bohême de ruines et de sang ».

mêmes *Annales fuldenses*, si importantes pour l'histoire du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle, relatent que, en 873, dans la région italienne de Brescia, une pluie de sang est tombée du ciel pendant trois jours et trois nuits<sup>35</sup>. Par la suite, de nombreuses chroniques médiévales, reprenant ces informations ou en proposant d'autres, plus récentes, conservent la durée symbolique de trois jours et trois nuits<sup>36</sup>. L'abondance est suggérée par des détails tels le fait que la pluie a duré plusieurs jours (*diebus multis*)<sup>37</sup> ou la référence à l'intensité de la pluie, comme il arrive en mai 1279, en Toscane, dans la ville de Bologne et dans les foires environnantes, quand la pluie de sang fut très abondante (*in maxima quantitate*)<sup>38</sup>. Dans l'*Historia Langobardorum*, écrite au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle par Paul Diacre, nous découvrons que dans la région de Brenner il pleuvait avec du sang, et dans les eaux du Rhin coulait un flot de sang<sup>39</sup>. La pluie de sang tombe dans l'environnement urbain à Paris, en 582 ou en 1058<sup>40</sup> ; à l'intérieur des murs des villes de Parme et de Ravenne ou sur les champs agricoles autour de ces villes, en juin 1113<sup>41</sup> ; dans les zones rurales, sur les ouvriers à l'intérieur d'une ferme monastique, en 954<sup>42</sup> ; à Rethel, *in episcopatu Dolensi*, en août 1164 ; dans *Britannia minori, in Retello*, en 1165<sup>43</sup> ; ou *in partibus Austrie, in Carentana et in dyocesi Pataviensi*, en juin 1237<sup>44</sup>. Les annales russes mentionnent que, dans la région de Silésie, une pluie de sang (*dozhd' krovavyy*) est tombée en 1269<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> *Annales fuldenses*, p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> *Iohannes Victoriensis liber I*, éd. par Fedor Schneider, MGH SS rer. Germ. 36, 1909, p. 24; *Sigeberti Chronica*, p. 341; *Ex Honorii Augustodunensis Summa Totius et Imagine Mundi*, éd. par Rogero Wilmans, MGH SS 10, 1852, p. 129; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 16, 1859, p. 140; *Annales Ratisponenses*, éd. par W. Wattenbach, MGH SS 17, 1861, p. 582.

<sup>37</sup> *Balduini Ninovens Chronicon*, éd. par Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS 25, 1880, p. 522.

<sup>38</sup> *Annales Colmarienses Maiores*, éd. par Philipp Jaffé, MGH SS 17, 1861, p. 204.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Diacre, *Istoria longobardorum*, éd. par Emanuel Grosu, Jassy, Polirom, 2011, p. 161.

<sup>40</sup> *Annales Sanctae Columbae Senonensis*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 1, 1826, p. 106.

<sup>41</sup> *Annales Leodienses*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 4, 1841, p. 30; *Anselmi Gemblacensis Continuatio*, éd. par Ludwig Conrad Bethmann, MGH SS 6, 1844, p. 375.

<sup>42</sup> *Annales Sanctae Columbae Senonensis*, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup> *Roberti de Monte Cronica*, éd. par Ludwig Conrad Bethmann, MGH SS 6, 1844, p. 512, 514.

<sup>44</sup> *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium Chronicon*, éd. par P. Scheffer-Boichorst, MGH SS 23, 1874, p. 942.

<sup>45</sup> E. P. Borisenkov, V. M. Pasetsky, *Ekstremalnye prirodnye yavleniya v Russkikh letopisyah XI-XVII vv*, Saint-Petersbourg, Gidrometeoizdat, 1983, p. 138.

Situées entre la perception et l'interprétation du phénomène, dans l'imaginaire médiéval il y a les histoires qui associent la pluie de sang à certains espaces, plus précisément aux églises, monastères ou forteresses. Après l'attaque dévastatrice des Vikings contre l'église de St. Cuthbert en 793, Alcuin, qui était alors à la cour de Charlemagne, envoie une lettre au roi de Northumbrie Æthelred I<sup>er</sup>, dans les dernières décennies du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans laquelle il se demandait de manière rhétorique : « Qu'est-ce qui laisse présager la pluie de sang pendant le Carême, sur l'église Saint-Pierre, Prince des Apôtres, dans la ville de York, qui est la tête de tout le royaume, que nous avons vue s'abattre d'une façon menaçante au sommet du toit, côté nord, alors que le ciel était serein? »<sup>46</sup> (n. t.), suggérant ainsi, certes, un lien entre la pluie de sang et l'attaque sanglante des Vikings. Une autre pluie de sang est tombée à Paris, en 1058, quand les croyants étaient à l'église pendant le service divin<sup>47</sup>. Quelques siècles après, en 1425, il tomba une pluie rouge dans les grandes galeries du cloître de l'abbaye de Bourgueil<sup>48</sup>.

La pluie de sang tombant sur les fortifications en construction soulève des questions et des doutes pour l'homme médiéval : faut-il arrêter immédiatement les travaux de construction face à un tel signe divin ou, au contraire, le chantier peut-il continuer à fonctionner ? Une miniature de la chronique suisse illustrée de Diebold Schilling de Lucerne, rédigée au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, montre une ville entourée de murs sous une pluie de sang, représentée selon le modèle biblique de Sodome et Gomorre : la pluie acide fait s'effondrer les tours, détruit les toits, les murs de la ville et les maisons ; de plus, la population est frappée par une épidémie de peste<sup>49</sup>. Les murs des fortifications sont construits uniquement par la grâce de Dieu, étant potentiellement détruits toujours par la colère de Dieu. Cependant, dans

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<sup>46</sup> *Alcuini Epistolae* 16, p. 43: « Signa enim huius miserie precesserunt, alia per res inconsuetas, alia per mores insolitos. Quid significat pluvia sanguinis, qui quadrogessimali tempore Euboraca civitate, in ecclesia beati Petri principis apostolorum, que caput est totius regni, vidimus de borealibus domus sereno aere de summitate minaciter cadere tecti ? Nonne potest putari a borealibus poenas sanguinis venire super populum ? quod in hoc facto nuper ingruente super domum Dei incepisse videri potest ».

<sup>47</sup> *Annales Sanctae Columbae Senonensis*, p. 106: « Hoc anno pluit sanguis in pago Parisiensi in quandam aeclesiam super populum audientem missam in sollempnitate omnium sanctorum ».

<sup>48</sup> *Recueil de chroniques de Touraine. Supplément aux Chroniques de Touraine*, éd. par André Salmon, Paris, Guillaud-Verger, 1856, p. 40.

<sup>49</sup> Chronique illustrée du lucernois Diebold Schilling, Lucerne, Zentralbibliothek, c. 1513, S 23, fol. 61v. La pluie de sang, l'épidémie de peste et les naissances monstrueuses sont attribuées à l'influence malheureuse de la comète de Halley de 1456 (Roberta J. M. Olson, « ...And They Saw Stars: Renaissance Representations of Comets and Pretelescopic Astronomy », *Art Journal*, 44-3, 1984, p. 216-224, ici p. 219, fig. 9).

l'Europe médiévale, les attitudes vis-à-vis de la pluie sanglante frappant les fortifications en construction variaient considérablement. Mettons deux cas opposés face à face. Au mois de mai 1198, peu avant les fêtes solennelles de l'Ascension, une pluie mêlée de sang tomba soudain (*repente imber sanguine mixtus descendit*) sur les fondations d'un château en construction pour la défense de la Normandie, à Andeli, sur la Seine. Richard Cœur de Lion, qui a supervisé les travaux de construction, et qui avait des raisons stratégiques bien fondées pour terminer le travail plus tôt, a refusé d'arrêter les travaux sur le site et a continué à hâter l'achèvement du château, malgré le fait que les conseillers du roi et même le chroniqueur contemporain, Guillaume de Newburgh, interprètent l'événement comme mauvais présage<sup>50</sup>. La décision pragmatique du roi Richard semble l'emporter sur certains signes divins venant du ciel. L'exemple contraire vient de la Moldavie d'Étienne le Grand (1457-1504). Ici, dans le contexte d'une longue guerre entre Moldaves et Ottomans, interrompue par des périodes de paix, Étienne consolide plusieurs châteaux en Moldavie. Dans la version moldavo-allemande de la chronique de la cour du voïvode, sous l'année 1483, on a consigné : « le troisième jour du mois de juin, le voïvode a commencé à construire un château dans le bourg de Roman. Et, le onzième jour du mois d'août, une pluie de sang s'est abattue sur le même château, et alors le voïvode a arrêté les travaux et en a abandonné la construction »<sup>51</sup> (n. t.). Les raisons de ces différences d'attitude des deux chefs politiques sont difficiles à expliquer, surtout quand leurs expériences sont médiatisées par l'interprétation des chroniqueurs.

Dans les chroniques médiévales, la pluie de sang est très souvent associée à des morts et à des batailles<sup>52</sup>. Ainsi, une terrible mortalité succéda

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<sup>50</sup> Guillaume de Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum...*, p. 500.

<sup>51</sup> *Cronica lui Ștefan cel Mare. Versiunea germană a lui Schedel*, éd. par Ion Const. Chițimia, Bucarest, Maison des Écoles, 1942, p. 48 : « In dem mened Junij 3 tag, hube der voyvoda an zu bauen eyn schloss an dem Romass marg, und in dem menet Augusti 11 tag regnet es blut auff das selbig schloss; do lyss der voyvoda von dem bauen ader mauer[n] ». Voir aussi *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, éd. par Petre P. Panaitescu, Bucarest, Édition de l'Académie, 1959, p. 35.

<sup>52</sup> Les historiens se demandent si de telles associations peuvent être considérées comme vraies (John S. P. Tatlock, « Some Mediaeval Cases... », p. 444-445; Paul Edward Dutton, « Observations on Early Medieval Weather in General... », p. 171-172). Mais, la notion de vérité du chercheur moderne est très différente de celle partagée par les intellectuels du Moyen Âge. Pour les chroniqueurs de l'époque médiévale, la vérité ne se confond pas avec la réalité, et la vérité historique devait avoir une signification profonde, didactique et morale. Loin de raconter de simples événements historiques, ils décrivaient des actes exemplaires ou significatifs, offrant des paraboles, des modèles à imiter ou, au contraire, à éviter, des leçons à prendre en compte, des faits qui pouvaient avoir un impact sur le cours de l'humanité et sur le salut de l'âme (pour une telle approche, voir Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles. The*

à une pluie de sang en Gaule, en 541, signale une source tardive<sup>53</sup>. Généralement, les chroniques associent une pluie de sang tombée en 786 à la mort de Saint Lull, le continuateur de l'activité de Boniface et l'archevêque de Mayence<sup>54</sup>. Une autre pluie de sang enregistrée le 6 mai 954 anticipe la mort du roi Louis IV, dit d'Outremer, qui a lieu au mois de septembre de la même année<sup>55</sup>. La mort de la reine Bérengère de Barcelone, reine de Léon, Galice et Castille, en 1149, a été suivie d'une pluie de sang (*lluvia de sangre*) qui est tombée sur « une partie du Portugal et sur les territoires des Maures »<sup>56</sup> (n. t.). La mort du noble Iohannes de Dol fut annoncée par une pluie de sang, en 1162. Deux ans plus tard, en 1164, une autre pluie de sang est associée à la mort de Robert, évêque de Chartres, et d'Hugues d'Amiens, archevêque de Rouen<sup>57</sup>. La pluie rouge qui est tombée en 1198 sur le château de Richard en Normandie, mentionnée ci-dessus, a été interprétée par Roger de Wendover comme « un possible avertissement que la mort du roi Richard aura lieu bientôt »<sup>58</sup> (n. t.). En 1270, la mort de la reine de Hongrie, Marie Lascarine, princesse byzantine auparavant, mariée au roi Béla IV, a été immédiatement suivie d'une pluie de sang, *in terra Zlesie circa Michalow*<sup>59</sup>; cette pluie rouge est tombée entre le Neisse et l'Oder pendant trois journées<sup>60</sup>. Une bataille entre les Francs et les Avars, en 787, est l'occasion d'une pluie sanglante<sup>61</sup>. De même, la défaite du roi Baudouin I<sup>er</sup> de Jérusalem par Mawdûd, atabeg de Mossoul, à l'été 1113, est suivie dans la chronique par une pluie de sang en Italie<sup>62</sup>. Par contre, en juin 1237, une pluie de sang qui a

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*Writing of History in Medieval England*, Londres, Hambledon Continuum, 2004, p. 1-20). De ce point de vue, la pluie de sang devient crédible et significative pour l'homme médiéval.

<sup>53</sup> *Rogeri de Wendover Chronica, sive Flores Historiarum*, vol. I, éd. par Henricus O. Coxe, Londres, Sumptibus Societatis, 1841, p. 73.

<sup>54</sup> *Annales Laurissenses Minores*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 1, 1826, p. 118; *Annales Wirzburgenses*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 2, 1829, p. 240; *Annales Ottenburani*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 5, 1844, p. 2; *Mariani Scotti Epitome*, éd. par H. Bresslau, MGH SS 13, 1881, p. 77.

<sup>55</sup> *Historia Francorum Senonensis*, éd. par Georg Waitz, MGH SS 9, 1851, p. 366.

<sup>56</sup> Juan de Mariana, *Historia general de España*, vol. IV, Valence, Oficina de Benito Monfort, 1788, p. 134. Voir également J. Eliot Hodgkin, « Rain of blood », *Notes and Queries*, 8-14, 1892, p. 283-284.

<sup>57</sup> *Roberti de Monte Cronica*, p. 512, 514.

<sup>58</sup> *Rogeri de Wendover Chronica...*, p. 128: « quo etiam tempore, idus Maii, pluit sanguis undatim super aedificantes turrim apud Andeliacum in Normannia, mortem fortasse regis Richardi denuntians in brevi futuram ».

<sup>59</sup> *Annales Polonorum*, éd. par Wilhelm Arndt, MGH SS 19, 1866, p. 638.

<sup>60</sup> Rudolf Brázdil, Oldřich Kotyza, *History of Weather and Climate...*, p. 107.

<sup>61</sup> *Sigeberti Chronica*, p. 335.

<sup>62</sup> *Annales Floreffienses*, éd. par Ludwig Conrad Bethmann, MGH SS 16, 1859, p. 623.

lieu en Autriche précède les guerres de duc Frédéric II d'Autriche<sup>63</sup>. Dans les versions russes ultérieures d'un compte rendu contemporain de la conquête ottomane de Constantinople en 1453, on relate qu'une flamme, symbolisant la protection de la ville par Dieu, monte vers le ciel depuis le dôme de l'église Sainte-Sophie et disparaît. Puis, une pluie de sang est décrite, qui anticipe la conquête de la ville<sup>64</sup>. Ces exemples suffisent à prouver les associations principales que les gens du Moyen Âge faisaient quand une pluie de sang tombait : la mort et la guerre.

## **L'évolution du discours savant sur la pluie de sang**

Au début du Moyen Âge, on retrouve des cas de pluies de sang en particulier dans les chroniques historiques, mais, comme nous l'avons déjà affirmé, c'est au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle que l'on voit apparaître en Occident une explication sur le phénomène de la pluie rouge, explication qu'on peut appeler rationnelle ou scientifique pour le contexte culturel et pour les techniques d'investigation limitées de l'époque. Nous arrivons ainsi à l'œuvre *De philosophia mundi*, conservée en deux versions principales<sup>65</sup> et écrite dans les années 1120-1130<sup>66</sup> par Guillaume de Conches<sup>67</sup>, philosophe

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<sup>63</sup> *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium Chronicon*, p. 942. Voir aussi la discussion du cas bien documenté de la pluie de sang tombée en juin 1027 en Aquitaine (Paul Edward Dutton, « Observations on Early Medieval Weather in General... », p. 177-179).

<sup>64</sup> George P. Majeska, « Nestor-Iskander », in Joseph L. Wiczyński (dir.), *The Modern encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet history*, vol. 24, Cambridge, Academic International Press, 1981, p. 167-168.

<sup>65</sup> Les deux versions ont été initialement publiées sous les noms d'autres auteurs. Il existe une version plus longue (*De philosophia mundi*, PL, t. 172, éd. par J.-P. Migne, p. 39-102) et une version plus courte (*Peri Didaxeon sive Elementorum philosophiae libri quatuor*, PL, t. 90, éd. par J.-P. Migne, p. 1127-1178).

<sup>66</sup> On ne sait pas quand Guillaume de Conches a écrit cet ouvrage. Voir quelques suggestions ici: André Vernet, « Un remaniement de la *Philosophia* de Guillaume de Conches », *Scriptorium*, 1-2, 1946, p. 244 (« entre 1125 et 1135 environ »); Ernest Wickersheimer, *Dictionnaire biographique des médecins en France au Moyen Âge*, vol. I, Genève, Éd. Droz, 1979, p. 103-104 (« entre 1125 et 1135 »); Benoît Patar, *Dictionnaire des philosophes médiévaux*, Montréal, Les Éditions Fides, 2006, p. 177 (« vers 1120 »); Franck Collin, *Guillaume de Conches. Philosophia mundi, Traduction et commentaire. Philosophia Mundi*, 2009, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-03167209/>, « c. 1120 », consulté le 19.04.2021; Reinhold Rieger, « William of Conches », in Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning†, Bernd Janowski et Eberhard Jüngel (dir.), *Religion Past and Present. Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, Leyde-Boston, Brill, 2011, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888\\_rpp\\_SIM\\_224261](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_224261), « c. 1124 », consulté le 19.04.2021.

<sup>67</sup> Pour Guillaume en tant que philosophe de la nature, voir Dorothy Elford, « William of Conches », in Peter Dronke (dir.), *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*,

français qui vécut probablement entre 1080 et 1154. Le septième chapitre du troisième livre a un titre significatif pour la vision, à la fois religieuse et naturaliste, que l'auteur y a développée : « Que, avant la fin du monde, des gouttes de sang tomberont, ou, comme on dit, il pleut avec du sang » (n. t.) (*Quod ante finem mundi guttae sanguinis cadent, vel quare sanguis dicatur pluere*). La référence au passage du livre de l'Apocalypse, cité ci-dessus, est évidente dans ce cas. Selon Guillaume, en raison d'une chaleur excessive, l'eau de pluie se réchauffe et s'épaissit, devenant plus visqueuse et semblable au sang, rouge et dense (*Haec pluvia quandoque plus solito spissata, ex nimio calore incensa, fit ad modum sanguinis, rubea et spissa*). Si la chaleur dans les nuages augmente encore plus, la couleur de la pluie a tendance à s'assombrir, passant du rouge (*rubeum ostendit colorem*) au violet ou au noir (*purpureum vel nigrum*).

L'interprétation religieuse proposée par l'auteur, précisément dans le paragraphe consacré à la pluie rouge, est encore plus importante. Après avoir dit que les philosophes ne connaissent pas la cause naturelle de ce phénomène, Guillaume déclare qu'il est également vrai qu'avant la fin du monde, des gouttes de vrai sang tomberont du ciel (*veri simile est dictum esse quod ante finem hujus mundi guttae sanguinis cadent*). Il cite à cet égard le Psaume 50:3 : « Il vient, notre Dieu, il ne reste pas en silence ; Devant lui est un feu dévorant » (*Deus noster manifeste veniet, Deus noster et non silebit. Ignis in conspectu ejus exardescet*), et un verset de *Missa pro defunctis* : « Il reviendra pour juger les vivants et les morts, et le monde par le feu » (*Qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos, et saeculum per ignem*), rappelant ainsi le Jugement Dernier. Il convient de noter que, pour un érudit du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'explication naturaliste de la pluie de sang n'exclut pas les connotations et les références religieuses apocalyptiques. En même temps, Guillaume de Conches comprend la pluie de sang comme ayant des causes naturelles et non divines, mais il tient à signaler immédiatement qu'un phénomène similaire – cette fois-ci une pluie de sang et de feu envoyée par Dieu – tombera avant la fin des temps, pour annoncer le Jugement Dernier. Dans cette perspective, le discours scolastique sur le monde physique environnant tente d'intégrer les explications naturalistes dans un univers familier et agréable à l'homme médiéval, régi non par des lois naturelles, mais par Dieu.

Bien que, dans cet ouvrage, Guillaume cite Aristote (il affirme par exemple *sed dicet hoc quod Aristoteles ait* : « *Impossibile est ignem non calere* »), le philosophe français de la première moitié du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle ne

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New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 308-327; « William of Conches », in F. L. Cross et E. A. Livingstone (dir.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, troisième édition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 1744.

pouvait pas connaître les théories du grand penseur de l'Antiquité<sup>68</sup> énoncées dans *De Generatione et Corruptione* et dans *Meteorologica*, œuvres traduites d'abord en latin par Burgondio de Pise et Gérard de Crémone dans la seconde moitié du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>69</sup>. Et puis, chez Aristote, la pluie est causée par le refroidissement des vapeurs, présentes dans l'air sous forme de nuages, refroidissement qui déclenche la pluie, tandis que Guillaume compte sur le chauffage excessif de l'eau, phénomène qui aurait provoqué, dans la vision aristotélicienne, l'évaporation de l'humidité de la terre et sa montée dans l'air<sup>70</sup>.

Pendant la seconde moitié du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle et au siècle suivant, cette théorie s'est répandue en Occident dans plusieurs cercles de savants, puisque la même explication offerte par Guillaume apparaît dans une série d'encyclopédies scolastiques du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. On pourrait citer à cet égard le chapitre *De diversis pluviarum causis* du traité *Speculum Naturale* (partie du *Speculum maius*) de Vincent de Beauvais<sup>71</sup>, ou le chapitre *De pluvia* du traité

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<sup>68</sup> Voir aussi Richard C. Dales, « The Understanding of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy by the Early Scholastics », in Nancy van Deusen (dir.), *The Intellectual Climate of the Early University. Essays in Honor of Otto Gründler*, Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, 1997, p. 141-150, ici 142; Richard Clark Dales, « Some reflections on the Paris Condemnations of March 7, 1277 », in Nancy van Deusen (dir.), *Issues in Medieval Philosophy. Essays in Honor of Richard C. Dales*, Ottawa, Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2001, p. 145-151, ici p. 146; Charlotte Gross, « Time and Nature in Twelfth-century Thought: William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres, and the 'New Science' », in Robert M. Stein et Sandra Pierson Prior (dir.), *Reading Medieval Culture. Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hanning*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, p. 89-110, ici 91.

<sup>69</sup> F. E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus. The Oriental Translations and Commentaries of the Aristotelian Corpus*, Leyde, Brill, 1968, p. 37-40; O. Godart, « Aristote et la météorologie au Moyen Âge », *Ciel et Terre*, 105, 1989, p. 79-81; Richard J. Durling, « The Anonymous Translation of Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione* (Translatio Vetus) », *Traditio*, 49, 1994, p. 320-330; *Aristotle's Meteorology and its reception in the Arab world*, avec une édition et une traduction du Traité d'Ibn Suwār sur les phénomènes météorologiques et du commentaire d'Ibn Bājja sur la météorologie, par Paul Lettinck, Leyde-Boston-Cologne, Brill, 1999, p. viii, 4; *Aristotle's Meteorology in the Arabico-Latin Tradition*, une édition critique des textes, avec introduction et indices par Pieter L. Schoonheim, Leyde-Boston-Cologne, Brill, 2000, p. xvii. Voir aussi la théorie opposée chez Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Aristote au Mont-Saint-Michel. Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2008, p. 103-124, avec la réponse: Louis-Jacques Bataillon, « Sur Aristote et le Mont-Saint-Michel. Notes de lecture », *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 92-2, 2008, p. 329-334.

<sup>70</sup> Aristote, *Météorologiques*, Tome I (Livres I-II), Texte établi et traduit par Pierre Louis, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1982, p. 30-32, 74.

<sup>71</sup> Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum naturale Vincentii*, éd. par Hermannus Liechtenstein, Venise, 1494, p. 43.



*De proprietatibus rerum* de Barthélemy l'Anglais<sup>72</sup>. La diffusion progressive de la théorie de Guillaume dans les milieux scolaires d'Europe occidentale est également suggérée par un détail lexical des textes. Dans *De philosophia mundi*, Guillaume a avoué que les autres philosophes ne connaissaient pas les causes réelles du phénomène, croyant naïvement que du vrai sang tombait sous forme de pluie (*rerum causam ignorantes philosophorum dicunt sanguinem pluere*), tandis qu'un siècle et demi plus tard, dans l'encyclopédie de Barthélemy mentionnée ci-dessus, ceux qui ignorent l'explication naturaliste de la pluie de sang n'étaient plus des philosophes de l'époque ou des personnes engagées dans l'étude de la physique (*physica*), mais des gens ordinaires (*vulgus*) ou, comme le souligne la traduction médiévale du livre, « le rude peuple »<sup>73</sup>. Ce changement de nuance nous montre, d'une part, qu'au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Guillaume fut l'un des premiers philosophes naturalistes à énoncer cette théorie, et, d'autre part, qu'un siècle plus tard cette explication fut reconnue comme valable par un certain nombre de penseurs. Barthélemy ne reconnaît pourtant pas que son prédécesseur ait formulé cette explication, mais Aristote lui-même (*ut dicit Aristo*), qui, dans les œuvres parvenues jusqu'à nous, n'a rien dit sur le phénomène de la pluie de sang. Si celle-ci est une référence de Barthélemy à un commentaire médiéval sur le livre *Meteorologica* d'Aristote, ou à une version médiévale de l'œuvre apocryphe, composite et écrite par plusieurs auteurs à différentes époques, intitulée *Problemata* et attribuée par tradition à Aristote<sup>74</sup>, nous ne le savons pas. En tout cas, l'originalité de l'explication médiévale semble être, encore une fois, enveloppée dans un emballage convenable d'autorité conférée par les sources anciennes.

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<sup>72</sup> Barthélemy l'Anglais, *De proprietatibus rerum*, éd. par Nicolaus Philippi et Marcus Reinhart, Lyons, 1480, liber XI, cap. VII.

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*, *Le grand propriétaire de toutes choses*, éd. par Jean Longis, Paris, 1556, p. xcix.

<sup>74</sup> Voir les articles recueillis dans Pieter De Leemans et Michèle Goyens (dir.), *Aristotle's Problemata in Different Times and Tongues*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 2006. À notre connaissance, si les éditions critiques modernes de *Problemata* ne spécifient rien sur la pluie de sang, dans un petit livre publié à Londres en 1725 et intitulé *Aristotle's New Book of Problems, Set Forth by Way of Question and Answer*, la sixième édition, aux p. 142-143, la question suivante est ajoutée : *What is the cause of monstrous and prodigious Rains, out of the ordinary Course of Nature, as raining Spiders, Fish, Flesh, Frogs, Milk, Blood, Wheat, Wool, Brickbats, Iron, Quicksilver, and the like, which History makes mention to have been many ?* Et la réponse proposée, qui n'a rien à voir avec la philosophie d'Aristote, prétend que les vapeurs, qui sont aspirées dans l'air et mélangées avec certaines substances dans l'atmosphère, emportent avec elles un certain type de germe ou putréfaction qui génère des créatures et choses à l'aide de la chaleur et de l'humidité. Voir aussi H. Howard Frisinger, *The History of Meteorology to 1800*, Boston, American Meteorological Society, 1983, p. 1-46.

Dans l'Empire byzantin, à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> et au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'historien Georges Pachymérès, si attentif au mouvement des étoiles et aux signes du ciel, décrit ainsi une pluie de sang tombée en mai 1283 aux alentours de Constantinople, à une époque où de nombreux changements avaient lieu quant aux évêques de l'Église : « au cours du mois de mai, lorsqu'enfin tous les arbres et tout ce qui sort de terre se furent couverts de feuilles, des gouttes de sang tombèrent du ciel : celles qui tombaient par terre, une fois enrobées de terre, n'en donnaient la sensation à personne, mais celles qui se répandaient sur les feuilles, les pierres ou les vêtements, en souillant ce qui les recevait, indiquaient de manière précise leur nature. Je n'ai donc pas une conviction assez forte pour affirmer sans hésitation que ce prodige se produisit à cause des événements, mais il ne paraît pas déplacé, à mon avis, qu'en relatant l'histoire je rapporte aussi ce prodige, qu'il se soit produit à cause de ces événements ou à cause d'autres événements »<sup>75</sup>. En d'autres termes, Pachymérès a observé personnellement le phénomène de la pluie de sang dans la nature, mais il n'était pas entièrement convaincu qu'il y ait un lien direct entre la pluie de sang et le changement des évêques, que la pluie de sang soit une conséquence d'événements passés et non une anticipation d'événements futurs; en fait, Pachymérès hésitait quelque peu sur la décision d'inclure ce détail dans sa chronique. Il est plausible que cette attitude interrogative envers les phénomènes naturels ait été influencée par le contact avec les œuvres d'Aristote, parce que nous savons que Pachymérès a écrit un commentaire sur *Meteorologica*, où l'on retrouve la méticulosité avec laquelle il observe le monde physique<sup>76</sup>.

Au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, en Occident, on énonce d'autres opinions sur la pluie de sang. Par exemple, le philosophe et théologien Konrad von Megenberg considère, dans son *Livre de la Nature* (*Das Buch der Natur*), que la pluie rouge est le résultat d'un autre phénomène naturel, mais dans lequel l'homme peut jouer un rôle appréciable : quand beaucoup de fumée se lève et se répand dans l'atmosphère suite aux incendies, elle se combine avec l'air

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<sup>75</sup> Georges Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, Tome III (Livres VII-IX), édition critique, traduction française et notes par Albert Failler, Paris, Institut français d'études byzantines, 1999, p. 65-66.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*, *Philosophia. Commentary in Aristotle's Meteorologica*, éd. par Ioannis Telelis, Athéna, Akademia Athenon, 2012. Voir aussi Ioannis Telelis, « Τεχνικὸς διδάσκαλος: Georgios Pachymeres as Paraphrast of Aristotelian Meteorology », in Andrea Cuomo et Erich Trapp (dir.), *Toward a Historical Sociolinguistic Poetics of Medieval Greek*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, p. 119-142; *Id.*, « Meteorology and Physics in Byzantium », in Stavros Lazaris (dir.), *A Companion to Byzantine Science*, Leyde-Boston, Brill, 2020, p. 177-201. Deux siècles plus tôt, au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle, Michel Psellos a témoigné que à Constantinople il y avait des astronomes qui prédisaient le cours de la vie humaine sur la base d'observations du mouvement des étoiles (Michel Psellos, *Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976-1077)*, Tome I, Texte établi et traduit par Émile Renauld, Paris, Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1926, p. 98).

humide, et l'eau de la pluie acquiert ainsi une couleur rouge<sup>77</sup>. Dans l'Europe de la Renaissance et du Baroque, plus précisément aux XV<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles, les explications possibles de la pluie de sang se diversifient considérablement. Paracelse, le célèbre médecin et philosophe de la nature, pensait que la pluie rouge était causée par le soufre des étoiles, qui prenait une couleur rouge en contact avec la chaleur. Mais, pour Paracelse, cette pluie était exclusivement une certaine substance libérée par les étoiles<sup>78</sup>. La tradition galéno-hippocratique reste influente à l'époque prémoderne : Johannes Garcaeus, physicien et astrologue luthérien allemand, écrit dans son traité de météorologie publié en 1568 que la pluie de sang est la pluie bouillie par le soleil et il compare cette pluie à l'urine rouge d'un homme atteint de fièvre<sup>79</sup>. En 1608, Peiresc, déjà mentionné, établit que « les prétendues gouttes de sang étoient des gouttes de liqueur déposées par des papillons »<sup>80</sup>. Daniel Sennert, professeur de médecine à Wittenberg au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, admet que, lorsqu'il pleut avec du lait ou avec du sang, cela pourrait être un phénomène surnaturel, sinon des substances naturelles créées dans l'atmosphère, similaires au lait ou au sang. La pluie violette, qui est tombée à Bruxelles en 1646, a été expliquée à l'époque par l'idée de certaines réactions chimiques aériennes<sup>81</sup>. Pour d'autres, comme Niccolo Cabeo, la couleur rouge de la pluie était due à une certaine *humor aliquis rubeus et purpureus*, qui est formée dans l'atmosphère<sup>82</sup>.

Cependant, l'opinion la plus répandue du point de vue social jusqu'à l'époque moderne est restée l'origine divine de ce phénomène. En 1879, dans la forêt de Windsor, en Angleterre, à certains endroits, une pluie jaune a causé un tel sentiment de peur que les gens hésitaient à aller se coucher,

<sup>77</sup> *Das Buch der Natur von Konrad von Megenberg. Die erste Naturgeschichte in deutscher Sprache*, éd. par Franz Pfeiffer, Stuttgart, Verlag von Karl Aue, 1861, p. 81-83; *Konrad von Megenberg, das « Buch der Natur »*, vol. II, *Kritischer Text nach den Handschriften*, éd. par Robert Luff et Georg Steer, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2003, p. 108-110; Christian Rohr, « Macht der Sterne... », p. 377-380.

<sup>78</sup> Hugh D. Crone, *Paracelsus. The Man who Defied Medicine*, Melbourne, Albarello Press, 2004, p. 147-148.

<sup>79</sup> Johannes Garcaeus, *Meteorologia*, Witeberga, Excudebat Johan et C. Wertel, 1568, p. 100: « Sanguinea pluvit fit, vel ex vaporibus cruentatis, qui attolluntur virtute Solis & stellarum, vel ex rubricatis locis aquosis exhauriuntur, vel cum calor Solis ita percoquit vaporem, ut rubescat, sicut urina percocta coloratur, & febricula laborantibus, urina est rubicundior ».

<sup>80</sup> R. A. F. de Réaumur, *Mémoires pour servir...*, p. 637-639.

<sup>81</sup> Craig Martin, *Renaissance Meteorology. Pomponazzi to Descartes*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011, p. 57, 80, 120. Voir également, pour le contexte, Anne Lawrence-Mathers, *Medieval Meteorology. Forecasting the Weather from Aristotle to the Almanac*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 1-21.

<sup>82</sup> Niccolò Cabeo, *Commentaria in libros Meteorologicorum*, Rome, Corbelletti, 1646, p. 282.

pensant que le jour du Jugement dernier était imminente<sup>83</sup>. Après une abondante pluie rouge à Naples et à Palerme, en 1901, qui a couvert les rues d'une matière rouge, les habitants étaient effrayés<sup>84</sup>. Pendant très longtemps, du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le discours savant sur la pluie de sang est resté hésitant, incertain et peu connu dans d'autres milieux sociaux que celui d'origine, de sorte que la volonté de Dieu était le premier aspect auquel la plupart des gens pensaient face à une pluie colorée<sup>85</sup>.

## **La sensibilité de l'homme médiéval et la couleur rouge**

Le fait que le rouge soit considéré comme une couleur chaude au Moyen Âge rapproche encore plus les associations symboliques de cette couleur avec le sang et le feu. Quand une pluie de sang est représentée ou décrite, l'imaginaire médiéval mobilise souvent les quatre éléments primaires, l'air, le feu, la terre, l'eau, soulignant ainsi la symbolique du phénomène : *sanguis e coelo terraque profluxit*, ou, selon certaines chroniques, *ex aere pluit sanguinem*<sup>86</sup>. Dieu transforme l'eau de pluie ordinaire en sang ou en feu qui tombe ensuite du ciel sur la terre. Comme la pluie, la couleur rouge est ambivalente, ayant des connotations positives et négatives culturellement associées. En général, la couleur rouge des pluies de sang met plutôt l'accent sur les aspects négatifs : la couleur de la colère et de la justice divine, la violence, la punition, le péché, la couleur d'une puissance effrayante, mais aussi le rouge du feu, le rouge du danger, le rouge du mal, le rouge de la blessure, le rouge du sang impur, qui étouffe, détruit ou contamine, ou, comme nous le verrons à la Renaissance, le sang le plus pur et le meilleur, qui sauve l'humanité, le sang du Christ dans la métaphore de la pluie de sang. La couleur rouge et la pluie de sang anticipent généralement un événement malheureux et triste, comme la mort d'un homme, ou carrément atroce et déplorable, comme une bataille. La couleur qui avertit du danger est

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<sup>83</sup> P. Herbert Carpenter, « Pine-Pollen mistaken for Flowers of Sulphur », *Nature*, 20-504, 1879, p. 195-196.

<sup>84</sup> J. W. Judd, « The Recent 'Blood Rains' », *Nature*, 63-1639, 1901, p. 514.

<sup>85</sup> Christian Gottfried Ehrenberg (1795-1876), zoologiste et naturaliste allemand, est le premier de l'ère moderne à étudier systématiquement le phénomène de la pluie de sang. Ehrenberg affirme que certaines espèces d'algues microscopiques et la poussière, occasionnellement transportée par les vents, sont responsables de la coloration de l'eau (C. G. Ehrenberg, *Passat-Staub und Blut-Regen: ein Grosses organisches unsichtbares Wirken und Leben in der Atmosphäre*, Berlin, Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1849, p. 127-192). Voir aussi Ludwig Friedrich Kaemtz, *Cours complet de météorologie*, Traduit et annoté par Ch. Martins, Paris, Delahays, 1858, p. 434.

<sup>86</sup> *Annales Weissemburgenses* et *Annales Lamberti*, éd. par Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 3, 1839, p. 39; *Annales Sanctae Columbae Senonensis*, p. 105.

mise en rapport avec ce phénomène météorologique rare et spectaculaire, qui prédit également un danger, consolidant ainsi ses significations générales. En revanche, l'imaginaire médiéval met en opposition le rouge et le blanc, une paire de couleurs fort contrastées<sup>87</sup>. La même chose se produit avec la pluie de sang, qui est d'abord remarquée par les gens sur des surfaces claires, peut-être blanches, comme certains vêtements. Ce fort contraste fonctionnait comme suit : le rouge, la couleur du sang, de la puissance et de la passion, tombait sur un fond blanc, qui était, selon Dante, la couleur la plus simple et la moins visible (*nam visibiles magis et minus dicuntur secundum quod accedunt vel recedunt ab albo (...) et simplicissimus color, qui albus est*)<sup>88</sup>. Par conséquent, le blanc, la couleur la plus forte et la plus visible, est mis en contraste culturellement avec le rouge, sa couleur opposée.

Au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, en Europe centrale, le motif de la pluie de sang se trouve assez souvent dans les manuscrits allemands conservés. Un psautier copié et décoré par Johannes Waltpurger en 1485, probablement à Augsbourg, est aujourd'hui conservé à Bâle. Sur le fol. 2r, la végétation luxuriante en bordure est arrosée d'une pluie de sang qui tombe en grosses gouttes<sup>89</sup>. Le *Liber chronicarum* de Hartmann Schedel, une chronique universelle richement illustrée de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, contient pas moins que neuf fois des représentations de pluies de sang, construites à partir du modèle biblique déjà consacré dans l'imaginaire collectif : le ciel couvert de nuages, le sang combiné au feu, l'abondance et la puissance des pluies acides. Dans de nombreux cas dans cet ouvrage, le texte accompagnant les miniatures décrit des pluies de sang de l'Antiquité romaine ou du Moyen Âge<sup>90</sup>. Vu que l'éclairage médiéval dépendait d'une flamme en mouvement qui projetait une lumière tremblante sur le support d'écriture, la représentation des gouttelettes de sang tombées du ciel a été perçue par l'œil médiéval dans son dynamisme et son mouvement, intensifiant ainsi l'impact visuel ressenti par le spectateur.

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<sup>87</sup> Pour plus de détails sur l'histoire du rouge, voir Michel Pastoureau, *Rouge: histoire d'une couleur*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2016, p. 12-90; *Id.*, *Une histoire symbolique du Moyen Âge occidental*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2004, p. 176-179, 181-187, 197-209, 225-226, 261-264, 282-284; Elena Phipps, *Cochineal Red. The Art History of a Color*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010, p. 3-46.

<sup>88</sup> Dante, *De l'éloquence vulgaire*, traduit du latin par Anne Grondeux, Ruedi Imbach et Irène Rosier-Catach, Paris, Fayard, 2011, premier livre (16.2 et 5).

<sup>89</sup> Le manuscrit est conservé à Bâle, Universitätsbibliothek, AN IV 6, f. 2r, <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/searchresult/list/one/ubb/AN-IV-0006>, consulté le 19.04.2021.

<sup>90</sup> Hartmann Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum*, Nuremberg, chez Anton Koberger, 1493, fol. 29, 82, 146, 149, 151, 171, 198, 208, <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PR-INC-00000-A-00007-00002-00888/2>, consulté le 19.04.2021.

## La pluie de sang à Rome en 1223

Ajoutons quelques mots sur l'une des pluies de sang les plus célèbres et les plus passionnantes de tout le Moyen Âge européen. En effet, c'est au début du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle que remonte le premier témoignage écrit d'une observation scientifique au sujet de la pluie de sang qui fasse appel à un raisonnement logique et expérimental cette fois-ci. Les nouvelles sur la pluie rouge tombée à Rome, en 1223, se sont non seulement propagées presque partout en Europe occidentale, mais elles ont contribué également à la diffusion de la principale explication scientifique de ce phénomène, bien que ce dernier ait été oublié assez rapidement. Les sources font référence à cette pluie en utilisant les termes suivants : *sabulum minutum*, *terra rubea pluit*, ou *pluit terra sanguinea*<sup>91</sup>. Un moine anonyme de l'abbaye cistercienne anglaise de Coggeshall, dans l'Essex, note dans la chronique de l'abbaye que, pendant une journée entière, en 1223, plusieurs régions d'Italie ont été arrosées par une pluie rouge<sup>92</sup>. Certains de ceux qui ont observé le phénomène se sont rendu compte que ce qui était tombé du ciel était en réalité une sorte de sable fin et rouge qui, une fois mélangé avec de l'eau, prenait l'apparence du sang. Il est possible que le moine d'Essex ait pris connaissance de ce qui se passait en Italie au sujet de cette pluie rouge grâce aux échantillons de sable fin rougeâtre qui ont été collectés et envoyés dans plusieurs régions d'Europe, les nouvelles passant à cette occasion en Angleterre. De la même manière, l'information est probablement arrivée dans la région bavaroise, de sorte que les moines du monastère de Klosterneuburg ont pu la relater dans les annales du cloître. L'épisode du moine anglais, qui mentionne l'explication d'une pluie rouge en Italie, prouve l'existence de réseaux d'échanges des

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<sup>91</sup> *Ex Radulfi abbatis Coggeshalensis Historia Anglicana*, éd. par Reinhold Pauli, MGH SS 27, 1885, p. 358; *Continuatio Claustro-neoburgensis Secunda* et *Continuatio Claustro-neoburgensis Tertia*, éd. par W. Wattenbach, MGH SS 9, 1851, p. 623, 636: « Roma terra rubea pluit per diem integrum et noctem »; *Ex Mathei Parisiensis Historia Anglorum*, éd. par Felix Liebermann, MGH SS 28, 1888, p. 400: « Eodem que Rome pluit terra sanguinea per tres dies, admirantibus, immo pocius obstupentibus, qui hec non previderunt, universis »; *Rogeri de Wendover Chronica, sive Flores Historiarum*, éd. par Henricus O. Coxe, vol. IV, Londres, Sumptibus Societatis, 1842, p. 85: « Eodem anno Romae pluit terra sanguinea per tres dies, admirantibus multis ».

<sup>92</sup> *Ex Radulfi abbatis Coggeshalensis Historia Anglicana*, p. 358: « Per diem integrum in Italia in plerisque locis sabulum minutum e nubibus pluendo cecidit, quod collectum et in aqua missum speciem sanguinis pretendebat atque in pluribus locis pro admiratione deportatum est, quod effusionem humani sanguinis portendere dicunt ». Voir aussi Milène Wegmann, « Die 'Entdeckung der Natur' in der monastischen Historiographie des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts », in Peter Dilg (dir.), *Natur im Mittelalter*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2003, p. 280-293, plus précisément aux p. 290-292.

connaissances et d'expériences scientifiques dans le christianisme occidental au début du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

## **La pluie de sang devient un motif artistique dans la littérature du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle**

Dans son livre *Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology*, S. K. Heninger a souligné le rôle des observations météorologiques pour la construction des tropes et des métaphores dans la littérature anglaise du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>93</sup>. Ces évolutions doivent, à notre sens, être rattachées à la sensibilité artistique à l'égard de la nature que la Renaissance manifeste consciemment dans l'art. Pour notre part, les exemples suivants tirés de la littérature anglaise, française ou italienne prouvent que la pluie de sang est devenue aussi un motif littéraire récurrent dans les œuvres de cette époque. Tel est le cas dans le drame historique *Richard II*, écrit vers 1595 par Shakespeare, où l'usurpateur et l'envahisseur Henry Bolingbroke, duc de Hereford et le futur roi Henri IV, demande au roi légitime de lui remettre les titres de noblesse et les possessions confisquées, sinon – et Bolingbroke continue sur un ton menaçant –, « sinon, je ferai usage de tous les avantages de mes forces, et j'abattrai la poussière de l'été sous les averses de sang qui pleuvront des blessures d'Anglais massacrés »<sup>94</sup>. Un autre exemple vient de la tragédie *Julius Caesar*, mise en scène en 1599, où les jeux de coulisses des conspirateurs sont accompagnés par une variété de mauvais augures et présages. Au milieu d'une nuit orageuse, Calphurnia, la femme de César, lui décrit les signes qui l'inquiètent : « Une lionne a mis bas dans les rues ; les tombeaux se sont ouverts et ont baillé leurs morts ; de furieux guerriers de feu qui combattaient dans les nuages, en rangs, en escadrons, et selon toutes les formes de la guerre, ont fait pleuvoir du sang sur le Capitole ; le bruit de la bataille retentissait dans l'air »<sup>95</sup>. Pour Shakespeare, comme dans le cas des

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<sup>93</sup> S. K. Heninger, *A Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology, with Particular Reference to Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1960, p. 153-214.

<sup>94</sup> *Œuvres complètes de Shakespeare*, Tome II, traduites par Émile Montégut, nouvelle édition, Paris, Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1866, p. 79; *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second* (Acte III, Scène III), in W. J. Craig (dir.), *Shakespeare Complete Works*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 397: « If not, I'll use the advantage of my power, // And lay the summer's dust with showers of blood// Rain'd from the wounds of slaughter'd Englishmen ».

<sup>95</sup> *Œuvres complètes de Shakespeare*, Tome III, traduites par Émile Montégut, nouvelle édition, Paris, Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1866, p. 200-202; *Julius Caesar* (Acte II, Scène II), in W. J. Craig (dir.), *Shakespeare Complete Works*, p. 828-829: « A lioness hath whelped in the streets; // And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead; // Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds, // In ranks and squadrons and

chroniqueurs médiévaux, la pluie de sang signifie donc une préfiguration de la guerre et des bouleversements politiques, de la mort et des effusions de sang. Le poète et dramaturge Christopher Marlowe se sert de ce motif de la même manière dans la pièce *Tamburlaine*<sup>96</sup>.

Traversant la Manche, on peut citer un beau poème de Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, intitulé *L'océan recueille les corps des martyrs* : « Ainsy la mer alloit, faisoit changer de course// Des gros fleuves amont vers la coupable source,// D'où sortoit par leurs bords un deluge de sang// (...) Le Soleil, qui avoit mis un espais nuage// Entre le vilain meurtre et son plaisant visage,// Ores de chauds rayons exhale à soy le sang,// Qu'il faut qu'en rouge pluie il renvoye à son rang »<sup>97</sup>. La méditation sur la condition humaine que d'Aubigné propose est chargée du point de vue chromatique de tons et d'images contrastés blancs (« son poil tout blanc », « l'océan, au chef blanc », « les Anges de lumière », « l'eau rid en mille rais ») et rouges (« ensanglanta sa main », « sa peau rougie », « un deluge de sang », « précieux rubis », « le sang meurtry », « guerre », « le soleil », « chauds rayons », « en rouge pluie », « le sang »), et le motif de l'eau (« l'océan », « les fleuves », « les ondes font les vents, comme les vents les ondes », « l'eau de l'eau est contente », « flots », « la mer ») et du vent (« un contraste de vents », « les vapeurs », « l'air soit content de l'air ») acquiert une signification purifiante, mettant l'accent sur la condition temporelle de l'homme, ainsi que sur sa possibilité de s'intégrer dans la création divine éternelle. Là aussi, nous retrouvons le même jeu entre le rouge et le blanc.

Un dernier exemple vient d'Italie. Dans un texte religieux publié à Rome en 1573 et intitulé *Oratione della Coronatione di Spine*, le visage du Christ, sur la tête duquel était placée une couronne d'épines, est décrit dans les termes suivants : « Je vois s'assombrir la lumière de ce front, et ces yeux sereins, je les vois aveugler par la pluie de ton sang. Je vois les gouttes de sang couler de sa tête, qui descendent sur le visage divin, tachent sa beauté »<sup>98</sup> (n. t.). Ainsi, à la Renaissance, la pluie de sang est invoquée comme signe

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right form of war,// Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;// The noise of battle hurtled in the air ».

<sup>96</sup> S. K. Heninger, *A Handbook of Renaissance...*, p. 176: « Thy victories are growne so violent,// That shortly heaven, fild with the meteors// Of blood and fire thy tyrannies have made,// Will poure down blood and fire on thy head:// Whose scalding drops wil pierce thy seething braines,// And with our bloods, revenge our bloods on thee ».

<sup>97</sup> Agrippa d'Aubigné, *L'océan recueille les corps des martyrs*, in Georges Pellissier (dir.), *Morceaux choisis des Poètes du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Marot, Ronsard, Du Bellay, d'Aubigné, Régnier*, Paris, Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1897, p. 279-282. Dans cette édition, dans les notes, on affirme que « en rouge pluie – de Thou et d'Aubigné rapportent qu'il y eut des pluies de sang en 1570 et 1575 ».

<sup>98</sup> *Oratione della Coronatione di Spine*, en *Rosario della sacratiss: Vergine Maria madre di Dio nostra signora*, Roma, 1573, p. 126: « Veggo oscurata la luce di questa fronte, e questi sereni occhi cecati con la pioggia del tuo sangue. Veggo le gocce del



qui anticipe la mort et la guerre, ou qui symbolise les blessures subies pendant la guerre, mais en même temps, elle devient une métaphore pour exprimer la forte souffrance corporelle et le sang le plus pur, celui du Christ.

## Recueils de la Renaissance sur *prodigia*

Depuis l'Antiquité classique jusqu'aux temps modernes, le mot latin *prodigium* a désigné un miracle, un signe merveilleux, un augure, une préfiguration ou un signe prophétique, un phénomène censé prédire l'avenir ou annoncer des changements majeurs. Utilisé exactement avec la même signification, ce mot latin est également employé dans le vocabulaire médiéval des chroniques, où la pluie de sang était considérée comme un prodige. Toutefois, il faut attendre l'époque de la Renaissance pour que des collections de tels prodiges soient publiées. Nous avons un modèle ancien pour ce type de littérature, influent au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle : dans l'Antiquité tardive, l'écrivain et le compilateur Julius Obsequens réunit dans son œuvre *Prodigiorum liber* des prodiges compilés à partir de sources romaines qui datent du III<sup>e</sup> siècle avant Jésus jusqu'à l'époque d'Auguste (environ 249-12 avant Jésus-Christ). Pourtant, la principale source d'information de Julius Obsequens est l'ouvrage *Ab Urbe Condita* de Tite-Live. Au Moyen Âge, ce livre ne circule pas, seuls quelques manuscrits de l'œuvre survivant dans la péninsule italienne jusqu'à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>99</sup>. L'intérêt pour ce travail se manifeste à nouveau en 1508, quand la compilation a été imprimée pour la première fois par l'humaniste et libraire italien Alde Manuce. À la base de cette édition se trouvait probablement le seul manuscrit conservé du Moyen Âge, qui avait appartenu à Giovanni Giocondo, perdu entretemps<sup>100</sup>. Réédité plusieurs fois plus tard (l'édition de Conrad Lycosthenes, *Iulii Obsequentis Prodigiorum liber*, de 1552, est la plus importante), ce livre fait partie d'une littérature apparue pour la première fois dans l'espace italien, mais répandue rapidement au nord des Alpes. Une autre compilation, publiée à Rome un an plus tôt, en 1507, par Gaspar Torrella, est *De portentis, presagiis et ostentis rerumque admirabilium ac Solis et Lune defectibus et Cometis*. En ce qui concerne l'espace allemand, on peut citer *Speculum naturalis coelestis et*

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sangue stillate dal capo, le quali scendendoti per la faccia divina, macchiano la sua beltà ».

<sup>99</sup> C. B. R. Pelling, « Obsequens Iulius », in Simon Hornblower et Anthony Spawforth (dir.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, troisième édition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 1058.

<sup>100</sup> Ofelia N. Salgado, « France and the Transmission of Latin Manuscripts », in Gerald Sandy (dir.), *The Classical Heritage in France*, Leyde-Boston-Cologne, Brill, 2002, p. 30. Voir aussi Gerhard Jaritz, Verena Winiwarter, « On the perception of nature... », p. 100-101.

*propheticae visionis*, ouvrage rédigé par Josef Grünpeck (Nuremberg, 1508) ; *Meteororum, hoc est, impressionum aerearum et mirabilium naturae operum*, par Marcus Frytsch, une bonne opportunité pour lui en vue de compiler un *Catalogus prodigiorum atque ostentorum tam coelo quam in terraexhibitorum* (Nuremberg, 1555) ; *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon*, par Conrad Lycosthenes (Bâle, 1557), ou *Physica curiosa*, par Caspar Schott (Wurtzbourg, 1662). Cette littérature est apparue en Europe avant la Réforme protestante, dans un contexte marqué par la découverte et la diffusion d'œuvres anciennes, l'intérêt croissant pour le monde physique et naturel (d'où les premières tentatives de systématisation de données météorologiques bizarres), et la forte conviction que Dieu manifeste toujours sa volonté par des signes sur la voûte céleste.

### **Brochures sur la pluie de sang dans les villes protestantes allemandes**

Au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, un autre moyen de communication se répand progressivement, notamment dans les zones urbaines : les dépliants graphiques. Deux brochures – c'est-à-dire des impressions sur une seule feuille – retiennent notre attention. Le premier dépliant a été imprimé à Nuremberg, en 1554, et décrit une pluie de sang tombée dans la ville de Dinkelsbühl le 26 mai de la même année. La représentation graphique de la pluie de sang prend plus d'une demi-page et peut être divisée en deux plans, l'un éloigné et l'autre proche. Au loin se trouve la ville de Dinkelsbühl entourée de murs, sur lesquels tombent des gouttes rouges. Au premier plan, une blanchisseuse range des vêtements et du linge de corps blancs sur un support en bois et en métal, afin qu'ils sèchent, des vêtements maintenant tachés de gouttes de sang qui tombent du ciel. Nous découvrons ici la même idée que nous avons retrouvée dans certaines chroniques médiévales : le jeu des contrastes chromatiques, parce que la couleur rouge de la pluie est mieux perçue sur les vêtements en laine ou en tissu végétal de couleurs claires. Les vêtements du prochain panier en osier sont déjà complètement rouges. Sur la droite, trois personnages parlent et regardent le ciel. Dans le texte qui accompagne la représentation, cet événement est appelé un signe miraculeux terrifiant (*ein erschrockliches Wunderzeichen*), la pluie de sang étant interprétée comme un présage de malheur et de guerre. À la fin du texte, une courte prière implore la miséricorde et le pardon de Dieu<sup>101</sup>.

Une brochure imprimée à Augsbourg en 1570 évoque un autre événement miraculeux et étrange. Le texte mentionne une pluie de sang et de

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<sup>101</sup> La source peut être consultée sur le site Internet de l'Université de Zurich et la Bibliothèque centrale de Zurich, [https://uzb.swisscovery.sls.ch/view/delivery/41SLSP\\_UZB/12464286230005508](https://uzb.swisscovery.sls.ch/view/delivery/41SLSP_UZB/12464286230005508), consulté le 19.04.2021.

blé qui a eu lieu en Autriche et en Bavière le 14 juin 1570, expliquée comme un événement qui prouve la toute-puissance de Dieu. L'auteur anonyme établit des parallèles avec des situations similaires enregistrées dans l'Ancien Testament, et, à la fin du texte, le lecteur est exhorté à une prière collective pour recevoir l'aide et la miséricorde de Dieu. La représentation illustre une communauté rurale allemande, avec des jardins, des champs et des maisons. Certains villageois sont allongés sur le sol, car ils essaient de récolter le blé qui tombe du ciel, tandis que d'autres s'émerveillent de l'association du blé avec les gouttes de sang qui proviennent d'un épais nuage, blanchâtre, teinté de jaune, dessiné en haut de la représentation<sup>102</sup>.

## L'épilogue

Si Aristote a inclus les phénomènes météorologiques dans le monde sublunaire et s'il les a subordonnés aux quatre éléments primordiaux, les distinguant ainsi de la cosmologie du monde des cieux au-delà de la lune, dès l'Antiquité une tradition différente s'est mise en place, qui connaîtra un succès considérable au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance : dans le deuxième livre de son encyclopédie monumentale, Pliny l'Ancien mélange à la fois les sujets traditionnels de la cosmologie (comme le mouvement des planètes, le fait que la terre est au centre de l'univers ou le principe de l'harmonie universelle), et les tremblements de terre, les miracles, les prodiges et, en ce qui nous concerne, les pluies de sang. Cette dernière attitude, c'est-à-dire l'entrelacement du plan cosmique avec le plan terrestre, sera partagée par plusieurs auteurs du Moyen Âge, d'où son influence. Nous avons vu que maintenant nous ne pouvons plus soutenir l'idée que la pluie de sang était un phénomène ignoré par l'homme médiéval, ni que, au Moyen Âge, personne ne connaissait l'explication rationnelle de la pluie rouge : le cas de Rome en 1223 prouve le contraire. Comme nous l'avons montré, la pluie de sang, bien que généralement associée à une gamme d'émotions et d'événements plutôt négatifs, de l'Antiquité à l'ère moderne, signifiait une expérience ressentie diversement par différentes personnes ou communautés d'une même région ou de différents lieux géographiques. La pluie de sang, anticipant la mort et la guerre, pouvait également signifier les blessures des combattants, la souffrance du Christ, la fin du monde, la colère et la punition divine, ou simplement un phénomène naturel causé par des facteurs matériels et physiques. Ensuite, un large éventail de sources historiques enregistrent cet étrange phénomène météorologique sous diverses formes, permettant des

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<sup>102</sup> De même, cette source historique peut être analysée sur le site Web de l'Université mentionnée plus haut, [https://uzb.swisscovery.sls.ch/view/delivery/41SLSP\\_UZB/12463418110005508](https://uzb.swisscovery.sls.ch/view/delivery/41SLSP_UZB/12463418110005508), consulté le 19.04.2021.

approches détaillées. Dans la pensée, l'écriture ou le dessin, l'homme médiéval transpose ses peurs sur la nature physique qui l'entoure, qui se métamorphose au gré des émotions et des sentiments humains. L'univers, la création de Dieu, tout comme un corps humain, a le potentiel de souffrir, de saigner, devenant ainsi, dans le symbolisme des représentations des pluies de sang, un monde naturel avec des traits profondément humains.

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# An Archaeological Analysis of Ruined Rural Settlements around a village near Ardabil City (Case Study: Viyand Settlement, Guran Site and Yel Suyi Site).

**Habib Shahbazi Shiran\***

**Abstract:** Ardabil province, with its North-South expansion in North- Western Iran and the Eastern part of the Azerbaijani plateau, includes intermountain plains and high mountains. Due to its diverse ecosystem and various latitudes, this province has been a suitable platform for human settlement in different periods of human life. According to archeological evidence, the region of Ardabil has been inhabited since the 1st millennium BC. The whole area is covered with ancient hills, or in other words, settlement areas, which were once fortresses or towns or villages. According to the existing ancient monuments, this region was one of the leaders of this civilization in the early days and the beginning of the formation of human civilizations, especially in the field of pre-historical civilizations, and this situation has continued during historical periods. As information and historical documents show, this region has played an effective and important role in attracting civilizations and transferring it to the other side, as well as spreading its civilization to the adjacent areas, as this has been one of the most important centers of civilization during the Sassanid era. In the Islamic era, it had a special position. In any case, although the evidence from this area is very rare, there is no doubt that today, a wide variety of ancient monuments from each of the past civilizations cover the entire plain. Considering the above points, it seems that the Ardabil region is a hidden and covered page of the history of Iran and will be the solution to deciphering ambiguous events, being seen as a possible means of communication among known events. The purpose of this paper is to show the physical and archeological nature and the dark and hidden corners of rural and urban settlements such as Viyand, Guran and Yel Suyi (which unfortunately have only a few traces left today). This research is a descriptive-analytical study based on library, documentary, and field studies.

**Keywords:** Ardabil, Viyand, Guran, Yel Suyi, Settlement Pottery.

## **Introduction**

Although the preservation of cultural heritage has gained a global reputation and dependent organizations are trying to restore and preserve

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them by establishing headquarters, there is no doubt that today, nations and people need to know each other more for dialogue and consultation, and therefore, the cultural heritage and historical monuments of each region are among the most important tools of this dialogue. The civilization heritage of any land is like a gate which opens to the spirits, moods and customs of the inhabitants of that land. It is compulsory for everyone to know and recognize the effects of civilization and bright faces everywhere. Therefore, from every gate, in order to see the culture of the people everywhere in the world, we see a very clear message from the heart of history engraved on the inscription of time, and that is the future belongs to a nation that knows its past better than the others. The generation that forgets its distant past perishes, and the only way to escape from this deadly path is the awareness and consciousness of common people who understand and comprehend the importance of ancient monuments. In fact, the purpose of this study is to provide a clear picture of the historical past of this region to future generations and to give the impression that in the archaeological equations of a region, each ancient monument is unique like a human being and has its special message or it is like a book that opens a new meaning of the past to us every time it is read.

This research is basic, but its information and results can be used to recover the original Iranian identity and the developmental one and the macro-planning in the field of the methodology of touristic activities and issues such as the growth of global cultural awareness, and to provide study structures to identify the cradles of civilization and world culture and pay special attention to the effective and privileged role of Iranians in establishing world culture and recognizing the legacies left in this ancient land and the cultural riches of the ancient nation as one of the practical strategies (application of design). Based on this, the results of the plan are responsive to the legitimate needs of society, especially universities and scientific and research centers of the country and other relevant agencies in the present and future.

## **VIYAND**

Two kilometers away from the village of Kalkhvoran-e Viyand, there is a high sedimentary hill, the Southern side of which has become a high wall due to the erosion of the bed of the Balkhlo River. A Dakhma stone (cemetery) with an entrance door and an absolutely simple room, with no decorations and junctures, has been excavated at the height of approximately 50 meters above the bed of Balkhlo Chai on its slope. From the meandering body of the mountain, one can enter the old site in front of the door of Dakhma. The opening of Dakhma is 1-meter-wide and 1.23 meters high and

its approximate diameter is 0.7 meters<sup>1</sup>. The general view of the Dakhma outside the village has been shown in Image 1.



Fig 1. Wind Kalkhoran Village, Crypt outside the Village

Inside the Dakhma, there is a space in the shape of a triangle pyramid with an incomplete and long base and the sides of the base of the pyramid or the floor of Dakhma are as it follows: surrounding side of entrance door is 0.7 m, East side 3 m and West side 3.8 m. The Eastern angle of the doorway is close to right and the sharpest angle is the Northern angle. The highest height of Dakhma is right behind the gate, which is 1.8 meters.

A picture was engraved in the South- Western corner of the Dakhma, which may be linked to the inability to present a magnificent exterior majesty or indifference to exterior views due to the use of elaborate stratum carvings. This image, which has the general shape of a triangle, is a zigzag margin with the length of 1.26 meters on the right side of the triangle and 1.06 meters on the Western side, the base of which is 0.96 meters.

Inside it, a smaller triangle is with the base of 0.55 m and the Eastern and Western sides are engraved at 0.85 and 0.75 m, respectively, having an echo, although weak, which can be discerned from the artist's conception. The man-molded "decoration" is engraved with a series close to the shape of a triangle and the hands, feet and the body that surround the triangle cover almost its entire space. There are also letters engraved on the margins, most of which have been destroyed. The triangle is the only shape

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<sup>1</sup> Seyed Jamal Torabi Tabatabaei, *Ancient monuments in Azerbaijan*, 1976, p. 329.

that can be oriented, and its upward or downward direction affects its meaning, and it is clear that the first point in the magical triangle is Pythagoreans; Tetrakys. Expressing and declaring is like revealing and bringing the concept, desire and thought to the material world. In addition to what has been said, the manifestation form is the complete unity of the constituent factors of the work of art, which includes: subject, content, material and form. In addition, the form specifically refers to the internal relations and the sensory-perceptual aesthetic structure of the totality of the work of art (or its form in general). Such a design, which is almost symbolic, tends to be interpreted as an element of Islamic architecture, because in a religious atmosphere, the Muslims' undeniable opposition to pictorial decorations, accompanied by idolatrous inspiration, encouraged the architect to focus heavily on abstract decorations.

In addition, houses in most cases are composed of several spaces with different niches and doorways at the floor of the neck between the two hills, most of their roofs have collapsed, but the entrances and stone walls remained intact. Numerous works of stone houses have also been erected on the Northern ridge of the village's sedimentary mountain, the walls of which are perpendicular to the base and, above it, it takes the form of a complete pyramid with a hole at the top. In the map of all these examples, no considerable order can be seen, and the rooms are specifically rectangular or square, wide or narrow with back and forth walls, or deformed, arranged without special attention. The general view of the Dakhma inside and the Eastern side of the village has been shown in Images 2, 3 and 4.



Fig 2. Wind Kalkhoran Village, Eastern Dakhma of the Village





Fig 3. Wind Kalkhoran Village, inside on of the Eastern Dakhma of the Village



Fig 4. Wind Kalkhoran Village, a Dakhma inside the Village

The unique and diverse pottery of different Islamic periods of Oltan castle is noteworthy and very prominent. In the castle's surroundings, there are some hills which were small building units. The major and main



buildings of the castle are in its Eastern side in which its major part has been destroyed due to the intense overflow of Araxes on this side<sup>2</sup>.

Although it is not yet possible to talk certainly about the structural cause of these architectural spaces, the study of the limited works obtained from this area suggests that such a pleasant and important area has many ancient remains belonging to the historical period, especially the Parthian, early, and middle Islamic periods.

In the Persian dictionary, "Dakhma" means the place of graves, the underground house, the place of the dead body, the basement or the building above the mountain and far away from the city, where the bodies of the dead are placed; Hence, the most natural interpretation which can be deduced from this ruined place is to consider it the only disturbed survivor of pre-Islamic burial architecture. But whether it can be recognized as a burial basement today, and whether it is correct or not, it cannot be verified by the available information. It is worth noting that there is no significant tradition of free burial houses in pre-Islamic times. The Tomb of Cyrus in Pasargadae is an exception that proves there is a rule<sup>3</sup>. The next Achaemenid kings were placed in carved pits in the heart of the cliffs. It seems that these tombstones continued until after the fall of this dynasty. The habits of the Parthians of Iran - by judging the graphic descriptions of Greek sources - did not accept the establishment of tombs. For the Sassanid kings, although they were not all equally supporters of Zoroastrianism, there were unique personal arrangements in that religion about the bodies of the dead. According to Zoroastrian teachings, the corpses of the dead pollute the earth because of the filthiness and satanic pollution caused by death. As a result, the religion undermines any desire to sanctify the dead and the burial architecture associated with it. The corpses were placed on raised platforms or in tombs located in remote locations.

At the same time, it is enough to note that the force of struggle and resistance was one of the principles of the religion of Mithraism. In addition, one of the pillars of this religion has been based on the invincibility and immortality of this phenomenon. Worshippers of Mithras believed that the sun is invincible and eternal, and this invincibility and immortality led man to the sanctification of the mountains. Hence, the worshippers of Mithras believed that Mehr was born of stone-, because it is invincible, permanent and eternal. Given this fact, it is obvious that the presence of such human-made spaces, if we do not say that it is an expression of religious symbolism, it is definitely an emphasis on a religious center. In addition, such houses, regardless of its primary role, may have been built to meet the needs of indigenous peoples who did not need permanent houses, such as a group of

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<sup>2</sup> Fehervari, *Ceramics of the Islamic world*, 2000, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 2008, p. 272.

farmers, or shepherds and herdsmen who stop there for a short period of time to use the surrounding pastures in certain seasons of the year or as a place for gatherings and temporary settlements, while migrating from one area to another.

Of course, on the one hand, it is necessary to note that the location of some of these temporary settlements and communities may have gradually become a permanent community and village<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, this place could have functioned as a place of human life or permanent settlement in certain circumstances. In this way, special political conditions shape the architecture of these structures inside the rocks. However, it is highly unlikely that these structures were essentially public buildings. Because, given the existence of inter-montane plains in the region, the intelligent human of the past could never easily leave the calm and peaceful environment of the plains and take refuge in the hard and impassable and mountainous areas.

Moreover, on the one hand, it is also noteworthy that in the Islamic period, the development of rock architecture with the use of worship or burial place was closely related to the spread of Sufi ideas. in such a way that after the devastating Mongol invasion of Iran, devastation and calamity made Sufism the most important spiritual and intellectual source of the people, and many turned to it. On the other hand, it did not take a long time, given the fact that the Mongol Ilkhans were fascinated by Sufism. The flourishing period of Timurid continued until the emergence of the Safavids. In this case, it is possible that the safe and secret facilities of this remote point for the Sufi community from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards were a cozy and ideal environment. Whether this recognition is correct or not, it cannot be proved by the available information.

A variety of potteries have been collected by archaeological excavations of this place and around it, most of them belong to pre-Islamic (Parthian and Sassanid) and medieval Islamic century. The design of the pottery samples collected in the archaeological studies of this place and its surrounding site has been included in Images 5 and 6.

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<sup>4</sup> Negahban, *Archeology of Iran*, 1997, p. 351.

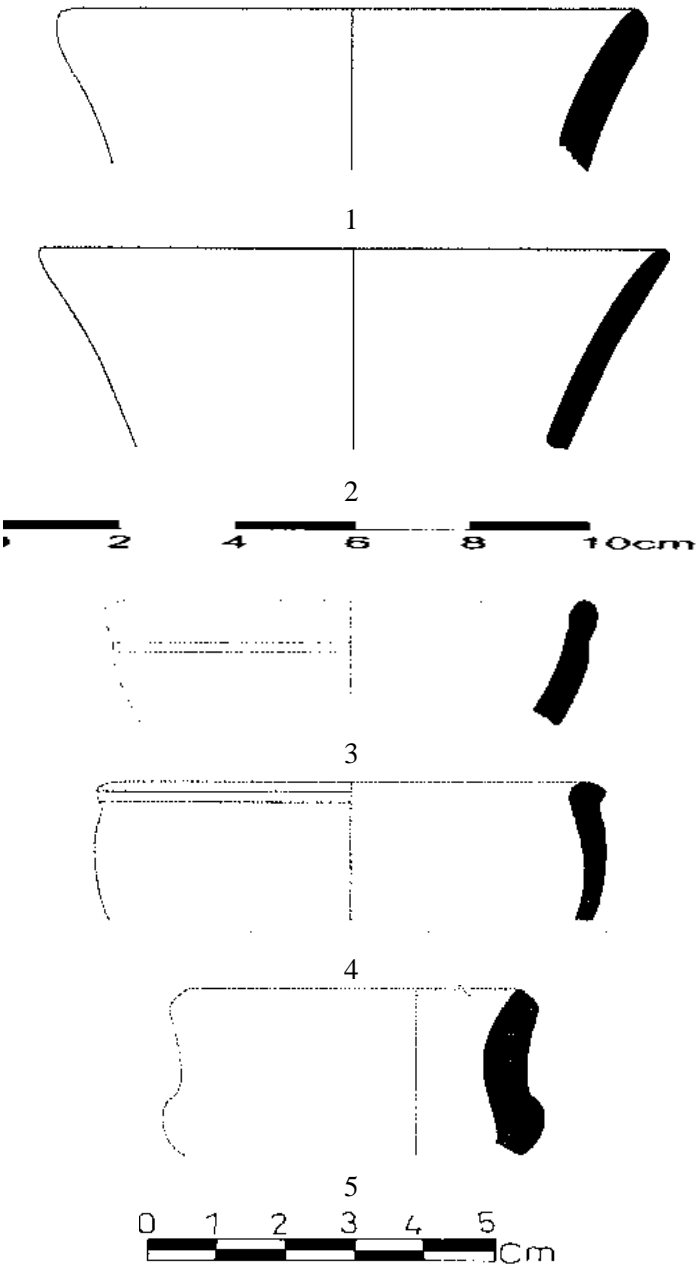


Fig 5. The settlement of Kalkhyoran-e Viyand village, 1, 2, 3, 4. parts related to medium bowls

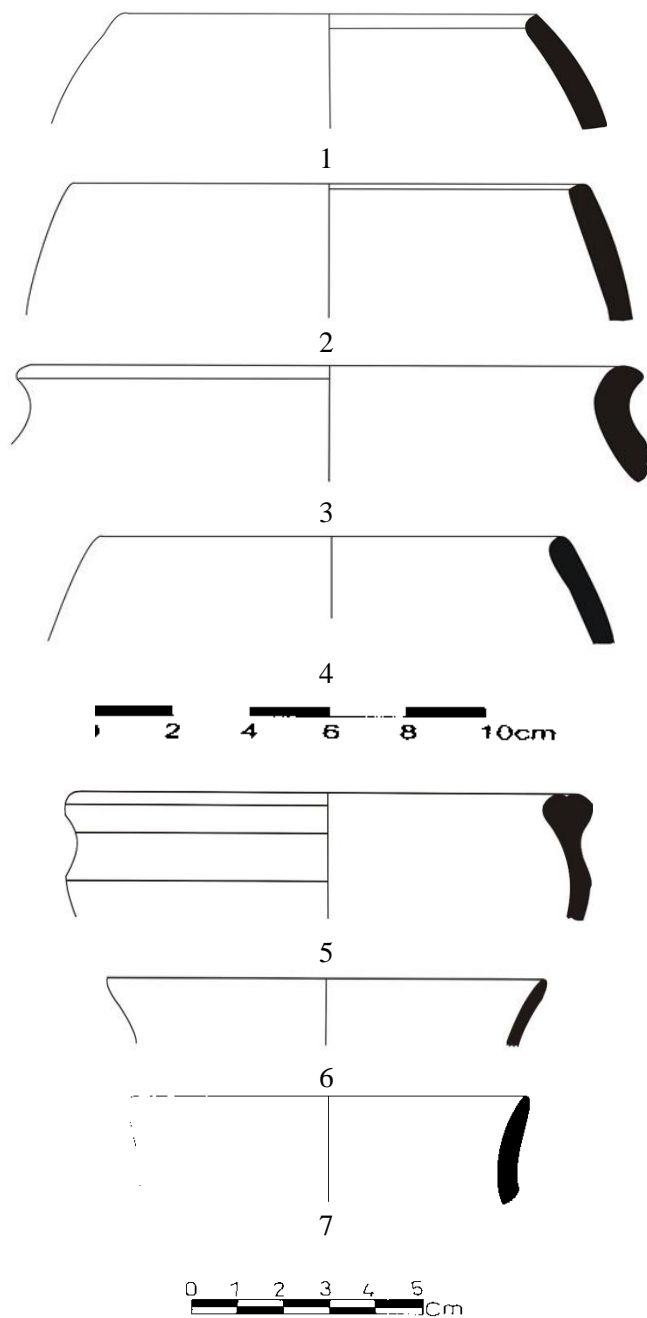


Fig 6. The settlement of Kalkhvoran-e Viyand village, 1, 2, 3, 4. pieces of jar-shaped pottery with large volume and capacity. 5, 6, 7. Fractures of bowl containers

In general, the potteries of this area are divided into two groups: unglazed and glazed. In terms of material, these potteries include delicate and semi-rough types, and according to the different parts of the edge and floor, and in terms of shape, they include small and large vessels. Some vessels have a dense and firm texture with a paste of fine particles of sand and minerals, but others have a breakable and porous texture and in addition to sand, they also have plant materials. The common color of unglazed pottery is pale goldenrod and black, and as far as decoration is concerned, they are divided into two categories: simple and painted. The second group of pottery documents are glazed specimens. The piece of glazed pottery is generally delicate, and in most cases, both the interior and exterior level are decorated with light brown, red brick, green, brown, and light blue glazes.

Since the effects of smoke are seen on some semi-rough parts, a number of first type pottery can be placed among kitchen dishes. The pottery of the first group can be divided into two groups, handmade and wheel made, and their cooking is mostly complete.

The pottery of Sassanid period of this area is completely different from the pottery of the Parthian period in terms of the shape of vessels edge. In Parthian's pottery vessels, the edge is still thin and slightly turned outwards, while the pottery of the Sassanid period has a short or long neck and the edge is fixed vertically on the neck and is thick and flat. The quality of Sassanid pottery, like the Parthian period, is relatively rough and there is a noticeable heaviness in it. In general, the pre-Islamic pottery of this ancient place was limited to vessels in order to meet their daily needs. Apart from pre-Islamic pottery, glazed pottery pieces of various colors belonging to the Islamic period have been obtained from the lands around the village, the hill levels of Chelleh Khaneh, as well as from the inside of rocky houses, which are mostly comparable to the samples observed in adjacent ancient sites. The pottery pieces show that the pottery vessels used in this place is of poor quality, non-luxurious, and merely functional, and that its motif pattern is different and seldom exactly the same. The potteries obtained from this place, despite the differences in forms in the details of the cross-sectional shape, are technically and in terms of cooking divided into three parts: delicate, ordinary and rough dishes.

Considering the traces and remnants of pottery found in this area, they can be mainly classified in the chronological table of the region as it follows:

- (a)- Historical periods, especially the Parthian period
- (b)- Early and Middle Islamic period

The pottery materials of this settlement are divided into the following types in terms of variety of form, color, glaze and the whole structure of pottery:

- 1- Glazed pottery with clear blue glaze

2- Glazed pottery with green glaze and carved motifs. Their chamotte was made of gravel, soft sand and plant materials.

3- Simple glazed pottery in red groundmass color

4- Pale goldenrod pottery to light cream brown with light brown glaze on the edge and inside the body

5- Spherical urns without neck or with a neck having an edge inclined to the inside or an edge turned outwards with a groundmass of light brown and decorations of orange colored plant motifs

6- Pieces of simple and rough handmade black pottery vessels that are made of fine sand chamotte.

7- Unglazed pale goldenrod pottery with an edge inclined inside, the edge of the vessel being decorated with three horizontal strips from the outside and the pottery paste is soft and its chamotte is made of plant.

### **GURAN SITE**

The ancient site of Guran, with the geographical coordinates of 48 degrees, 10 minutes, and 6.01 seconds East longitude and 38 degrees, 18 minutes and 8.08 seconds North latitude, is located at a distance of approximately 12 km Northwest of the center of the province and in the lands of Baruq village of the central part of Ardabil city, its height from the sea level is 1448 meters<sup>5</sup>.

The site consists of a prehistoric cemetery and an ancient hill<sup>6</sup>, located on the top of a high natural hill, and its highest point from the level of the surrounding lands on the Eastern slope is about 15 meters. The hill looks almost like an ellipse, and the effects of destruction caused by natural factors are seen in the form of cracks and grooves of water passing. Also, the excavation of several holes by unauthorized explorers at the top and slopes at all four main directions has caused further destruction of this hill and has somewhat reduced it from the scope of scientific use.

The Northern front of the hill has a very steep slope and has given it a completely natural shape and an impenetrable position. This situation also dominates the Eastern front of the hill; in addition to the many natural beauties and having a very steep slope, in the part that is connected to cliff, due to the special situation of the region, stone distension has appeared, which is the source of production of floods from this region. However, the Western side of the hill, with a gentle slope and without any special complications, gradually ends in a hard and strong rocky slope where the ancient cemetery is located<sup>7</sup>. The remained scattered archaeological evidence

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<sup>5</sup> Habib Shahbazi Shiran, *Analysis of causal or explanatory: Archaeological and architectural monuments Ardabil region in the Islamic period*, 2014, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Reza Rezaloo, *Project Registration of Ancient Goran Site*, 2007, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Habib Shahbazi Shiran, *Analysis of causal or explanatory: Archaeological and architectural monuments Ardabil region in the Islamic period*, 2014, p. 49.

represents the reality that the settlement deposits in this area are not unique to the hill itself, and that the traces of human settlement can be clearly seen on the rocky slopes of its Northern, Southern, and Eastern sides. From a chronological point of view, it completely introduces several settlement periods (from prehistoric times to the Islamic Middle Ages), and the stratigraphy of ancient deposits (reserves) in a region does not guarantee the recognition of macro-cultural and artistic horizons of the whole range of this ancient site. Undoubtedly, the specific geographical position, the ease of access to water resources of the land and the ideal strategic location of these lands have been the most important effective factors in the formation of human groups and their continuity throughout history.

On the hill and close to the Southern slope of the hill, the remains of a two-stack defensive wall about 2 meters in diameter can be seen, which is made of dry stone (dry stack) with small and medium carcass stones and no mortar has been used in its construction and strengthening. The construction method of this defensive wall is that of placing two rows of stones along the wall boundary, the foundation stones are installed in a good condition on the ground, in such a way that it has the stability of standing in the soil. It seems that the layer-by-layer wall (period to period) has been built to the desired height and its width has always been reduced as it rises, and the spaces between the two walls have been carefully packed with smaller stones. Despite the defensive potential of the site and the special conditions of this hill regarding a strategic position, there has been no evidence of the existence of the tower on the works and remains of this wall so far, which in addition to the defensive aspect also plays the role of supporting the wall. Considering the structure of this architecture and the special physiography and topography features of this site, it seems that the existing evidence tends to interpret it as - a small fort or castle, or a guard station - a road toll-house (Rahdarkhaneh), or a small castle among the towers and fortifications of the city, or it may be in the middle of a large castle, but without new evidence, it is not possible to finalize the matter, and to arrive at more facts to determine this and to properly allocate it, for this purpose requires in-depth and extensive research and in detail archeological excavations<sup>8</sup>. Of course, except for the Southern slope wall, all the walls of this structure have also disappeared due to the lack of reinforcement of the structure, its construction on dilapidated sloping slopes or accumulation of soils from illegal excavations in the area with the old idea of achieving treasure and also due to excavation operations in order to dig a canal.

Despite the serious damage to the body of the hill and the destruction of parts of it along the water canal, the pieces of evidence from archeological

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<sup>8</sup> Habib Shahbazi Shiran, *Analysis of causal or explanatory: Archaeological and architectural monuments Ardabil region in the Islamic period*, 2014, p. 49.

studies and major excavations carried out by antiquity robbers in previous years, emphasize that:

1- The architecture discovered from the heart of this area is based on the use of stone in the foundation and walls.

2- Ovens and stoves were used to create heat, their fuel of which was wood.

3- The walls were mainly in the form of dry stones (without the use of mortar) and the level of foundation of the stone is wider than the walls on which it is placed.

- In terms of form and type of architecture, the structures do not follow a single pattern.

5- Archaeological evidence and various other factors indicate that the slopes and margins of the Northern, Southern and Eastern sides of the settlement areas and the Western slopes of the hill surround the cemetery located here and it seems that the hill itself was used as a fortress or residential castle.

Pottery, as the most important and major data in archaeological studies, has the highest frequency among the ancient remains of this site. Pottery pieces can be seen on the entire surface and slopes of the hill, as well as in flat lands, most of which are handmade, and with a polished surface in terms of material including delicate, relatively delicate and medium types, and given to different pieces of edges, bodies, and floors in terms of shape, they have containers including bowls, plates, large trays, and rarely large pottery vessels at a large scale including jars. Baking pottery is mostly complete, and fine grained and medium sized minerals have been used for their chamotte.

Pottery with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type), belonging to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, and pottery with Slipware (Slip) cover, belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD are among the good samples of this area. The abundance and distribution of pottery with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type) in this place and other ancient hills of this valley shows well that Ardabil has been one of the most important centers for the formation and development of this method<sup>9</sup>. In this type of pottery, whose source of production is considered by scholars to be from Egypt and its growth in Mesopotamia, Syria and then Iran<sup>10</sup>, engraved motifs had been done on colorful glazes such as green, yellow and purple, and then private places of the vessel had been painted. The purpose of using this technique was to prevent other paints from being sprayed or escaped. These types of vessels were generally delicate and polychrome, and they had yellow, brown, green, and sometimes red to brown colors<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Reza Rezaloo, *Project Registration of Ancient Goran Site*, 2007, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Fehervari, *Ceramics of the Islamic world*, 2000, p. 49.; Lane, *The Early Sgraffito Ware of the Near East*, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Dostiyev, *Şimal-Şərqi Azərbaycan IX-XV əsrlərdə*, 2001, p. 164.



The designs and motifs on the pottery are mostly scrolls and plants. Animal motifs and rarely human motifs are another part of the decoration of these potteries. In the engraved motifs on these pottery vessels, it seems that separate colors were also used to follow metal vessels used in the excavated parts of wire with different colors from the vessel ground<sup>12</sup>

Samples of one-color vessels made of stone-paste were also obtained from the Guran site, the most common of which were broken bowl vessels belonging to the Seljuk period. The multi-chrome glazed pottery design of the site, obtained through field research, has been shown in Images 7 and 8.



Fig 7. Guran, polychrome glazed pottery, pieces related to bowls or plates, pottery samples with engraved technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type), Seljuk period of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD

<sup>12</sup> Fehervari, *Ceramics of the Islamic world*, 2000, p. 89.; Schnyder, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 1991, pp. 601-609

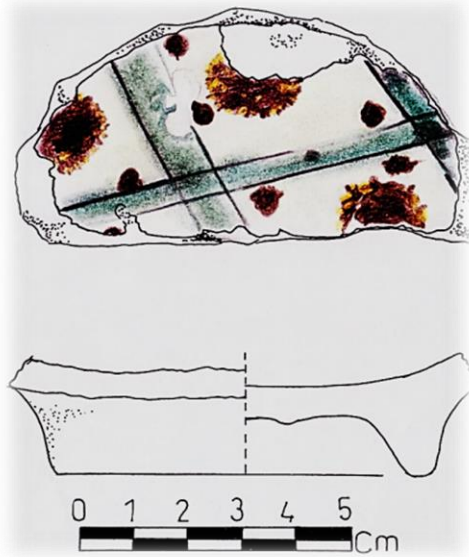
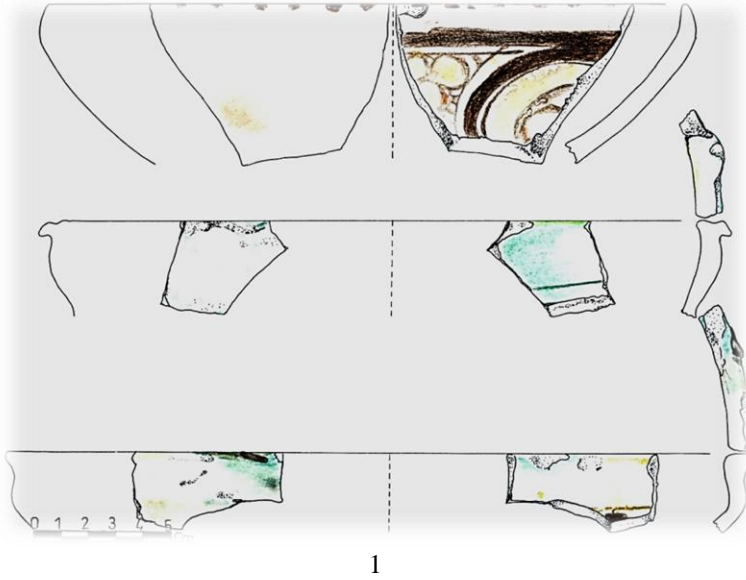


Fig 8. Guran. 1. polychrome glazed pottery, pieces related to bowls or plates, pottery samples with engraved technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type), Seljuk period of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. 2. polychrome glazed pottery, pieces related to bowls or plates, pottery samples with Slipware (Slip) cover, belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

It is also noteworthy that the oldest Iranian pottery found with a stone-paste belonging to 1139 AD and the first example of this type of pottery found in Egypt dates back to 1290 to 1295<sup>13</sup>.

Scientific studies on the works and documents of the terrestrial surface of the hill, which is considered one of the most important sites of this valley in terms of the extent and variety of works, show the continuity of settlement and living in this place from ancient times to the Islamic Middle Ages; but the subject cannot be finalized without systematic archeological excavations and new evidence.

### **YEL SUYI SITE**

The ancient site of Yel Suyi Castle, with the geographical coordinates of 47 degrees, 45 minutes, 6 seconds East longitude and 39 degrees, 45 minutes, 33/05 seconds North latitude, is located at a distance of approximately 3.7 km from the village of Abbas Alilu, in Anguti district, in the North-West of Ardabil, and its height from the sea level is 895 meters.

This ancient site consists of a small castle, located on a high natural hill, and a residential area, located in the Southeastern part of the hill, as well as three sites of cemetery located on the West, Southwest and the North-East sides of the castle. The building of the castle had been built on top of a high natural hill, part of its peak is rocky and separated from the surrounding mountains by the water flowing adjacent to the Sumbar River, valleys and deep grooves, and the height of the highest point of the hill relative to the bottom level of the Sumbar River on the North- Eastern shore of the castle is about 132 meters.

The Northern front of the hill has a very steep slope that gives it an impenetrable position in a completely natural way. This situation also exists on the Eastern front of the hill, and in addition to its abundant natural beauty and very steep slope, rocky distention or swelling have appeared in the part that connects to the cliff due to the special situation of the region, which is the source of floods in this area. The access road to the castle is also blocked from the south side due to the presence of deep cliffs, and only in the Western part, which leads to the residential area, the hill has a gentle slope that reveals the access road to it. Undoubtedly, the specific geographical location, the ease of access to water resources of the land and the very suitable strategic location of these lands have been among the most important effective factors in the formation of human groups and their continuity throughout history. The location of the Southern and Northern sides of the castle, the architectural spaces that have been revealed as a result of unauthorized excavations, the water reservoir (ab anbar), and the wells

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<sup>13</sup> Morgan, *Islamic pottery*, 2005, p. 137.

created in the heart of the rock have been shown in Images 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.



Fig 9. Yel Suyi, the South side of the castle.



Fig 10. Yel Suyi, the Northern side of the castle.





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Fig 11. Yel Suyi. 1, 2. Architectural spaces that have been revealed as a result of unauthorized excavations.



Fig 12. Yel Suyi, a space that was probably a water reservoir.



Fig 13. Yel Suyi, a well formed in the heart of the rock.

On the high natural hill, there is no evidence of the defensive function of the castle (the walls surrounding the castle and the guard towers) and application of the name of the castle to this place is due to the defensive potential of the place and the special settlement conditions of this hill in a strategic situation.

Although no traces have been left on the main fortifications and structure of the castle, the major excavations carried out by the antiquity robbers in previous years have revealed little evidence of the structural signs of the spaces related to the period of expansion of the building, which include:

1- Large carcass and rubble stones that are the remains of various architectural structures.

2- The lower layers of the wall and the remains of scattered bricks with dimensions of  $23 \times 23 \times 6$  cm, and Sarooj mortar obtained from unauthorized excavation, which indicates the existence of a large brick building with a regular design.

3- Works on the wall of a room with dimensions of  $0.8 \times 1.5$  m.

4- The works of a quadrangular hole from Northwest to Southeast and with dimensions of  $6 \times 2.9$  m, which is carved from the heart of a piece of hard rock and is located in the highest point of the hill and the distance of its Southern wall from the cliff edge is about one meters. This carved hole created a pond that may have been used as a water reservoir.

- The traces of a well on the Eastern side of the hill and at a situation where relatively steep parts of the earth's surface begin, the well is carved up to a depth of 5.5 meters in the integrated rock and the diameter of its almost circular mouth measures 2.7 meters.

Pottery, as the most important data in archaeological studies, has the highest frequency among the ancient remains of this site. Throughout the entire surface and all the slopes of the hill, as well as in the surrounding flat lands, pottery pieces can be seen, 79.3% of the samples are handmade and 20.7% of them are wheel made and have a thick or thin clay covering the color of the pottery itself. The baking of potteries is mostly complete, and mineral of large grain sand (32.8%), fine grain sand (31%), medium grain sand (31%) and a combination [vegetable + large grain sand] (5.2%) has been used for their chamotte. Potteries not completely cooked usually show a brown pottery core and lighter brown tonality. The percentage diagram of the type of collected pottery construction has been shown in Image 14.

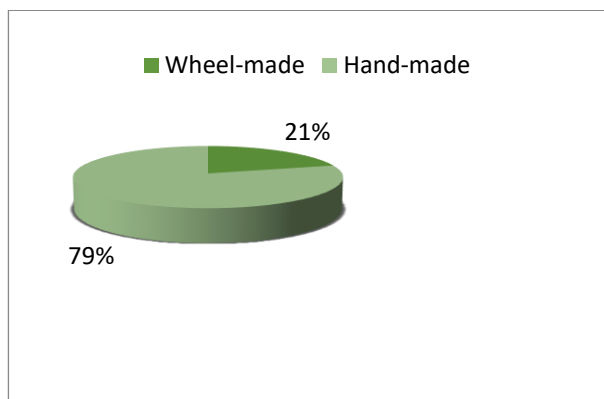


Fig 14. Yel Suyi, Quality diagram of making collected potteries.

In terms of material, these potteries include medium types (inner wall 77.6%- outer wall 60.3%), delicate (inner wall 12%- outer wall 27.6%) and rough (inner wall 10.4%- wall Exterior 12.1%, and considering different pieces include edge (69%), body (13.8%), pipe (5.3%), ball-shaped pottery (3.4%), pottery piece (3.4%), stamp (1.7%), cover (1.7%) and token (1.7%). In terms of shape, they mainly contain vessels including bowls, plates, drinking vessels and rarely include pottery vessels of large dimensions such as jar. In terms of decoration, two groups of simple and painted pottery can be identified among the unglazed pottery. Simple and ordinary pottery, which is mostly brown (inner wall 32.7%- outer wall 27.6%), cinnamon (inner wall 27.16%- outer wall 18.9%), lateritious (inner wall 10.3%- outer wall 12%), dark gray (inner wall 8.6% - outer wall 10.3%), black (inner wall 6.9% - outer wall 8.6%), pale goldenrod (inner wall 5.2%- outer wall 6.9%) and rarely light gray (inner wall 3.5%- outer wall 1.7%), plum (inner wall 3.5%- outer wall 5.2%), beige (The inner wall 1.7%- the outer wall 3.5%) and cinnamon and black (outer wall 5.3%), allocate the largest number of pottery in this settlement to themselves. Sometimes, signs of genius and partial skill can be seen in these potteries. Two types of thick clay glaze (Slip) and thin clay glaze (Wash) have been used for beauty, impermeability and strength of this type of pottery in the outer and inner parts of them and in some cases, their surface is a bit polished and the hand effect is also evident on their surface. The quality diagram of the collected pottery has been shown in Image 15.



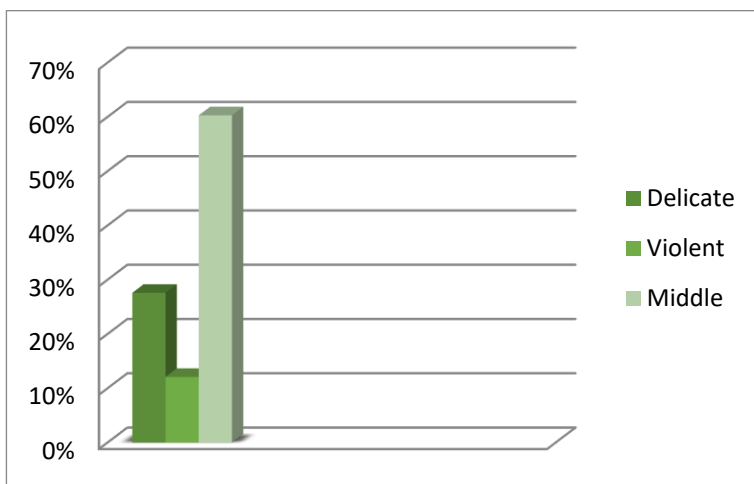


Fig 15. Yel Suyi, Quality diagram of making collected potteries.

According to the data obtained from this hill and in terms of cooking quality, about 84.2% of the data have a suitable degree of cooking and 15/8% have incomplete or insufficient cooking. The cooking quality diagram for the collected pottery has been shown in Image 16. It indicates the control of potters on the kilns of making pottery and their mastering and skill in their work. Also, about 19% of the pottery is painted and the motifs on the potteries are carved decorations (45.4%), hot (36.4%) and rarely grooved (18.2%), which usually include geometric linear decorations and wave and plant stripes on some potteries. Pottery with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand and Gerrus type) belonging to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, pottery with slipware (Slip) cover belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, monochrome glazed pottery belonging to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AH, and sprinkled glaze pottery and boiled beet Kashk belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, are among the pottery samples of this site. The percentage diagram of simple and engraved pottery has been shown in Image 17.

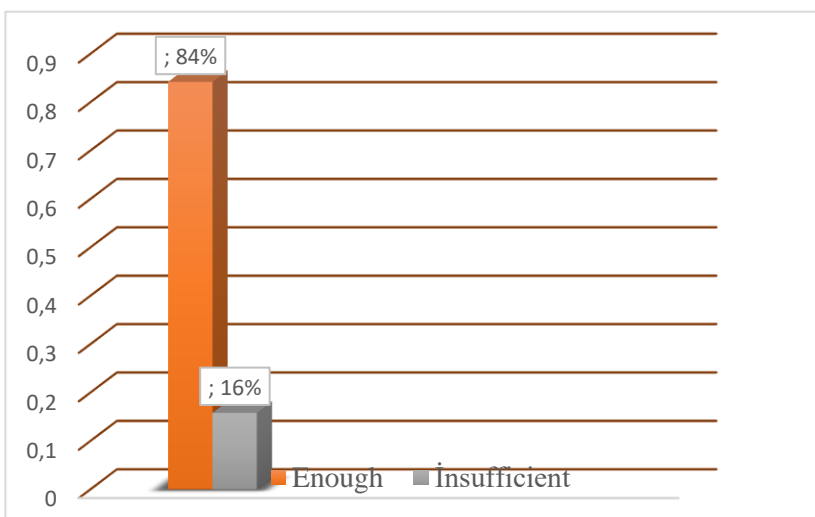


Fig 16. Yel Suyi, Quality diagram of baking collected potteries

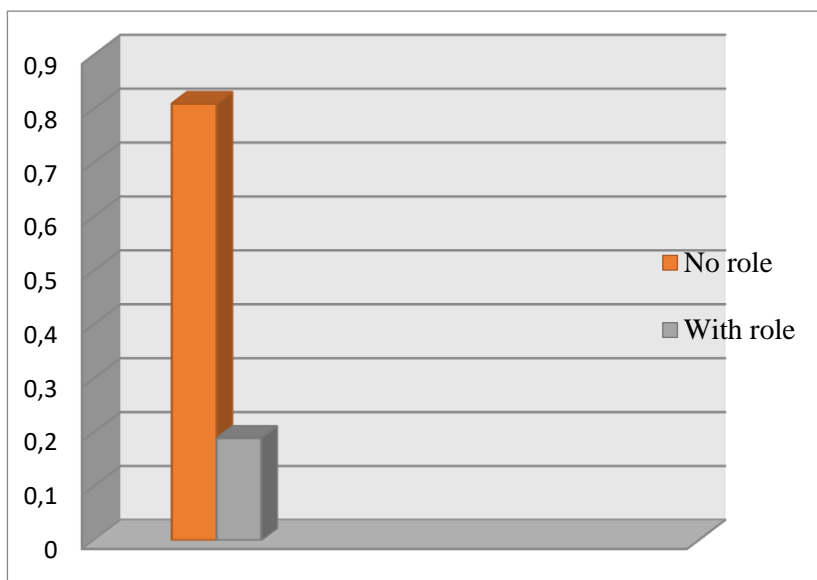


Fig 17. Yel Suyi, Percentage diagram of simple and painted potteries

In general, the potteries of this site had been built in terms of decoration and shape, and in terms of physical characteristics such as form and motif, they are somewhat different from the other potteries of the Islamic sites of this region. The design of multi-chrome glazed pottery and pieces related to the bowl or plate of the site, obtained through field research, have been shown in Images 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27.

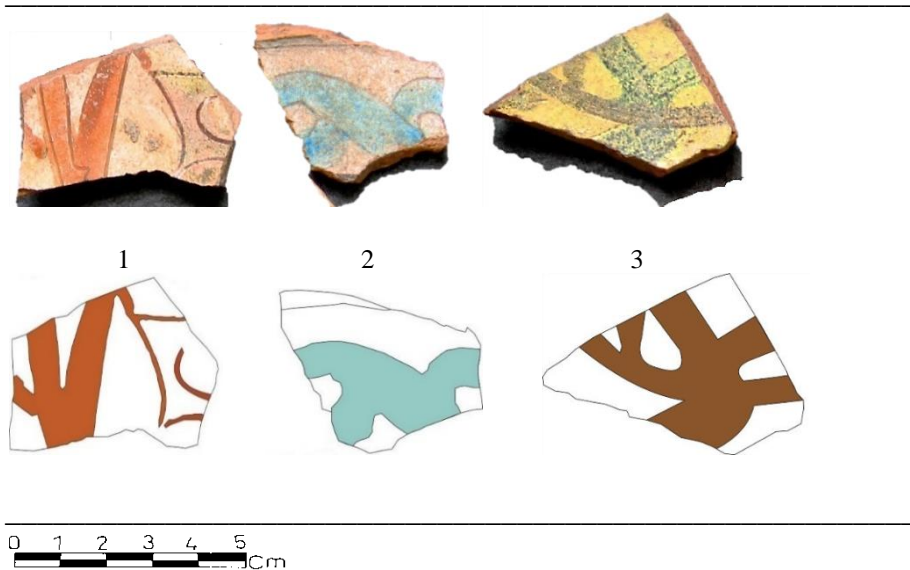


Fig 18. Yel Suyi. 1, 2, 3. Polychrome glazed potteries, pieces related to bowl or plate. Pottery samples with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato.

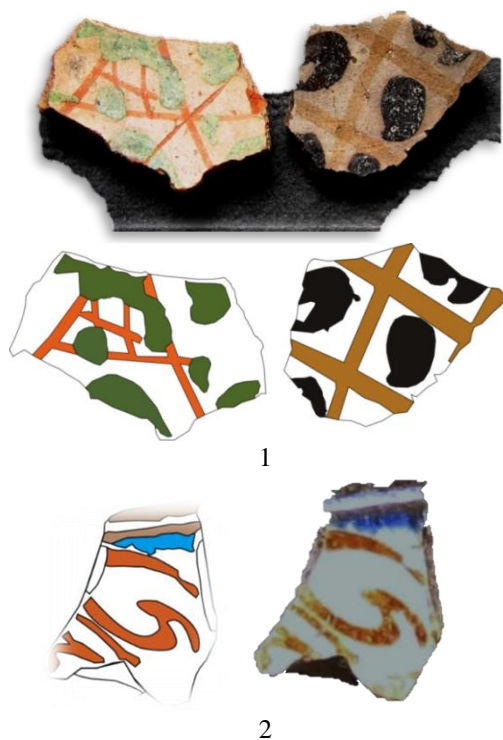


Fig 19. Yel Suyi. 1. Polychrome glazed potteries, pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with slipware (Slip) cover belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD 2. A piece related to a plate, lusterware of Ilkhanid type, 14<sup>th</sup> century AD

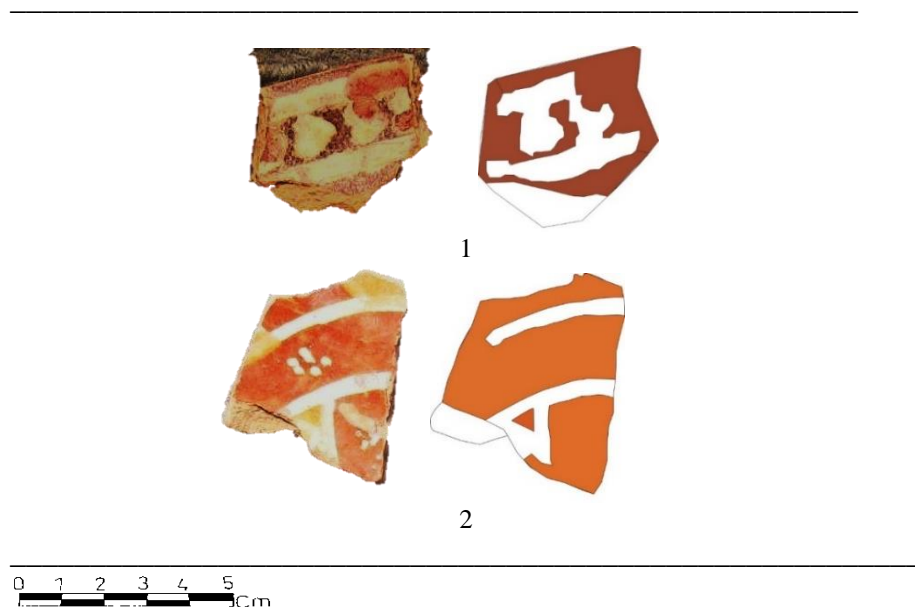


Fig 20. Yel Suyi. 1. A piece related to a plate, pottery sample with slipware (Slip) cover belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD . 2. Polychrome glazed pottery, a piece related to plates, pottery sample with slipware (Slip) cover belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

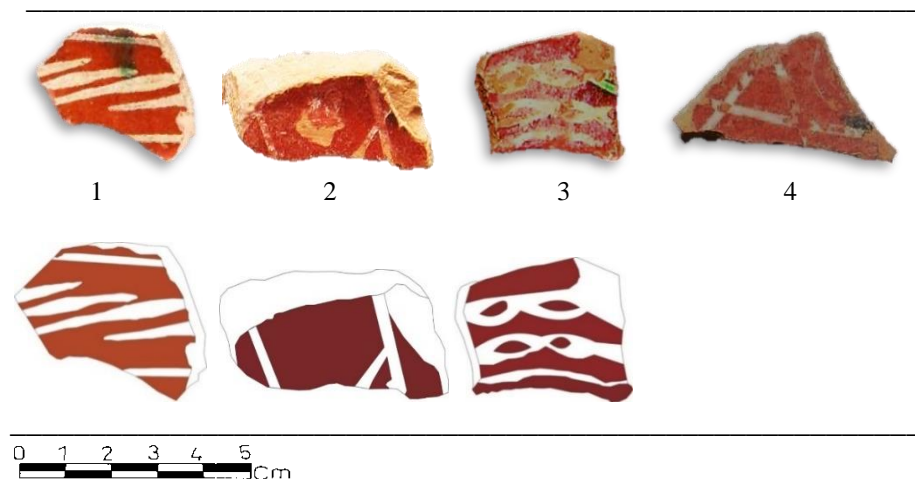


Fig 21. Yel Suyi. 1, 2, 3, 4. Polychrome glazed potteries, pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with slipware (Slip) cover belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

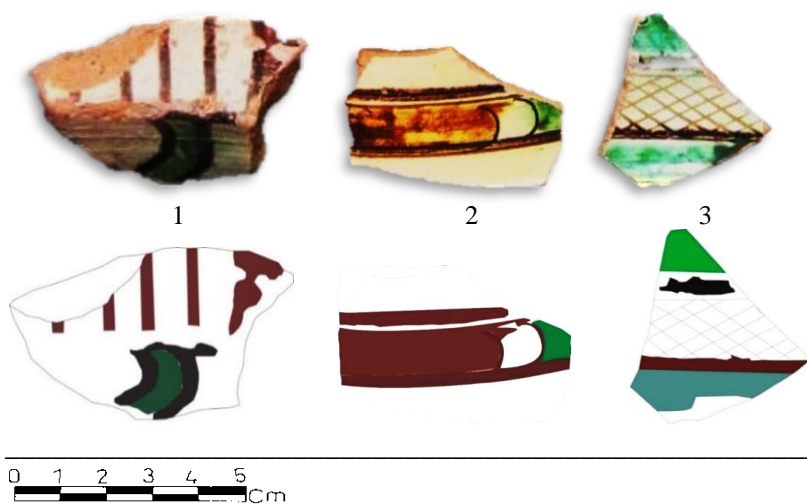


Fig 22. Yel Suyi. 1. A piece related to a plate, pottery with sprinkled glaze and engraved motif, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. 2, 3. pieces related to plate, pottery samples with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

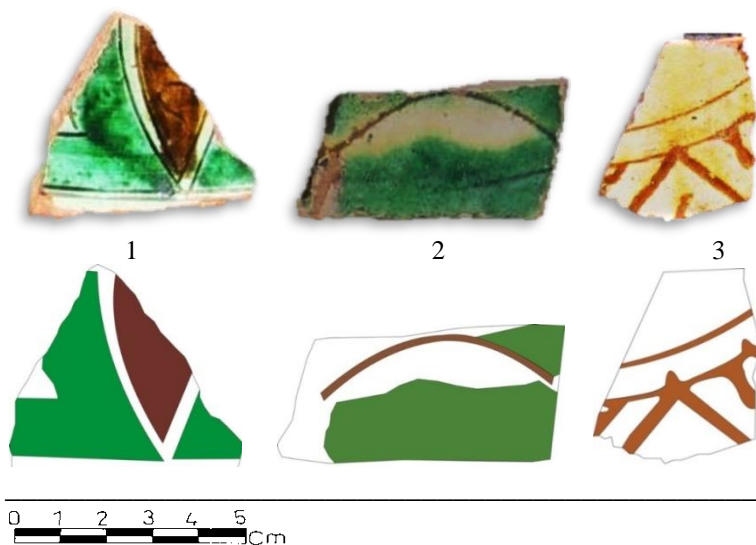


Fig 23. Yel Suyi. 1, 2, 3. Pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type), , 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

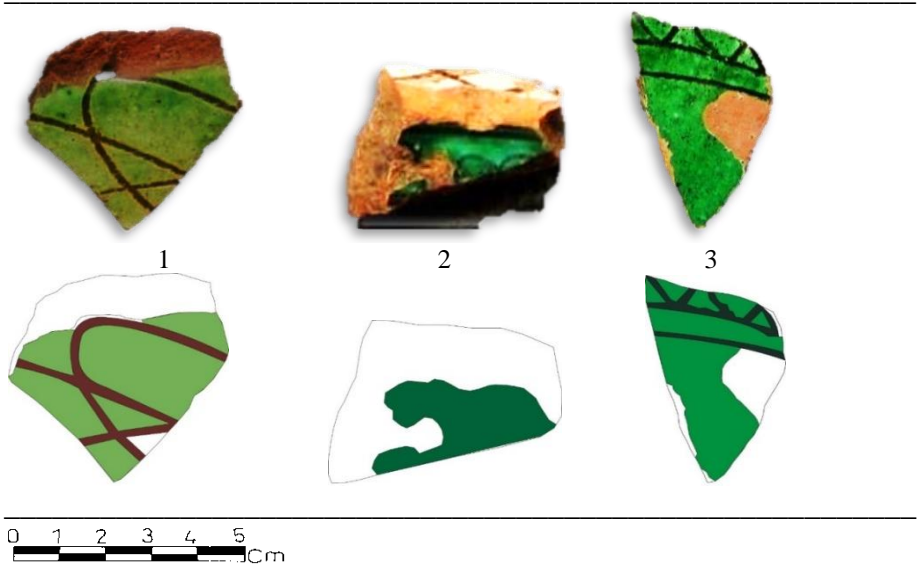


Fig 24. Yel Suyi. 1, 2, 3. Pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Gerrus type). 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

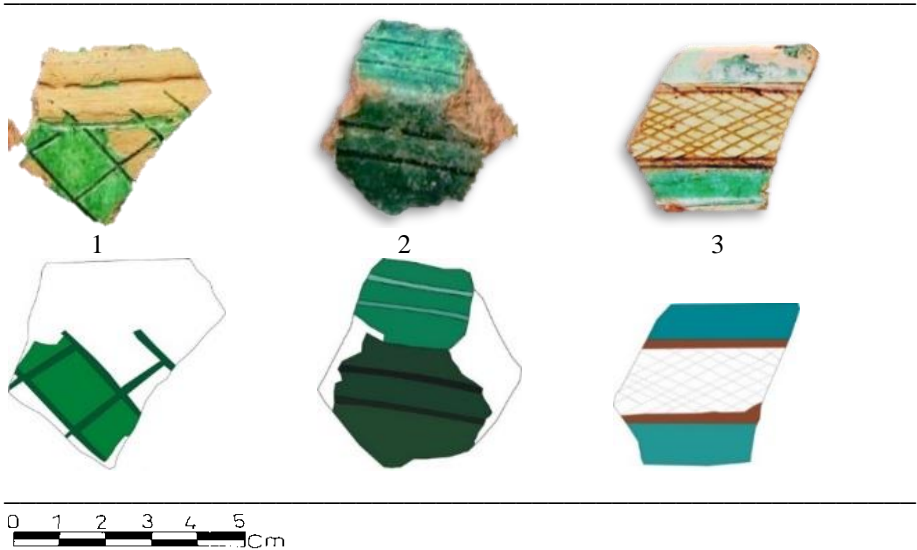


Fig 25. Yel Suyi. 1, 2. Pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Gerrus type). 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. 3. pottery sample with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type), 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD .

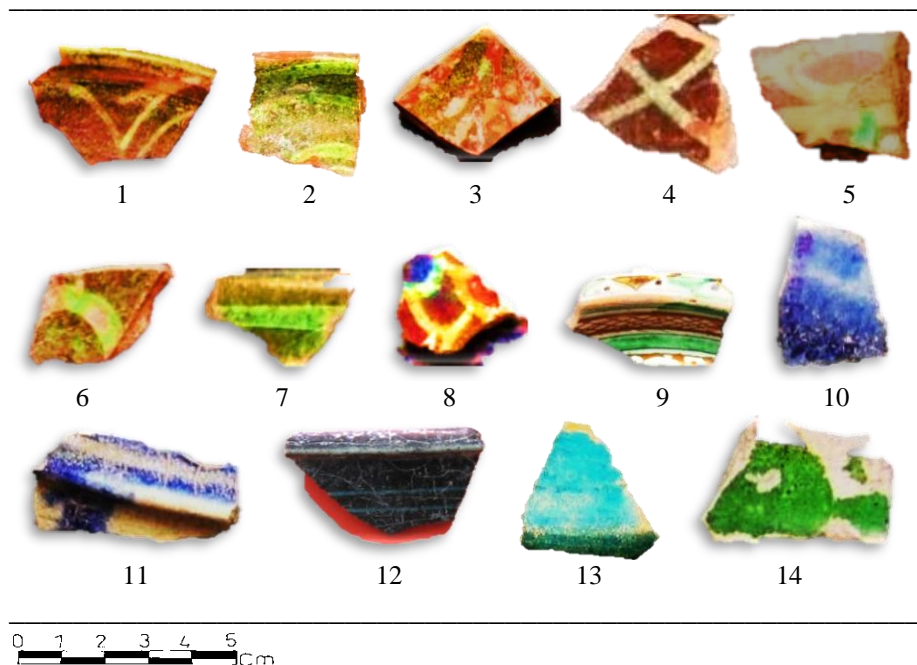


Fig 26. Yel Suyi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with slipware (Slip) cover belonging to the 8<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. 9, 10. Pieces related to bowl or plate, monochrome glaze (azure), Seljuk period. 11. A piece related to plate. pottery sample with engraved motifs technique in a slip known as Sgraffiato (Aqkand type), 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. 12. A piece related to plate, monochrome glaze (green), Seljuk period. 13. A piece related to plate, monochrome glaze (turquoise), 6 Seljuk periods. 14. A piece related to a bowl, a sample of a monochrome vessel made of stone-paste, Seljuk period.

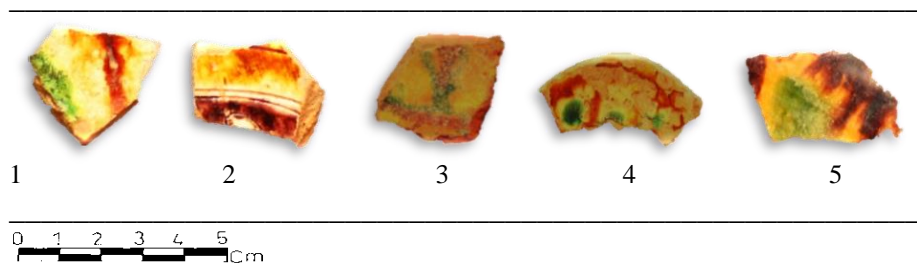


Fig 27. Yel Suyi. 1, 2, 3. Pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with sprinkled glaze, the 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. 4, 5. Pieces related to bowl or plate, pottery samples with boiled beet Kashk galze belonging to the 9<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD .



Scientific studies on the works and evidence of the terrestrial surface of the hill indicate the continuity of settlement and living in this place from ancient times to the Islamic Middle Ages. But the subject cannot be finalized without systematic archeological excavations and new evidence.

## **Results**

From ancient times, this region has been a place of life and residence of people, and the remnants of them show the way of their life and residence. The valley's historical background and records are evident in numerous artifacts and things found during numerous archeological excavations. The industry and art reflected in these artifacts show that historical events have strongly influenced this technology and art. The presence of abundant water and boiling springs in this area is reminiscent of the coexistence of water and settlement, and the combination of special and magnificent architecture with water is a manifestation of purity, birth and life. According to history, Ardabil region was one of the oldest settlements of humans and the place of great historical events in Iran, and the abundance and diversity of the discovered objects and countless traces of material culture, its settlements, castles and ancient settlements explicitly show the ancient greatness of this region of Iran.

Old rural and urban settlements have maintained their existence in this area both during the period of nomadic development and in the Middle Ages and modern times. Research on human settlements in Ardabil between the 5<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Middle Ages) suggests that the texture of the old mountain settlements in this area was irregular, but sometimes the topography of the earth has given them a regular shape. Most of the houses are square and muddy, and the difference between the houses sometimes consists in the position of the land or its size, in other cases in the shape of the ground and sometimes its slope and roughness are different. The architecture of such settlements is such that they easily adapt to these special conditions. Flexibility is not only in forms and shapes, but also in the way spaces are combined, in size, in geometry, and so on. The houses are sometimes scattered and separated from each other, and sometimes they are like stack, and the size of the space in them is proportional to human dimensions.

The open and scattered settlements are almost indicative of the security of the mountains or impenetrability and invasion of nomads. However, in the places where villages have constantly been attacked and invaded by nomads, they have taken the shape of castles. The houses inside the castle are mostly interconnected and are built towards the inner front of the castle wall. The diversity in the appearance of the castles suggests that, the existence of the castle before it arose from the necessity of adapting to a

particular geographical environment or as a result of the intensification of insecurity, it was influenced by a particular architectural style, which could have been adapted to very different requirements.

The investigations of the author of these lines show that the structure of the settlement system in the rural areas of the study area have been formed due to its relation to natural foundations while being influenced by human foundations, and there is a direct and significant correlation between land type and distribution of settlements and an inverse and significant correlation between height and distribution of settlements. Also, factors including height, slope, pasture cover and proximity to the river have been more effective than other natural factors in the distribution of abandoned rural settlements around the city of Ardabil.

The abundance and scattering of various samples of pottery with engraved motif on the surface and around the sites of Guran and Yel Suyi clearly shows that Ardabil is one of the most important centers of formation and distribution of these vessels known as Aqkand.

In this type of pottery (whose source of production was considered by scholars to be from Egypt and its growth in Mesopotamia, Syria and then Iran), engraved motifs had been done on colorful glazes such as green, yellow and purple, and then private places of the vessel had been painted. The purpose of using this technique was to prevent other paints from being sprayed or escaped.

Overall, the results of this study show that the rocky spaces of Kalkhvoran-e Viyand, in addition to being an expression of religious symbolism, are certainly an emphasis on a religious center. In addition, such houses, regardless of their primary role, may have been built to meet the needs of the natives who did not need permanent accommodation, such as a group of farmers, or shepherds who stay for a short time in such houses to use the surrounding pastures in special seasons of the year or as a place of temporary gatherings and settlements where they moved from one area to another. Scientific studies on the works and documents of the terrestrial surface of the sites of Guran and Yel Suyi, which is considered as one of the most important sites of this valley in terms of the extent and variety of works, show the continuity of settlement and living in this place from ancient times to the Islamic Middle Ages but the subject cannot be finalized without systematic archeological excavations and new evidence.

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## The Evolution of the Image Iconography of James Borovichsky

Vyacheslav Vyach. Babiyak \*, Olga A. Tuminskaya\*\*

**Abstract:** *The question of the evolution of the iconographic image of St. James of Borovichi is considered in the time interval: the miraculous appearance of the saint in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the preparation of the memorial service between the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the formation of variants of local iconography between the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. We are talking about the formation of a local iconographic performance, characteristic to "Borovichi" and "Valdai" types, the focus being the image of the fool (in a robe and with a scarf on his loins). The description and analysis of the composition of the copper icon with the image of St. James of Borovichi from the personal collection of V. V. Babiyak bears the character of attribution and it is introduced into a wide scientific context.*

**Keywords:** the image of Jacob Borovichi, copper casting, relic, the evolution of iconography.

The history of the study of the phenomenon of Orthodox foolishness originates in Russian religious literature (if we refer to it in connection to the main genres of Old Russian literature: homiletics, hagiography, chronicles, canonical and Liturgical literature), it continues in the church bookwriting of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and finds itself in the scientific literature of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. There are a lot of works devoted to the topic of foolishness. The main problems are generally covered in the monograph of S. A. Ivanov, in the works of D. S. Likhachev and A.M. Panchenko. A significant range of literary sources on the iconography of Orthodox foolishness includes the iconographic originals of G. V. Filimonov and A. I. Uspensky, as well as a monograph by V. D. Fartusov, these are the only works intended for the practical use of icon painters. A two-volume collection of materials on the iconography of G. V. Markelov is of great value for researchers. Important historical and hagiographic information is contained in the books of E. E. Golubinsky, N. P. Barsukov, Count M. V. Tolstoy and other authors.

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However, despite the listed sources, the number of published images of Orthodox fools remains far from complete. That is why information of a visual, literary and legendary nature that contributes to scientific research is of particular value.

Foolishness in Christ is a responsible and hard work, to which the Orthodox Church rarely directs a believer. The phenomenon of foolishness in Russia is covered mainly by church literature, which contains a description of an apologetic nature. One of the few scientific monographs relevant for the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the book by S. A. Ivanov, in which foolishness is analyzed from a cultural and historical point of view. Agreeing with the author that Orthodox foolishness is a concrete historical phenomenon, we will designate the chronological framework of our own research.

The first mention of this kind of Christian ascetics is contained in the Kiev-Pechersk Paterik (the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century); the heyday of this phenomenon falls on the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The veneration of the iconographic image of the blessed one began with the fact of the miraculous appearance of Jacob on the Msta River. After that, the relics were placed in the chapel, and in 1544 they were transferred to the Holy Spirit Monastery. In the same year, a celebration was established in honor of St. James of Borovichi (since 1572, a polyeleic celebration has been established). In 1657, Patriarch Nikon transferred the relics of St. James to Lake Valdai, to the Iversky Monastery, therefore the icons began to be painted some time after the death of the fool. The iconographic image could play the role of a reliable witness in the process of the saint's canonization. Such a process can be carried out by the church authorities on the basis of the appeals from parishioners and clergy of local churches, taking into account the fact that the relics are incorruptible and the miraculous healings performed from these relics for a hundred years after the official date of death. The iconographic image contributes to the beatification of saints.

The feat of Old Russian foolishness occupies a separate place in the list of asceticism due to its dissimilarity to the Christian path of other saints. Having emerged from the Byzantine "riot", in Old Slavonic there is a mention of "fool" and "obscenity"), foolishness could spread in Russia only after the adoption of Christianity, because this phenomenon in the Old Russian version was originally associated with the church. Apparently, there was no secular foolishness in the Old Russian state, or there is no information about it.

The Orthodox Church distinguishes the peculiarities of the origin of the fools, calling some "reverend", others – "righteous" or "blessed" fools. The monks who leave the monastery for the world are venerable. This is an early kind of foolishness. A later and more common type is foolishness in the world. Lay people who have assumed the guise of madness and who fool

around among people, but in the name of the church, are called "righteous". Both received the name "the fool in Christ". The assimilation of the earthly path of Christ and, most importantly, the experience of the difficulties of people's contempt and misunderstanding of Jesus is one of the reasons for the antisocial and immoral behavior of the blessed ones.

In Byzantium, foolishness was also born in the monastic environment, but by the 6<sup>th</sup> century, it "broke out of the monastery walls", thus becoming the property of the cities and, therefore, being part of the secular, secular way of life. A similar process took place in Russia: the first fools (Isakiy, a monk of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Avraamiy Smolensky, abbot of the monastery of the Holy Mother of God, the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) were representatives of the church world, but by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this feat of holy faith had already gone beyond the church and was spread by believers outside the monastery walls. For example, Prokopy Ustyuzhsky, a former merchant who was baptized (died in 1303), or Isidor Tverdislov, a native of Prussia, an educated man who consciously converted to Orthodoxy, and spread this faith already on Russian soil, in the city of Rostov (he died in 1474).

*The image of James of Borovichi* represents the type of lay saints. Quite often, Jacob is represented in a frontal pose with his arms crossed on his chest. The composition of this type of iconography was influenced by the already developed tradition of representing the holy fools and the blessed of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This is indicated by the sewn covers of Blessed Isidore of Rostov (1571-1585, GMZRK) and St. Basil the Blessed (1589, GIM). However, there are reasons to associate this feature of iconography with the vision of Patriarch Nikon: "you are alive, and your hands are folded on your fingers according to your rank." The worship of James of Borovichi was carried out not only in the parishes of the Novgorod diocese, but also in St. Petersburg and Siberia. It is known that a particle of the relics of St. James of Borovichi, along with other relics, was brought to Yekaterinburg from Novgorod Sofia by the first abbess of the Novo-Tikhvin Monastery, Mother Taisiya, in 1811. In the Trinity Cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, among others, an ark was kept with the relics of St. James of Borovichi, Christ being the fool. There is no information whether this is the ark that now forms the exhibition part of the collection of the historical museum of Moscow, Collection Borovichi, but this possibility cannot be excluded.

Art monuments with the image of Jacob Borovichi primarily position the skill of artists of Novgorod, Novgorod provinces and Borovichi, and then-Moscow and other regions. His image is represented as part of personal (Fig. 1, 2, 7), cathedral (Fig. 4) and paired compositions (Fig. 8) of "easel" icons and in wall paintings (Fig. 9). The image of Jacob Borovichsky is decorated with a cross-moshevik (Fig. 5), therefore, it represents a monument of decorative art used in cult practice. Special attention should be paid to the

works of decorative and applied art: the ark (1756) and the cast icon of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dissertation student thanks V. V. Babiyak for the opportunity to introduce an image with the image of St. James of Borovich into scientific circulation. The Ark of Jacob Borovichsky (1756), the museum of Borovich (Fig. 3) is a monument of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, made in the traditions of local Novgorod (Borovichsky) foundry masters and presented as a contribution item. One of the vertical walls shows the moment of a miracle: fishermen pull the body of Jacob out of the stormy waters of the river Msts. The rectangle of the outer wall of the ark is repeated in the small rectangle of the coffin, where the saint is represented with his arms crossed on his chest, i.e. as in the dream of Patriarch Nikon. Stormy waves and swirling clouds give the scene dynamism. Witnesses of the miracle-peasants in Armenian coats and hats, making efforts, pull the deck with the body of Jacob to the shore with a rope. They are helped by fishermen on a boat. The drawing a realistic looks, and reinforcing the hagiographic and legendary beginning in the work of art, the ark can be considered in three hypostases: as a religious relic, as a historical evidence and as a pictorial monument.



Fig. 1. Saint James of Borovich. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. Borovich version.

Fig. 2. Saint James of Borovich. The 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Valdai version.





Fig. 3. The Ark of Jacob Borovichsky of the 18th century.

Above: Jacob in an oak deck

Below: The miraculous appearance of Jacob to the peasants  
on the Msta River

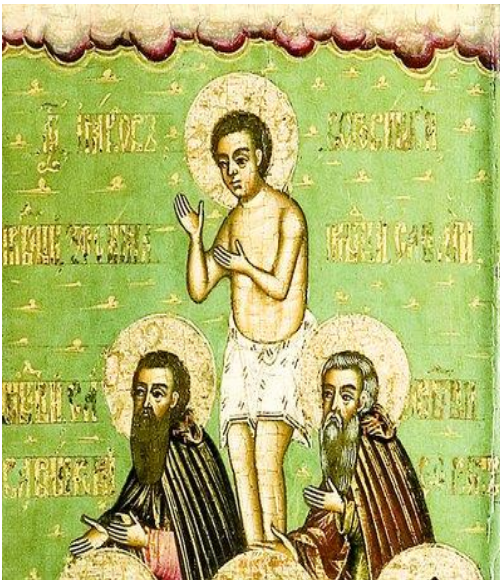


Fig. 4. Icon of the Novgorod Cathedral of Saints. The 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5. A fragment of a cross-reliquary. The end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 6. The holy righteous James of Borovichi is a miracle worker. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging icon. Private collection of V. V. Babiya (enlarged).



Fig. 7. Icon of St. James of Borovichi on the background Iversky Bogoroditsky Monastery, the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 8. Icon of the Apostle James, the brother of the Lord and the faithful James of Borovichi. Palekh. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A private collection

Fig. 9. The facade icon. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (?). Valdai Iversky Bogoroditsky monastery

*Hanging icon "The Holy righteous James of Borovichi the Wonderworker".* The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Copper casting. Private collection of V. V. Babiyak (Fig. 6). The obverse side of the icon represents the image of the saint in an oval. The semi-figure of the holy righteous man with a loincloth organically fills the space of the oval plane of the image. The composition is based on rounded outlines: the outer oval of the icon, the circle of the halo, the inscription [ST. JACOB B. Ch.] arched above it, the soft oval of the face, the smooth line of the shoulders, the rounded folds of the sling, the double circle of relief belts. The image is detailed by the fine "cutting" of hair, earlobes, eyelids, nose and lip lines, scrupulously worked out finger phalanges. Thanks to the possibilities of copper casting, an oval edging on the front side is given with a beaded dotted line, which texturally echoes the small scattering of background points on the reverse side. The cross and the spears are cast smoothly, and the fine drawing of the blades of grass on the rounded surface of Golgotha echoes the drops of the Sky.

The reverse side is a four-pointed double-sided cross with rectangular ends, a right angle and volutes in the middle cross. Volutes have rays in the form of balls with a bump at the top. There are no gaps between the volutes and the corners of the middle cross, the casting is solid. An eight-pointed

Calvary cross has a spear and a cane. Golgotha in the form of a slide. The spear and the cane depart diagonally from Golgotha. According to the outlines of the cross, this type was formed in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and according to the classification of

E.P. Vinokurova, it belongs to the type of body crosses-images of the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. On the reverse side of the oval icon there is a full Orthodox cross, which is similar in shape to the Ancient Orthodox one. If the executed cross is such, then the thesis of the dissertation about the production of this monument in the Old Believers' copper-cast workshops is legitimate. The subtlety of the study of the form, together with the conciseness of filling the space, refer the image of the "Holy Righteous Jacob of Borovichi the Wonderworker" of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the workshops of Karelia and the Baltic States. It was in these places, somewhat remote from Novgorod and Moscow, which were influenced by theological disputes, that the restoration of the pictorial tradition of Jacob Borovichsky could take place. The rejection of the Nikon reforms by the Old Believers did not allow the Valdai version of the iconography of St. Righteous James to spread among them. A unique example of the combination of the Valdai semi-naked type of drawing a figure on the front side with the image of an Orthodox cross on the back legitimizes the veneration of Jacob Borovichi and indicates the continuing attention to his image among Orthodox artists of the Late Middle Ages and Modern Times.

The body image should not be attributed to the rare types of individual order, rather, there was a circulation in its casting, but judging by the careful manner of execution and harmonious composition, the analyzed sample represents a variable type of classification, in which the creative efforts of the master are traced. Unlike the crosses, which were produced in huge editions, small (20-25 mm) oval "incense" were made much less often, their compositions were creatively comprehended and cast in small editions for a specific holiday or in commemoration of a particular saint—because today, they are a rare rarity.

In conclusion, the history of the veneration of the image of James of Borovichi reveals the main concepts of the formation of the memory of the saint and the emergence of the iconographic image: faith in the righteous boy; a miraculous phenomenon; the construction of a chapel on the site of the phenomenon at the rapids of the Msta River, and then the monastery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit in Borovichi; the development of a new place—the Holy Lake and the Valdai lands, which turned into a sacred topos — the Valdai Iversky Bogoroditsky monastery.



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## Symbology of Animal Motifs in the Verneh Textures of Shahsevan Tribe

Sanam Arzani \*, Reza Rezalou \*\*,

**Abstract:** *Most of the nomads of East Azerbaijan province belong to the tribes of Arasbaran and Shahsevan, nine independent tribes in the Yaylak period, and seven independent tribes in the Qishlaq period. Shahsevan nomads are composed of different tribes, such as Ajirlu, Moghanlu, Giglu, Qaralar Meshgini etc. Verneh, as a type of carpet, Maffrash or means of carrying household furniture, were mainly woven by nomads and some villagers in the settlement of Shahsevan nomads in Azerbaijan and some surrounding areas, such as Pars Abad, Germe and Meshgin Shahr counties of Ardabil province, and Ahar and Kaleybar counties of East Azerbaijan province. This handicraft has both the simplicity of the rug (Kilim) style and the elegance and beauty of the carpet. The lack of sufficient information in this field has led to a close study of some of these motifs related to Verneh. Therefore, one of the most important objectives of the research is to introduce motifs, concepts and animal symbols hidden in Verneh, in order to expand knowledge about the artistic products of this region and examine the impact of nomadic life conditions on the nature of their products in these areas. The research method is applied in terms of nature and purpose and its findings were first done as field research. Then, the samples from the studies were matched with the general information and eventually examined. The results of this study show that the animal motifs created in verneh tell the truth about the material and social life of weavers and show a valuable collection in their life. Verneh's paintings and motifs depict the nomadic way of life, the animal-dependent life in direct connection with nature, the adherence to the customs of the ancestors and the beliefs of these people. Animal motifs are a symbol of nomadic life, related to nomadic livestock.*

**Keywords:** *Shahsevan tribe, Verneh, symbology, animals*

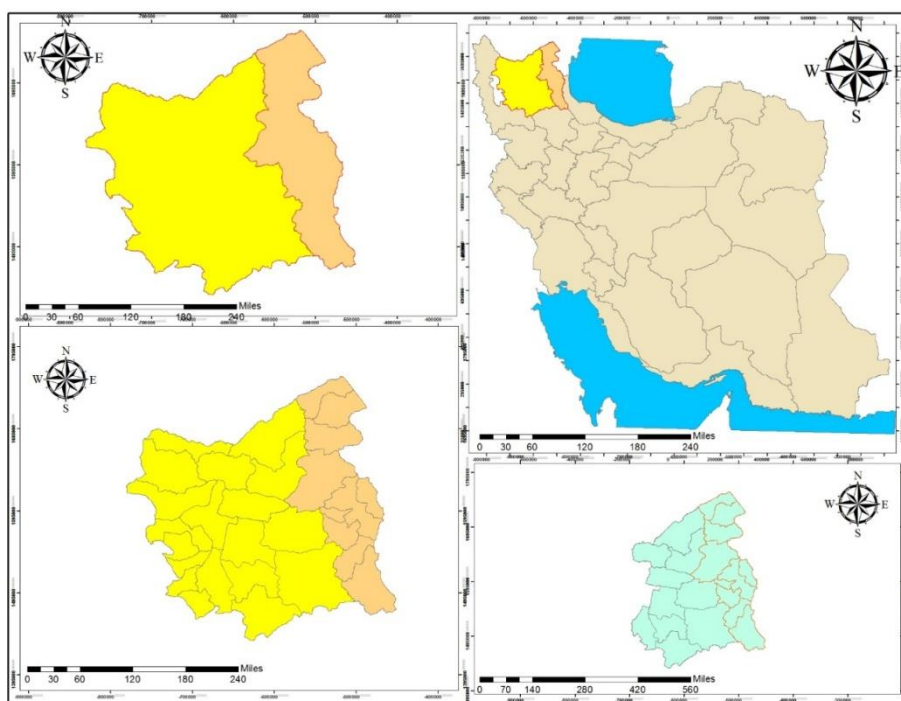
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## Introduction

Based on technical and artistic classifications, carpets are twofold: flat woven and knotted-pile. Flat Woven carpets are older than knotted-pile and also have different weaving methods that lead to the production of different products, such as Palas, Jajim, Zili, Verneh and Kilim. These types of handmades, which are often decorated with innovative patterns, hold a special place among handicraft products. Their quality and quantity depend on the culture of the region, beliefs and faiths, desire and people's living conditions, which are unique in every region. The production of handmade carpets by Shahsevan and Arasbaran tribes of East Azarbaijan nomads is very common (Map 1).



Map1. Location of the studied area

Verneh is mainly woven by nomads and some villagers in Moghan regions, such as Germi, Bileh Savar, Aslan duz, Pars-Abad, Arshaq in Meshgin Shahr and also Qaradagh regions, like Ahar, Kaleybar. However, the main origin of this industry is represented by the Shahsevan nomads from Azerbaijan. The theoretical framework for creating an artwork does not seem very logical just because of its artistic value in the difficult life of nomads. The deep dependence of the nomadic culture on the conditions and way of life has caused them to portray everything in their own handicrafts that have



played a role in their lives. In this way, these products are full of motifs that have been given them an artistic aspect. The analysis of meaningful forms can provide the basis for the analysis of tribes' social actions, because these forms explain in general aspects their history, identity and their beliefs. Encoding meaning, representing culture and constructing special meanings in the process of producing works of art and the final product is possible<sup>1</sup>.

As a conclusion, one of the features of the Verneh of Shahsevan is its decorative motif, which can easily illustrate the tradition and beliefs of its weavers. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient information in this field has led to the study of some of them related to Verneh in order to determine the type of motifs and their symbolic concepts.

### **Research questions:**

The main question is: what motifs and titles are common in Verneh of Shahsevan and what are the meaning and concepts of their animal motifs? Another question is that if various different motifs are used in a Verneh, are these motifs semantically related to each other or are they independent of each other?

### **Objectives and research methods:**

The main purpose of our study is to identify the original and widely used animal motifs in Verneh of the Shahsevan from Moghan region. Another goal of the present study is the classification of functional motifs in terms of appearance, dividing them into groups and subgroups to facilitate the research, and investigation of the mysterious and symbolic meanings of each classified motif. Therefore, the first field research has been done and then, samples from surveys have been matched with official information and eventually reviewed.

### **Symbol meanings in artworks:**

Pierre Bourdieu believes that understanding an artistic work cannot just be defined in terms of physical access, because artworks only make sense to those who have the right tools to understand them. According to Bourdieu, understanding requires decoding. But the decoding of artworks is not a natural and universal ability, as understanding artworks is entirely dependent on having codes, on the basis of which the work is encrypted. These codes and skills are neither natural and innate nor distributed universally. He calls such a skill a linguistic talent and he considers it as a form of cultural capital. Bourdieu's relational view argues that on one hand, a cultural work must be analysed in accordance with all environmental factors and on the other hand, in relation to the character structure of the producer<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ziapour, Jalil, *A brief history of Iranian and world art*, Tehran: Jihad Daneshgani of Art Publications, 1999, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Rezaei, Mohammad, *Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Production Area*, Social Science Month Book, No. 78, 2005, p. 53.

As artistic activities express, arise from common patterns, and to be learned from behaviors, beliefs and feelings, they belong to the fields of culture. The materials used to produce the artwork, the methods used and the natural elements that the artist chooses to represent, all vary from community to community and reveal the connection between society and art with the environment.

In the article entitled “*Art as a cultural system*”, Clifford Geertz considers art as a conscious production that affects the sense of beauty referring to the manner of arranging colours, shapes, movements, sounds and other elements. Howard Murphy also believes that works with semantic and aesthetic features are used to represent goals and representations<sup>3</sup>.

Franz Boas believes that wherever decorative designs have been used by primitive man, there are no pure aesthetic purposes, but these designs evoke certain principles instead<sup>4</sup>. He also argues that symbolic decorations are guided by symbolic principles. Thus, the motifs of animals are placed in proportion to decorative patterns. By studying shapes, he concludes that there are special pure artistic elements used in symbolic representations. In response to the question of whether the totemic dimension of social life was the main stimulus for the development of art or the artistic stimuli developed totemic life, he states that totemic ideas were a mediation among symbolic artistic manifestations.

### **The conception of symbolic motifs used in handicrafts by Shahsevan tribes**

A symbol is a sign that represents thoughts and ideas. In other words, it is something that stands for something else (usually by convention or association), especially a material object used to represent an abstract concept. Symbols are codes that play an important role in transmitting the civilization and culture of any ethnic group from the past to the future. One of the artistic fields that has such a capability is the art of Kilim weaving. Looking at the past motifs in Kilim, we can notice their presence in weaves from the contemporary period. Besides, the same symbolic meanings and concepts belonging to the past can be found.

It is worth noting that some of these motifs are abstract and others are explicit. In this way, in weaves such as twisting weave, which is possible to use horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines, abstract motifs that are quite similar to the intended design and do not require to be identified, such as the motifs of rooster, goat horn and hoof, four, six and eight leaf flowers, apple blossoms and leaves, can be used.

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<sup>3</sup> Izadi Jeyran, Asghar, *Anthropology of the Art of Rural Kilims, analysis of the shape and style of designs*, Anthropological Journal, No. 10, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Boas, Franz *Primitive Art*, In the Anthropology of Art, Howard Morphy & Morean Perkins (eds). Oxford: Blackwell. 2005, p. 396.

In this study, because artists have used these names for such motifs for many years, their concepts are defined on the basis of their names, and it is possible that these concepts, such as motifs like tulips, camel neck and fireplace, were not intended for kilim weavers throughout the history.

It is necessary to state that the type of texture involved in creating these ornaments, because the cracked texture in which step-like mode was used instead of vertical lines, influenced the motif texture. By this method, the patterns cannot be shown in a natural state.

In general, the motifs used in Kilim rugs are divided into three groups. The first group is related to those that refer to the weavers' linguistic awareness. They weave what they see beautiful in the environment and try to show this beauty in their weaves. The second group is related to the motif of animals and functional accessories that are used in everyday life and are considered a part of their lives. The third group deals with the symbolic elements rooted in the ethnic and tribal beliefs of individuals. The purpose of their texture is to conquer nature and its forces and use some motifs as a talisman to repel evil forces and to attain desires and aspirations, such as achieving power and courage, endurance, fertility, rain, life and prosperity, longevity and evolution. These beliefs are embedded in the ethnic and tribal beliefs of each region and most of them have been preserved from the past to this day<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Motifs used in Shahsevan's weaves**

Most of the nomads of East Azerbaijan province belong to the two tribes of Arasbaran and Elson (Shahsevan), nine independent tribes in the Yaylak period, and seven independent tribes in the Qishlaq period. Handicrafts are very important among these tribes. All kinds of Kilims, Jajims, saddlebags, horse blankets are among the most important handmades of the tribes in this region<sup>6</sup>.

The Shahsevans, like other Turkic tribes, have long-standing traditions of weaving. Today, the art of integrated production is still among the indigenous art of women. Until a few decades ago, traders and researchers did not recognize Shahsoon weavings. But now, these weaves have regained their lost identity in the collection of sellers.

The design was more naturalistic. But with the advent of Islam and prohibition of displaying human and animal shapes, the motifs became more decorative. One of the consequences of the prohibition is the creation of geometric shapes. Indigenous weavers have become more receptive to simple geometric designs. Thus, the motif of sun, moon, birds and animals were

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<sup>5</sup> Sadegh Poori, Elham, *Appearance and conceptual study of common marginal motifs in kilims of the Ardabil province*. Two Scientific Quarterly on the Promotion of Art Research, sixth year, No. 12, 2017, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Izadi Jeyran, Asghar, *Anthropology of the Art of Rural Kilims, analysis of the shape and style of designs*, Anthropological Journal, No. 10, p. 32.

woven in a conventional way. Despite the fact that the Shahsevan belong to different races, their weaves can be easily distinguished from other tribes. Another feature of weaves is the induction of a sense of movement in the designs. This quality is created by the interaction of positive and negative space in the creation of motifs. In many cases, negative space is created by mirroring positive space. But in some samples, these two categories are different. The meaning and concept of many motifs have been forgotten. Birds, plants, rivers, mountains, sun, moon and star, all have their own legends<sup>7</sup>. Most of the motifs used in the Verneh of the Shahsevan tribes are animal motifs. (Fig. 1). One of the most famous Verneh designs, which is one of the most important handmade designs of this tribe at the same time, is the frame or brick design. On the other hand, rooster design is the most common design in this area.



Fig. 1. Using different motifs throughout the Verneh's texture

### Verneh

Perhaps verneh can be seen as the most important and beautiful handicrafts of Shahsevan's tribe. Many experts have considered the verneh's weaving method to be the middle limit between kilim and carpet and sometimes it is called the home of the evolution of kilims into carpets. At the same time, most experts consider it as a type of kilim due to the lack of use of knots in the weave. Verneh is sometimes a combination of silk and wool and it is woven by nomadic women and girls vertically on the loom without motifs. Verneh is mostly produced during the Qishlaq season of the tribe because nomads have enough opportunities to rest.

<sup>7</sup> Hall, Alastair; Nicholas, Barnard, *Iranian kilims*, translated by Keramatollah Afsar, Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 2001, p. 39.

In the past, the nomads of "Moghan Plain", "Garamduz", and "Arasbaran" spun wool from their livestock with ordinary spindles and painted it in a basic way, preparing it for Verneh texture<sup>8</sup>.

Verneh looks like a carpet without a pile. Each weave consists of four parts: side, chain, margin and texture. In Verneh of nomads, it is possible that the chain is woven before and after the margin. According to some methods used, Verneh is woven in different dimensions, as follows: 60 90, 100 150, 120 200, 200 300, 250 350, 300 400, 400 600 and 500 800 cm. We should also mention that Verneh is exported to European and American countries.

Verneh in nomadic life is such an important aspect, that in some areas, when its weaving is finished, the first and the elder in a family goes to the verneh's loom and rewards its weavers, then women remove the verneh from the loom and deliver it to her.

As a matter of fact, verneh is one of the most basic dowries for girls in the region, and the bride should participate in weaving them. Even in the past, women belonging to a family who were looking for suitable girls to marry often asked about her weaving art and the quality of her Verneh<sup>9</sup>.

### **History of Verneh**

Verneh is woven by some villagers and nomads in the Qaradagh regions in counties like Ahar, kaleybar and in Moghan regions in the counties of Germe, Bileh-Savar, Pars-Abad and Meshghin shahr (formerly Khiav). The main origin of this industry was the nomadic region of Azerbaijan, which has spread to other regions starting from there.

One-sided kilim or Verneh is called Sumak or Sumeh in the Republic of Azerbaijan and Northeast Turkey. The main place of production was in the mountainous region of Qarabagh, upstream of Aras. Due to cultural-tribal relations and traffic on the banks of the Aras River, Verneh production gradually became common first in the Arasbaran region and then among the tribes and nomads of Moghan plain. Currently, the production of Verneh is unique to Iran and it only exists in the above mentioned regions of Iran. The feature of production, the process of adaptation or simulation, like many other rugs, such as carpets, kilims, etc., makes it difficult and even impossible in other parts of Iran and the world. Verneh carpets produced in Azerbaijan are usually found in colours of lacquer, dark-blue, cream, white, onion and light blue with the motif of animals in the middle and margin. Verneh, as a type of carpet, Maffrash or means of carrying household furniture, has been developed in the area of migration and nomadic settlement of Shahsevan in Moghan region of Azerbaijan and some

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<sup>8</sup> Tabibi, Heshmatullah, *Sociology of tribes and nomads*. Tehran: University of Tehran Publications, 2008, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Izadi Jeyran, Asghar, *Anthropology of the Art of Rural Kilims, analysis of the shape and style of designs*, Anthropological Journal, No. 10, p. 38.

surrounding areas related to the population and communities settled in this region<sup>10</sup>.

### **The marginal motifs of Shahsevan's kilim weavers**

The margin woven in Verneh is in the form of a small margin with a small width and a large margin with large width. Margins are called “Yılan” in local terms. Yılan means *snake* in Turkish language and the reason for this naming is the shape of the margins woven like a snake around it. Most of the motifs used in this case are specific to margins, and a few of them are sometimes woven into the texture. Marginal motifs are generally divided into two groups: disconnected marginal motifs and connected marginal motifs.

### **Disconnected marginal motifs**

Disconnected marginal motifs refer to margins with separate motifs at a distance from each other, which are used in both small and large house margins. In addition to the margins, some of these motifs may be used in the texture. Most of these motifs are used in the texture of striped Verneh due to the design of these Verneh rugs. Because strips similar to marginal strip are used in the texture of the striped Verneh (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2. striped Verneh

<sup>10</sup> Ghasemi, Ahad, *Moghan Negine Azerbaijan*, Volume II, Tehran: Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1999, p. 59.



Sometimes, the motifs are placed in the Verneh texture with the same sizes used in the margins, which may be included in the frame designs and fill the entire texture, or fill the blanks as a small motif. (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Framed Verneh

### **Connected marginal motifs**

These motifs are connected and interconnected, which have a chain shape. For this reason they are also called chains. Some of them come from the connection of separate marginal motifs (Fig. 4). Some have a going mode (Fig. 5) and others have going and returning mode (Fig. 6) and often take a positive and negative colours on themselves (Fig. 7). For this reason they are called male and female terms. The motifs are often used marginally, but sometimes they are also seen in the texture strips of verneh. Most of the motifs are used in small margins, whereas sometimes they are also used in large margins.



Fig 4. A sample of a camel neck design



Fig 5. Running water



Fig 6. The birds



Fig 7: The tulip

According to the findings of studies, the most marginal motifs in Shahsevan kilims are specific to the limited marginal space and are rarely used in the texture. Therefore, the limitation of the marginal dimensions is involved in the formation of its motifs. Also, the motifs used in a margin are not diverse and usually a repetition of a motif is obvious. The only difference between them can be repetitive in the colour mixture of motifs. The usage of two different motifs in a margin was observed only in the connected margins in the form of two flowers and leaves that were combined with each other (Fig. 8)



Fig 8. A sample of an apple flower

### **Types of animal designs used in Verneh**

#### **Rooster design**

Due to their importance in the tribe, some animals are used as a prime motif in Verneh. The rooster is one of these animals (Fig. 9). This motif is widely used in the texture and margins of Shahsevan kilims in Moghan and is less used in Ardabil itself and other areas of this province



(Fig. 10). Generally, the rooster is a sign of pride and this feature can be clearly understood in the behavior of this animal. It is also a symbol of the sun all over the world because its roaring heralds the rising of the sun<sup>11</sup>.



Fig 9. A sample of rooster design



Fig 10. The Rooster

In Avesta, due to the roaring of this animal by observing the rays of the sun, it has been called roaring, which is known in Persian as the rooster<sup>12</sup>. It is the symbol of caring and guarding, defiance, perseverance and manhood<sup>13</sup>. It is also considered a manifestation of beauty and lust. This animal has always been present in rural and nomadic life.

<sup>11</sup> Maljaei, Zahra; Akbari, Fatemeh, *Investigation of symbolic carriers and structures of Verneh designs of Arasbaran's tribe*, Scientific-Research Quarterly of Motif Visual Arts, Fifth Year, No. 13, 2013, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Bahmani, Pardis, *The Evolution of Motif and Symbol in Iranian Traditional Arts*, Tehran: Payame Noor University, 2011, P. 80.

<sup>13</sup> Yavari, Hossein, *Recognition of kilims and Iranian kilims-like* (second edition.) Tehran: Simaye Danesh, 2014, P. 153.

### Owl design

The owl is another animal that has an important position in some tribes. One design has been assigned to it with the same name. The owl is a bird that was known for its wisdom and good fortune in ancient Iran. In this design, the abstract motif of owl has been used in the texture and margins (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. A sample of owl design

### Snake design

What gives the snake symbolic power is peeling, having life again, and going back to nature and because it has always been the guardian of treasure in springs and ponds. In this design, the margin forms are repeated in rows in the texture. Yilan means snake and the Verneh texture has been filled with colourful snakes (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. A sample of snake design

If the size of this motif is large and has hands, feet and tentacles, it is called a dragon, which even uses small shapes on its body. They can be the spangles of the dragon's body, and to be considered as a small snake and dragon inside the body of a larger dragon. The motif of the complete dragon has been widely used in the Caucasus weaves. The motif of S, in addition to being the symbol of the snake, is also a symbol of running water. This is due to the twist seen in running water, which is similar to the twisting of a snake's body. This animal is considered as a symbol of happiness and joy, time<sup>14</sup> and a sign of inner change<sup>15</sup>.

Perhaps such an impression is due to the moulting of this animal. What has given the snake a symbolic power is its moulting, living again and returning to nature. Because of its moulting and regeneration, the snake is considered a symbol of fertility<sup>16</sup>, life and resurrection<sup>17</sup>. Snake weavers consider it as a treasure protector and a deterrent to demonic forces. They engrave it in the margins to protect what is in the texture. This margin is also very useful in the texture of the bread table, because it protects the bread, as their treasure. In addition to the motif of the snake used in kilims, the word also refers to the margins. As mentioned before, the margins are called *Yilan*, which is the Turkish equivalent of the word *snake*. This name is due to the flower design in margins, which is twisted around the weave like a snake and is responsible for protection. There is a well-known type of margin among the Shahsevans called "*Ala Yilan*", which is towards the colourful snake. Several spongy motifs are placed on each colour and are designed similar to the body of a snake (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13. A sample of snake design

### **Combined designs**

In these designs, designs from other handicrafts such as carpets or from other countries are usually combined with tribal designs. One of the

<sup>14</sup> Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, p. 79.

<sup>15</sup> Chevalier, Jean; Graben, Allan, *Culture of Symbols*, translated by Soodabeh Fazaili, Volume One, Second Edition, Tehran: Jeyhun, 2006, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> Maljaei, Zahra; Akbari, Fatemeh, *Investigation of symbolic carriers and structures of Verneh designs of Arasbaran's tribe*, Scientific-Research Quarterly of Motif Visual Arts, Fifth Year, No. 13, 2013, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Bahmani, Pardis, *The Evolution of Motif and Symbol in Iranian Traditional Arts*, Tehran: Payame Noor University, 2011, p. 109.

types of such designs is Kian (Fig. 14), which is known as the royal design due to the use of Caucasian designs.



Fig. 14. A sample of Caucasian design

### **Adapted designs**

These designs are usually adapted from the carpet design. The perfect example of this group is Azan eye design (Fig. 15), a complete adaptation of the carpet, and the animals used in it have been taken out of abstraction and moved towards realism, and it is considered a new design.



Fig. 15. A sample of animals design



### **Butterfly**

Butterflies are a symbol of pure love and sometimes a symbol of stupidity<sup>18</sup>. This motif is one of the new patterns and is not seen in old weaves. The role of the butterfly is rarely used, and the only place where this motif is used is in the Moghan region (Fig. 16). In addition to the above figure, another type of butterfly is rarely used in the contemporary period. It accurately shows the anatomy of the body of a butterfly, but is not one of the original and traditional motifs.



Fig. 16. A sample of butterfly design

### **The legendary two-headed animal**

Two-headed animals are used as birds and quadruped animals at the margins of woven kilims. Being two headed can be a symbol of Sufi thoughts, a mirror-like and reciprocal world<sup>19</sup>. It can also be a symbol of double strength and pairing. The two-headed bird is the most used design in the margins. (Fig. 17). Some two-headed animals look exactly like a natural animal that have one body and two heads, but in some cases, such as the picture above, it is considered similar to the general shape of an animal.



Fig 17. A sample of two-headed animal design

### **Part of the animal body**

Each animal is a symbol of a thought. When some of the components of these animals are used in the weave, it can express the symbol of that animal and the thoughts of humans about it. In some cases, the motif may be unrelated to the animal and only resemble a part of the animal's body. There

<sup>18</sup> Reza Sarfi, Mohammad, *Symbol of Birds in Masnavi*, Literary Research Quarterly, Fifth Year (18), 2008, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, p. 77.

are several types of such margins in Ardabil's Kilims that will be mentioned in our essay.

### **Head of bird**

This motif, which can be seen in great abundance in the margins and around bergamot orange, is symbolized by the image of clouds and rain, as it shows the connection between clouds and rain from prehistoric times. If this motif is placed around the bergamot orange or pond, it evokes the concept of rain. Marginal heads of birds are usually shown as male and female in contrasting colors, which have long been used in both carpet weaving and kilim textures.



Fig. 18. A sample of birds head design

### **Eagle paw**

In mythological and ethnic beliefs, the eagle is considered the king of birds. It is a symbol of the sun, maybe that's why the eagle is the only bird that can stare at the sun. The flying eagle can keep all the creatures on earth under its control, which is a sign of its superiority<sup>20</sup>. It is also a symbol of vision<sup>21</sup>, freedom and not being trapped in chains<sup>22</sup>. The eagle's paw, known in Turkish as *Qinakh* and *Qarmakh*, is very powerful and eagles use it to break their prey (Fig. 19.) This motif has been widely used in kilims as a mark of the mentioned powers and as a talisman for increasing strength and

<sup>20</sup> Dadvar, Abolghasem; Mansouri, Elham, *Introduction to the myths and symbols of Iran and India in ancient times* (first edition) Tehran: Kalhor, 2007, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, Alastair; Nicholas, Barnard, *Iranian kilims*, translated by Keramatollah Afsar, Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 2001, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup> Reza Sarfi, Mohammad, *Symbol of Birds in Masnavi*, Literary Research Quarterly, Fifth Year (18), 2008.

courage<sup>23</sup>. In addition to the margins, the motif of the eagle itself is abundantly found in the twisting texture of the Shahsevan.



Fig. 19. A sample of eagle paw design



Figure 20. Eagle paw

### **Goat hoof**

In ethnic and mythological beliefs, the goat is mainly male and a sign of productive power. It is also considered the lord of the moon<sup>24</sup>. By weaving

<sup>23</sup> Shirani, Razieh, *A symbolic and visual approach to Iranian talisman. Two quarterly motifs*. Second Year, (3), 2010, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Jobes, Gertrude, *Symbols, Book One: Animals*, Translated by Mohammad Reza Baghapour, First Edition. Tehran: Translator, 1992, 25.



this animal on the kilim, weavers are looking for a talisman for blessing, rain and fertility<sup>25</sup>. (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21: Goat hoof

### Camel neck

This animal itself is mostly used in the texture of kilims in a completely natural way. The motif of the camel neck, which does not resemble a camel neck in general, is used both in the texture and the margin (Fig 22). Camel, in addition to being a symbol of hard work and patience, is also known as a symbol of protection<sup>26</sup>.



Fig. 22. A sample of camel neck design

<sup>25</sup> Afzal Tusi, Effat Al-Sadat , *Protective Kilim of the motif of Wild Goat* , Quarterly Journal of Nagreh, No 21, 2013, p. 66.

<sup>26</sup> Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, P. 75.



### **Animal horns**

The horn is the image of supernatural power, divinity, kingship, strength, victory, abundance of flocks and crops, and fertility<sup>27</sup>. In ancient times, the Iranians considered horned animals to have immortal power, and there was a strong possibility of a connection between the bowed horns and the crescent moon. The moon has long been associated with rain, so the horn was thought to be effective in reducing rainfall<sup>28</sup>. One of the most widely used motifs of this group is the ram's horn (Fig. 22), whose eternal force is the manifestation of masculinity, male fertility, vigour and courage. The weaver, by drawing its motif of the neck, seeks to make his husband's force eternal and indestructible<sup>29</sup>.



Fig. 23. A sample of animal horn design

<sup>27</sup> Cooper, Jean, *Illustrated Culture of Traditional Symbols*, Translated by Maliheh Karbasian, First Edition.) Tehran: Farshad, 2001, p. 218.

<sup>28</sup> Afzal Tusi, Effat Al-Sadat , *Protective Kilim of the motif of Wild Goat* , Quarterly Journal of Nagreh, No 21, 2013, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> Hall, Alastair; Vivoska, José Logic, *Kilim*, translated by Shirin Homayounfar and Niloufar Ulfat Shayan, first edition, Tehran: Karang, 1999, p. 75.

### **Motif used in Verneh**

The common feature of all nomadic handicrafts is the traditional motif-making developed over the years. Traditions are a part of the system of social values through which nomadic life can find meaning. For this reason, in weaving, like any other work of art, they can not be ignored.

Weavers' deep dependence on the natural environment, animals, plants and family system has made the Verneh texture to be related to the life of its producers. In addition to the decorative aspect, it is a practical application to reflect the feelings and desires of the weavers. Although this feature can be seen in most traditional art productions, in the case of women's handicrafts, this feature is so strong that it gives expressive language to decorated handicrafts<sup>30</sup>.

Verneh is similar to carpet in design and appearance. All Vernehs have four parts including side, frame margin, chains and texture. Verneh texture is woven with different compositions. Sometimes the whole texture is divided into equal square parts. Inside each square, one or more motifs are engraved. Depending on the taste and mentality of the weaver, it/they may be repeated in another place with the same colour or not repeated at all. In other types, the texture is composed of different motifs without special division, which may be repeated along the length and width of the Verneh or woven without repetition. Another group of Verneh is woven mainly based on the execution of symmetrical motifs along the length and width of the Verneh. Such Vernehs often have special uses, such as preserving the tribal sign, gifts for other tribes, valuable dowry, a sign to carry the symbol of a tribe, the sign of good luck, the symbol of fertility, the symbol of loyalty, wealth and health. If Verneh is woven with any of these compositions, all its motifs will be in one direction. The beginning and the end of Verneh is clear. In other words, it is a carpet with a bottom. The motifs in Verneh have deep sensory and emotional meanings embedded in them. Motifs that are symbolically woven in Verneh are symbols that may have been forgotten, but still preserved by women weavers. Most of them are inspired by animals, plants and objects including gazelle, deer, wolf, dog, turkey, chicken, rooster, cat, snake, camel, fox and local birds. In addition to this motif, animals such as peacocks, lions, the Eurasian hoopoe and mythical creatures such as dragons are also used in verneh. Plant motifs are woven in a more abstract form than animal motifs and may be often found in the shape of hair leaves, cucumber leaves and trees<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Mahmoudi, Fataneh; Shayestehfar, Mahnaz, *Comparative study of hand-woven motifs of Shahsevan and Caucasus tribes*, Scientific Research Quarterly of Iranian Carpet Scientific Association, No. 11, 2009, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Hajilu, Fataneh, Amir Ghasemi, Minoo (2013). Motifs of the life of the Arasbaran tribes in a shop called Verneh- Anthropology Research of Iran, Volume 2, Number 1, 2013, p. 163.

Animal motifs are varied in verneh and are used depending on the composition and design of the verneh. They can also stand for a symbol of a tribe or clan (Fig. 23). In verneh, a limited number of specific motifs are used and the main motif, which is the symbol of the tribe with its talisman, is woven larger in the verneh texture. Motifs have different types. In all cases, the side of the verneh consists of two parts, namely the chain and the margin. Chains are narrow striped margins that are often created by repeating connected motifs.

In most verneh samples, there are two rows of margins: the outer margin and the inner margin, which are placed between the three strands. In this case, the chains of the outer edge of the verneh and the chain next to the texture have the same shape and often narrower than the chain between the two margins. The width of the two rows of margins and their motifs are also different. Often, the inner margin is wider than the first and outermost margin. Motifs of inner margin are sometimes interconnected and sometimes disconnected. What is most evident in the varnish texture is the contrasting colour of the chains with the text and the border that defines the formatting of the whole work. In addition to the weaving method that leads to the creation of abstract designs, the natural environment in which the weaver lives and is inspired by it leads to the creation of motifs such as lake pets, flowers and trees, or wild animals and even imaginary creatures.

Abstract is basically a kind of art of visual symbolism that speaks to its audience with gestures and presents itself to the audience in familiar forms. The artist, using conservative secrecy and creating a vague collection, creates mental subjects by using symbolism and stays behind the secret house of thoughts<sup>32</sup>.

In general, animal motifs in verneh of East Azerbaijan tribes can be divided into groups listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification of animal motifs in verneh

Animals	The birds	The common cuckoo - pigeon- the Eurasian hoopoe - rooster- peacock- eagle
	Quadrupedalism	Horse- camel- ram- deer- goat- dog- cat- wolf- lion- fox

<sup>32</sup> Ziapour, Jalil, *A brief history of Iranian and world art*, Tehran: Jihad Daneshgani of Art Publications, 1999.

	Insects	Spider- scorpion- tarantula- butterfly
	Other	Turtle- fish- snake

The texture of the motifs in Verneh is not done solely for the purpose of beautifying the final product. The extensive, diverse and scattered collection of motifs in verneh has a logical connection with each other, a connection that indicates the cultural relation of nomads with the surrounding environment. The internal logic and meaningful connection of the motifs reflect the integrated generality of the weavers' lives. The symbolic meaning hidden in the motifs is always discussed by researchers.

There's a fact that weaving a motif to express a wish, value and belief is definite and will not change the premise. These paintings carry many meanings of thoughts and beliefs. There are scenes from the lives of people whose written works are extremely simple motifs as appearance and extremely complex in meaning, which will remain forever in handmade textures.

**Conclusion**

The motifs woven in verneh represent the realities of the material and social life of weavers. A set of things that are important to them and that are the focus of their lives makes up the Verneh texture as a whole. Meanwhile, most of the Verneh's motifs are associated with animals, which are related to the nomadic lifestyle, life depending on direct livestock, adherence to the customs and beliefs of the ancestors and these people. A significant part of the collective memories of nomadic people has been presented in the form of stories and narratives in Verneh motifs and passed on from generation to generation. In this process, although a large part of the symbols lose their meaning over time, later generations will use the motifs in the verneh texture without conscious knowledge of their meanings. In fact, they are not inventors. Imitators can only repeat motifs without being fully connected to those concepts.

The concept of Verneh motifs can be found in the beliefs and traditions of its weavers, as they indicate the need and commitment of weavers to nature. The use of these motifs in the texture is not limited to decorative purposes, but believing in their hidden power is more than dealing with its intended beauty.

The animal motifs studied in this article are the most useful motifs used by weavers in verneh and each has a special symbol which is rooted in the beliefs of nomadic tribes. In fact, it can be said that everything has a

special place and value in the life of nomads. In their view, everything represents life and gives meaning to it. The reflection of this idea is manifested in verneh in such a way that they are presented together on a level beside each other. All of them are the component part of a tribe's life. The symbols that play the role of the weaver's heart language and emotions in verneh, in fact represent the existing and relevant realities in the current life of these people. All in all, the motifs that make up verneh are a part of the history of the tribes, which lies among the symbolic signs of their weaves.

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# **MEDIEVAL CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH**





## **Women's image and role in art: from Medieval virtuous mystics to today's Advertising perverse figures**

**Aida Furnică\***

**Abstract:** *For various historically documented reasons, women have always been considered a paradigm of either virtue or perversion. In this article, we focus firstly on the image of women as reflected in medieval illuminated manuscripts, where portrayals ranged from mainly mystics in convents, saints, mothers, damsels in distress, labourers in the fields and even women of ill character. Apart from that, we mention the role of women as writers and illustrators of Manuscripts. Secondly, we have a brief look at modern western art, based on the heritage of medieval art, that carries on even further the stereotyped image of women, systematically objectifying them. Thirdly and finally, we examine how this has influenced today's advertising depictions of women, outlined with distinctive characteristics. The visual discourse emphasizes certain physical and moral traits based again on clichés, stressing mostly decadent passive attitudes and poses or submissive roles. The present research is quantitative and qualitative, based on case studies and referred in articles on Medieval Illuminated Art and Today's Advertising and Mass Media.*

**Keywords:** medieval, women, western, art, advertising, stereotypes

### **1. Women's image and role in Medieval Art. Positive and negative depictions and authorship of Illuminated Manuscripts**

„The roles of women in medieval times is a subject that has been little explored despite the considerable visual and literary evidence that exists”, explains Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum at the opening of the *Illuminating Women in the Medieval World* exhibition from September 2017. „There are abundant representations of women in medieval

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art with which we are all familiar, including female saints, royals, and everyday labourers”<sup>1</sup> but also some less known, such as that of art patron.

There are biblical heroines, female saints (fig.1), and pious nuns (fig.2) who were held in high honour as models of appropriate behaviour (fig.3).



Fig. 1. Unknown *Vita beatae Hedwigis*, 1353, Tempera colors, colored washes, and ink on parchment bound between wood boards covered with red-stained pigskin Leaf: 34.1 × 24.8 cm (13 7/16 × 9 3/4 in.), Ms. Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig XI 7

Some passionate women were used as warnings against sinful conduct.

According to Christine Sciacca, curator of the exhibition mentioned above and author of the book *Illuminating Women in the Medieval World*<sup>2</sup>, medieval notions of ideal womanhood were everywhere in the illuminated manuscripts. However, in addition to establishing positive role models,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.medievalists.net/2017/06/illuminating-women-medieval-world-getty/> (accessed on 02/09/2021).

<sup>2</sup> Christine Sciacca, *Illuminating Women in the Medieval World*, J.Paul Getty Museum, Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2017.

medieval artists and thinkers used the Judeo-Christian creation account to reinforce some negative conceptions about women.

On the one hand, we have Virgin Mary as the ultimate female archetype, whose obedience to God and love for her son conceived without sin, till his death and beyond, set a paradigm for the faithful. Female martyrs dying for their faith offered historical models of purity and a resourceful inspiration for art early on.



Fig. 2. Unknown *Saint Hedwig and the New Convent*; *Nuns from Bamberg Settling at the New Convent*, 1353, Tempera colors, colored washes, and ink on parchment. Leaf: 34.1 × 24.8 cm (13 7/16 × 9 3/4 in.), Ms. Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126), fol. 56 The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig XI 7, fol. 56 (left)

Fig. 3. Master of Sir John Fastolf (French, active before about 1420 - about 1450) *Saint Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read*, about 1430–1440, Tempera colors, gold leaf, and ink on parchment. Leaf: 12.1 × 9.2 cm (4 3/4 × 3 5/8 in.), Ms. 5 (84.ML.723), fol. 45v The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 5, fol. 45v (right)

On the other hand, we have Adam and Eve. In the Middle Ages, authors and theologians blamed Eve for the temptation – she was the one who incited Adam to take the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. As a result, women were considered feeble, temptresses with poor judgement and in need of counselling. In some cases, both virtuous and evil women were painted in the same picture to highlight the difference between good and evil.

Furthermore, although there were more saintly models than wantons, the iconography was meant to induce the reader to reconsider their conduct (fig.4).

An essential type of illuminated manuscript was The Book of Hours, considered "the medieval bestseller of those times" (fig. 5). They contained prayers to be said by devout laypeople at different times of the day. Reading the holy texts, laypeople imagined themselves witnessing sacred events and conversing with holy figures.



Fig. 4. Master of the Chronique scandaleuse (French, active about 1493 - 1510) *Denise Poncher before a Vision of Death*, about 1500, Tempera colors, ink and gold Leaf: 13.3 × 8.7 cm (5 1/4 × 3 7/16 in.), Ms. 109 (2011.40), fol. 156 The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 109, fol. 156

These books were considered suitable possessions of wealthy Christian women and a testimony of their faith. Many women chose to be portrayed in their heavily illuminated books, where they usually appear kneeling in prayer before the Virgin. For example, in her Book of Hours (Ghent, *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, the late 1440s, book found in Vienna, at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – Ms. 1857, Fol. 14v), Mary of Burgundy is shown reading in an oratory. Beyond the still life on the sill, the window opens into a church where she is again shown, kneeling before the Virgin and the Child (fig. 6).



The interesting fact about women at that time is that they were not only portrayed in the books as owners of books, but there are also accounts of women who had been writing, copying, and illustrating books, at least as far back as Hroswith of Gandersheim, author of chronicles and plays in the tenth century. The arrival of the Observantist Reform Movement in northern Europe during the fifteenth century brought with it a veritable "explosion" in women's scribal activity.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 5. Workshop of Master of the First Prayer Book of Maximilian (Flemish, active about 1475 - 1515) *Mary Magdalene with a Book and an Ointment Jar*, about 1510–1520, Tempera colors, gold, and ink on parchment Leaf: 23.2 × 16.7 cm (9 1/8 × 6 9/16 in.), Ms. Ludwig IX 18 (83.ML.114), fol. 264v The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig IX 18, fol. 264v (left)

Fig. 6. Ghent, *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, late 1440s, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – Ms. 1857, Fol. 14v (right)

A Chronicle written by sisters at the Benedictine Cloister of Ebstorf in Lower Saxony recounts that in the first years after the house was reformed by Observant activists from Hadmersleben (1464-1470), all of the old liturgical books were cut up and replaced with new ones following the more uncomplicated Bursfeld common liturgy. It relates how the sisters themselves

<sup>3</sup>Laura Light: *Women and the Book in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Les Enluminures LTD., New York, Chicago, and Paris, 2015, pag. 10 (Introduction by Anne Winston-Allen).

laboured mightily to copy twenty-seven significant manuscripts (Breviaries, Collectars, Graduals, Gospel Books, Psalters, Antiphoners, Lectionaries and Hymnals) and proudly names six sisters who accomplished this monumental work.<sup>4</sup> In the secular world, one hears of women trained as illustrators who worked in family workshops, such as the daughters of the Nuremberg painter Georg Glockendon the Elder (d. 1520) or Jeanne de Montbaston (c. 1353), who illustrated copies of the lives of saints as well as secular manuscripts in Paris together with her husband, Richard de Montbaston<sup>5</sup>. There is also the illuminator Anastasia in Paris, whom Christine de Pizan praises for her skills at painting the backgrounds of miniatures. Daughters of prosperous painters such as Konrad Witz and Paolo Uccello were sometimes accepted into convents, as Katharina Witz, who became a nun at Basel's Magdalen Cloister in 1454<sup>6</sup>. Antonia Uccello (1456-1491) – whom Giorgio Vasari called "a daughter who knew how to draw" – entered the Carmelite cloister at Florence, where records list her as "pittoressa" although no work by her has so far been identified. The last great Flemish illuminator, Simon Bening (d. 1561), active in Bruges, trained his daughters as illuminators; one became court painter and "limner" to Edward VI of England and another a dealer in paintings, parchment, miniatures, and silk.

Women's books have much to reveal about late-medieval society and women's role and influence in it. Convent books – apart from their obvious aesthetic and devotional significance – also had economic, political, and social functions that extended beyond the walls of the religious house. Women's convents served the secular community as schools for educating young women of the aristocratic classes, as safe guardians of records (wills, deeds, contracts), as financial institutions for lending and investment, as employers of craftsmen and artisans, as distributors of food and alms to the poor, and as places of retirement toward the end of life. Christine de Pizan, for instance, retired to the royal abbey of Poissy after life at court as an author-scribe of deluxe manuscripts. Moreover, the pious nuns of a reformed convent guaranteed that anniversary prayers would continually be said for souls in passage through purgatory and that prayers of intercession would be offered for the welfare of the town's inhabitants in the here and now.

Women made thousands of prayer books and illuminated an excellent part of them. In books they purchased or made themselves, women still

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<sup>4</sup> Conrad Borchling ed. "Litterarisches und geistiges Leben in Kloster Ebstorf am Ausgange des Mittelalters," *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereins für Niedersachsen* 4 (1905), pp. 361- 420, cited by Laura Light, see note 3.

<sup>5</sup> Richard and Mary Rouse: *Manuscripts and their makers; Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200-1500*, 2 vols. New York, 1999, pag 235-260 vol.1.

<sup>6</sup> Emila Erdin: *Das Kloster der Reuerinnen Sancta Maria Magdalena an den Steinen zu Basel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Reformation (ca. 1230-1529)*, Fribourg, 1956, p.80, cited by Laura Light, see note 3.

tended to prefer prayer books, vernacular lives of saints, sermon collections, tracts, and devotional treatises. And while women of the high nobility such as Margaret of Savoy also owned courtly romances and popular non-fiction, most hand-written books before printing were still religious works. Here is a list of some women authors, artists, scribes, patrons, and book-owners accounted for and cited in Laura Light's book<sup>7</sup>:

1. SULPICIA (late first century B.C.) was the only female poet from ancient Rome whose works survive today. Her poems are found in the *Corpus Tibullianum*, a collection of poems by Tibullus and others, preserving an aristocratic female voice from the Augustan milieu of Horace and Vergil.

2. FALTONIA BETITIA PROBA (c. 306/315-c. 353/366) was the author of a centon in Virgilian hexameters, the *Cento vergilianus de laudibus Christi*, an account of the significant events from Creation to Pentecost. This work was read throughout the Middle Ages, and her biography was included in Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* and Christine de Pizan's *La Cité des Dames*.

3. AELIA EUDOCIA AUGUSTA (c. 401-460), the wife of the Eastern Roman emperor Theodosius II, was a poet and author of a Homeric cento that borrowed lines from Homer's epics to retell parts of the biblical narrative and a work on the martyrdom of St. Cyprian, also in verse.

4. HROTSVITHA OF GANDERSHEIM (c. 935-1002) was a poet and dramatist who lived at Gandersheim Abbey in Lower Saxony; notable for her knowledge of classical authors; she was the author of eight verse legends, six plays, and two epics.

5. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND (c. 1046-1093), daughter of Edward the Aetheling and Agatha of Hungary and wife of Malcom of Scotland, was canonized in 1250. Her *vita* depicts her as an educated woman who read the Bible to her husband; the small Gospel Book, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS lat.liturg.f.5, which miraculously survived unharmed after carelessly dropped into a river, is described as her favorite book.

6. MATILDA OF SCOTLAND (c. 1080-1118), daughter of Margaret of Scotland and wife of Henry I of England, commissioned a life of St. Brendan in Latin and then a second version in the vernacular for her ladies.

7. ANNA COMNENA (1083-1153), a Byzantine historian of the first crusade, is considered the first female historian; her chronicle is a significant source of information about the reign of her father Alexis I.

8. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN (1098-1179) was a Benedictine nun and Abbess, a mystic, theologian, and author of numerous works: three volumes of visionary theology including the *Scivias*, musical compositions

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<sup>7</sup> Laura Light: *Women and the Book in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Les Enluminures LTD., New York, Chicago, and Paris, 2015, pag. 18-23 (Introduction by Anne Winston-Allen).



for the liturgy, a musical morality play, nearly four hundred letters, sermons, medical works, and many more.

9. HELOISE (c. 1101-1164) was trained in the classics, Latin rhetoric and philosophy, and knew not only Latin but some Greek and Hebrew; her tragic love affair with the philosopher Abelard is famous; after their dramatic parting, she entered the convent at Argenteuil, and subsequently became Abbess at the Paraclete; her correspondence with Abelard survives.

10. HERRAD OF LANDSBERG (c. 1130-after 1196), Abbess of Hohenburg, was the author of the *Hortus deliciarum* (Garden of Delights), which included captions in Latin and German to teach her novices Latin.

11. GUDA (12th century, the second half?) was a scribe and artist; an initial in a Homiliary from c. 1175 (now Frankfurt, Stadtbibliothek, MS Barth, 42), shows Guda, dressed as a nun, and holding in her hand a banderole inscribed, "Guda peccatrix mulier scripsit et pinxit hoc librum" ("Guda a sinner wrote and painted this book").

12. MARIE OF CHAMPAGNE (1145-1198), daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, was a patron of secular and religious works; she commissioned Chrétien de Troye's *Chevalier de la charrette* and in her widowhood Evrat's translation of Genesis, and probably a translation and gloss of Psalm 44, "Eructavit cor meum."

13. MARIE DE FRANCE (fl. c. 1160-1215) is known today for her works in Anglo-Norman French, including twelve *Lais* (short poems on courtly themes), a rhymed collection of Aesop's Fables, and the *Purgatory of St. Patrick*. She may have been an aristocratic woman, perhaps a nun, living in England but "from France," as she tells us in the *Fables*.

14. SAINT CLARE OF ASSISI (1194-1253) was one of the first followers of St. Francis of Assisi, and author of the rule for Franciscan Nuns, commonly called today in her honor the Poor Clares.

15. BEATRICE OF NAZARETH (1200-1268) was a Cistercian Nun from Belgium, and author of the *Seven Manners of Love* and a diary in Dutch, apparently destroyed when her Latin Life was written.

16. MARGARET OF PROVENCE (1221-1295) was Queen of France and wife of Louis IX; she commissioned a translation of the *Speculum historiale* by Jean Vignay.

17. MECHTILD OF MAGDEBURG (c. 1207-c. 1282?), a beguine who entered the Cistercian monastery of St. Mary at Helfta late in life, was the author of *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* (The Flowing Light of Divinity) describing her mystical visions of God.

18. MECHTILD OF HACKEBORN (1240/1-1298) was a Cistercian Nun at the convent of St. Mary at Helfta in Saxony and the author of the *Liber specialis gratiae* (Book of Special Grace).

19. GERTRUDE THE GREAT, OR GERTRUDE OF HELFTA (1256-1301/1302), also a Cistercian Nun at Helfta and Mechtild's protégé, was the author (with her sisters) of the *Herald of God's Loving Kindness*.

20. MARGUERITE PORETE (c. 1250-1310) was a beguine from Valenciennes and author of the *Mirror of Simple Souls*; she was burned as a heretic in 1310.

21. GISELA OF KERSSENBROCK (d. 1300) was a Cistercian nun in the northern German city of Rulle who served as choir mistress, and who probably worked most of her life writing and illustrating manuscripts, including the Gradual known as the Codex Gisle, Osnabrück, Gymnasium Carolinum und Bischöfliches Generalvikariat, MS p.004.

22. BRIDGET (or BIRGITTA) OF SWEDEN (1303-1373) was the founder of the order of Bridgettine nuns and monks; her mystical visions were recorded in the *Revelationes coelestes* (Celestial Revelations).

23. BLANCHE OF BURGUNDY (d. 1348) was Countess of Savoy and the granddaughter of Louis IX of France; she commissioned a Book of Hours now known by her name (Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 390) that was made Paris at the atelier of Jean Pucelle; although only a fragment of her book survives, she is depicted a remarkable twenty-five times.

24. CATHERINE OF SIENA (1347-1380), a Dominican tertiary, is an example of a religious woman, known for her asceticism, who led an active life as a peacemaker and prophet; her writings include her mystical treatise, the *Dialogue of Divine Providence*, prayers, and more than 300 letters, many of them to the prominent political leaders of her day, and more than one third to other women.

25. JULIAN OF NORWICH (1342-c. 1416) was an English anchor regarded as one of the most important medieval mystics; she recorded her visions in the *Revelations of Divine Love*.

26. ANNE OF BOHEMIA (1366-1394), wife of King Richard II of England, commissioned a translation of the Gospels into English.

27. CHRISTINE DE PIZAN (1364-1430), known as the first professional female author, supported herself and her family by writing after her husband's death in 1390, composing forty-one works, all in French, including *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* ("The Book of the City of Ladies") and *le Trésor de la Cité des Dames* ("The Treasure of the City of Ladies").

28. ANASTASIA (fl. c. 1400) was a French artist and illuminator who specialized in decorative borders and the backgrounds to miniatures; Christine de Pizan praised her in *The Book of the City of Ladies* as the finest illuminator of her day.

## 2. Women image and role in Modern Western Art. Continuity of positive and negative aspects, objectification and stereotypes

The female image in patriarchal society originates from the Greek-Latin culture, but it is influenced by the Judeo-Christian and Catholic traditions, as we mentioned at the beginning of our previous chapter. We will continue now to look at the image of women as it develops through the centuries, till our present times, based on portrayals described at the beginning of this article.

The interpretation of the biblical account of contempt and the characterization of Eve as an agent of sin have deeply marked Western morality and theological thought. In the words of Gerda Lerner, the most influential gender metaphors present in the Bible have been those of woman, created from the rib of man, and Eve, the temptress who causes humanity's loss of grace. For two millennia, they have been cited as proof of divine support for the subordination of women.<sup>8</sup> The discriminatory discourse created around the first woman is enlivened in the medieval religious tradition with the introduction of another element, motherhood, which becomes diacritical of the concept of femininity. Through the Ave/ Eve anagrammatic dichotomy, the Church's thinkers establish a forceful dualism between Eve, the woman of flesh, the sinner and mother of the living, and Mary, the total pulchra, chosen to gestate God himself. Anagrammatic paronomasia had already appeared in the second century. According to Gambero, the first to include parallelism in his writings were San Justino the Martyr and San Ireneo de Lyon<sup>9</sup>. However, from the twelfth century and as a result of a crisis in feudal normative systems that endangered the sacredness of the marriage institute, attention emerged towards female sexuality as a guarantor of family unity. With this, a reformulation of the vision that women traditionally had as a promoter of chaos in the world from the mythical story of the book of Genesis took place. From there, and following the exegetical model of the Church, the chaos of sin introduced into the world by a woman must be neutralized by another woman who introduces order, redemption in it. [...] In the incipient literature of the Romance languages, the theme of the opposition Ave/Eve was created, or what is the same between Mary, the new Ave, giver of life, and Eve, mother of the human race, introducer of both physical and spiritual death in the form of sin.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the criteria that, since the Middle Ages, initially linked women to sin, lust and ignorance, in the middle of the 19th century, the myth

<sup>8</sup> Gerda Lerner: *La creación del patriarcado*, Ed. Crítica, Barcelona, 1990, pag. 270.

<sup>9</sup> Gambero, Luigi: *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1999, pag 46 and 54.

<sup>10</sup> José María Izquierdo: *Ave/Eva. Comentarios acerca de una tipología artística bajo-medieval*, *Romansk Forum* 17, 2003, pag 59-70.

of the angel of the home was forged, which further entrenched women in the domesticity and destines her solely for nurturing, divinizing the act of generating and setting the motherhood of Mary as the model of mother to follow. To mark the final turn towards the mythification of the maternal instinct are, without a doubt, the medical discourses that looked only at public prosperity. As Moreno and Mira explain well, allusions to nature and an essentialist conception of sex served to explain the social function of women. The female body had been configured for motherhood, thus becoming an inexcusable destiny for women<sup>11</sup>.

Counter-discourse of that woman devoted to family life is the bad mother, a woman afflicted by a chronic bovarism, fluctuating between the illusions of an ideal world and the reality of conjugal and maternal life, unsatisfied, careless and selfish who will make way for the figure of the fatal woman of the thirties.

However, we have to see that most of these stereotypes have been created by the world of men. It is not how women have portrayed themselves but how they appeared through men's eyes. We are looking at a limiting imaging of women. Men have always been in control of the archetypal constructions of womanhood that have influenced ideas of how women should appear and how they should behave, or how they see themselves, from the mild and patient Virgin Mother to the always-available sensuous Venus pin-up, or the vulnerable damsel in distress and even the terrifying witch. For the past two millennia, male producers have created the works of cultural construction that we have valued and admired and have defined our sense of beauty, history, taste, value, and heroism. In the world of art, and not only there, until recently, men have had almost exclusive access to creating our cultural heritage of images. And these patriarchal archetypes persist in our contemporary culture, shaping our ideas of not only beauty and taste but also national identity or political authority, sexuality and our deepest fears and expectations. The implications of these works hanging in art galleries shape our everyday lives: they permeate into our lives quite in an insidious way from fashion magazines, music videos, and advertisements selling products to young and adult people. Everyone living in the developed world is caught in the inevitable capitalist slip-stream of advertising and social media - where all these historical images of women shape and inform popular culture, from music videos to advertising for formula milk to album covers and fashion photography.

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<sup>11</sup> Moreno, Mónica y Mira, Alicia: *Maternidades y madres: un enfoque historiográfico*, en *Discursos teóricos en torno a la(s) maternidad(es): Una visión integradora*, Coord. Silvia Caporale Bizzini. Ed. Entinema, Madrid, 2005, pag.19-61.

*Some media reference this legacy explicitly, from Beyoncé and Jay-Z's music video Apeshit, shot in the Louvre; to Reebok, ads ripping off Renaissance artist Boticelli to sell sportswear; to fashion and lifestyle shoots inspired by the horizontal and docile women in our art collections. Many more are influenced tacitly as our heritage of fine art, and cultural images become part of our shared visual language.*<sup>12</sup>

*There is even a very definite connection between the normalization of how women's bodies have been eroticized in our high arts and how that echoes in women's bodies are consumed in certain manners in our fast-moving culture.*<sup>13</sup>

See *The Rape of Europa* by Titian, painted ca. 1560–1562, a famous painting printed on tote bags, toiletries, cosmetic bags, and posters and postcards.

*I think that sort of image is celebrated for its frothy sensuality, its stylistic beauty ... without thinking about what it means to have an image that is normalized of a young Middle Eastern woman who is abducted to be raped by a male god in the act of forced and violent reproduction.*"<sup>14</sup>

Same as in medieval times, there are also women artists who challenged these scripts with images that expose culture's misogynistic legacy and help us rethink the value of women's work and the politics of their pleasure of sexuality and power. Nevertheless, their work is significantly smaller: in the National Gallery, in a collection of over 2.300 paintings spanning the 13th to early 20th century, there are only 23 paintings by women.<sup>15</sup> To mention a few names: Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun (favourite painter of Marie-Antoinette, Paris, 1755), Rachel Ruysch (17<sup>th</sup> Century Holland), Rosa Bonheur (1822, Bordeaux), Artemisia Gentileschi (1593, Rome), etc.

At this point in our research, we have to mention an important author that has defended the concepts described above decades ago, in an early attempt to classify these stereotyped images of women: John Berger.

British cultural and literary critic John Berger published in 1972 his famous book "Ways of Seeing", which has sold over a million copies and still serves as a reference today. He was the first to set up a framework for seeing how images in everyday life, such as photographs and advertising echoed

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<sup>12</sup> Catherine McCormack: *Women in the Picture: Women, Art and the Power of Looking*, Icon Books, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/2018808099/what-culture-does-with-women-s-bodies> (viewed on 13/10/21)-Catherine McCormack.

<sup>14</sup> Idem 12.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/women-in-our-collection> (viewed on 14/10/21).

traditional and much valued images of Western European art, exposing many stereotypes regarding women. His iconic aphorism that in the history of painting "men act, women appear" neatly sums up the gendered power dynamic that women have been labelled on how they look rather than how they see. A woman has to survey everything she is and everything she does because of how she appears to others and ultimately to men.

Berger argues that traditionally, men and women have different types of social presence. Men are measured by the degree of power they display. The power may be in any number of forms, for example, moral, physical, economic. A man's presence suggests what he may or may not be able to do to or for you. In contrast, a woman's presence indicates what can or cannot be done to her. Her sense of being is replaced by a sense of being appreciated by others – ultimately men. He acts, she appears, and she watches herself being looked at. 'The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.'<sup>16</sup>

Often, she looks at the spectator looking at her. Her nakedness is not an expression of her feelings but that of the male viewer. Berger develops the distinction between nudity and nakedness. 'To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become nude.'<sup>17</sup> In the average oil painting of the nude, the main character is never painted; this is the male spectator for whom everything has been done. Berger illustrates this point with the *Allegory of Time and Love* by Bronzino. In the painting, Cupid is kissing Venus, yet their bodies are arranged in a way that has nothing to do with them kissing. Her body has been contorted to present itself to the male viewer of the painting. The picture appeals to his sexuality. It has nothing to do with hers.

Despite the notion of the perfect nude being broken by Manet's *Olympia* and replaced by the realism of the prostitute, the unequal relationship exploited by oil painting is still deeply embedded in our culture and shapes the thinking of many women.

Today, the attitudes that created the nude can be seen in the mass media, and "the essential way of seeing women, the essential use to which their images are put, has not changed"<sup>18</sup>. The ideal spectator is still male, and the image is mainly designed to flatter him.

So, Berger clearly showed that women had been continuously seen and judged as mere sights through the persistent theme of the nude in the

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<sup>16</sup> John Berger: *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin Books, first Published by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books in London, 1972; current edition: Penguin Books, New York, 2008, p.47.

<sup>17</sup> Idem 16

<sup>18</sup> Idem 17, pag. 64.

European painting. Moreover, if we consider the story of Adam and Eve again, that is the first depiction of the nude tradition. For Berger, there are two crucial elements to this story. Firstly, having eaten the apple, they see each other differently, so nakedness was in the eye of the beholder. Secondly, the woman is blamed and made subservient to the man by way of punishment. During the Renaissance, the story disappeared, and instead, a single moment was shown, usually the moment of shame. However, the shame is directed more at the viewer than towards each other. Gradually, the shame became a kind of display. Even when secular subjects began to be used, the implication that the woman was aware of being seen by the spectator remained. As a result, she was not naked in her own right but naked as the (male) viewer saw her. Berger gives a range of examples: nudes looking at the viewer looking at them; women looking in mirrors joining in the spectacle of themselves; or looking into mirrors and being accused of vanity when in reality they only satisfy men's desire to see them naked. Common to all these images is the sense of the woman being watched; by men in the painting, by herself, by the spectator towards whom her body is often turned.

### **3. The relationship between classical oil painting and today's publicity. Today's Advertising image of women: temptresses and luring figures, positive and negative portrayals**

All this world of women on display is a rich source for today's media and advertising, as we have already mentioned. John Berger has described a connection between European oil painting and publicity/advertising early on in 1972. Author Catherine McCormack has recently reopened the debate through her book and interviews this year in 2021.

According to Berger, publicity images often directly reference past art, either by copying it somehow or by incorporating the art into the publicity image. This 'quoting' of art achieves two things. Art is associated with wealth and beauty, and the publicity image benefits from this. Art also has cultural authority, which makes it superior to mere materialism. This use of art allows the publicity image to promote two almost contradictory things, spiritual or cultural refinement and consumerism. Publicity understands the link in oil painting between the work of art and the spectator-owner and uses these to flatter the spectator-buyer.

There is, however, a much deeper link to oil painting. The composition and visual signs used are very similar. Berger cites a list of examples:

- Stereotypical women, e.g. serene mother (Madonna), hostess (spectator-owner's wife), sex-object (Venus)

- The models' gestures
- The frontal arrangement of lovers for the benefit of the viewer
- The romantic use of nature with connotations of innocence
- Materials indicating luxury (metal, fur, leather)
- Wealth and virility conveyed by the stance of men
- Perspective used to offer mystery
- Drinking equated with success

For Berger, publicity is the culture of the consumer society, and there are reasons why it is inspired by oil painting:

- Firstly, oil painting celebrated private property; it expressed the idea that you are what you have. For this reason, publicity has not replaced post-Renaissance art; it is an extension of it.
- Secondly, it is nostalgic because its references to quality are bound to the past and the traditional. If it spoke in contemporary terms, it would be neither confident nor credible.
- Thirdly, it exploits the traditional education of the average spectator-buyer. Publicity does not need to make specific or accurate historical references; in fact, it should not do.
- Fourthly, color photography and oil painting are very similar in their ability to produce a sense of tactile reality to the spectator, reinforcing the sense of actually owning the thing (in the case of the spectator-owner), or the possibility of owning it (in the case of the spectator-buyer).

However, there is a fundamental difference between oil painting and publicity. Oil painting starts with facts, i.e. he already owns what is shown. It confirms the status of the spectator-owner and boosts his ego. Publicity diminishes the spectator-owner's ego; it makes him dissatisfied with his life (but not society). The spectator-owner made money out of the market; the spectator-buyer is the market and has money made out of him at two levels, as a worker and then as a buyer.

Publicity works on the fear that if you have nothing, you are nothing. Despite having spent our money, our lives will be richer by possessing more. The short-lived publicity image claims not that you are desirable or successful but that you will be. Sexuality is used, either explicitly or implicitly, by publicity to sell things. The message it conveys is that being able to buy is the same as being sexually desirable or loveable. Publicity works on the natural appetite for pleasure, something that is real. It does not, however, offer the pleasure as it is. Instead, it promises happiness, happiness gained by being envied by others, and this is glamour. It is not, therefore, offering pleasure in itself. The better the publicity, the more the spectator is aware of what they are missing. Yet, how does publicity remain credible if it never delivers happiness? It does so by being relevant to the fantasies of the spectator-buyer. The individual is trapped between what he is and what he



would like to be. And although tied to the concept of free choice, the freedom to buy this brand or another, the whole system of publicity is based on one proposal: that we can change our lives for the better if we buy something. The present is insufficient. Publicity images do not refer to the present, but the ideal future, where life is better. In effect, the publicity image has lowered the spectators' self-esteem and offers it back if they buy the product.

For Berger, the term 'publicity images' has the same meaning as advertising images. These images surround us, and that is unique to modern society. People usually believe that although advertising is everywhere, one can ignore it, tune it out, but it is not true. Advertising's influence is quick, it is cumulative, and mostly, it is subconscious.

Author Jean Kilbourne has an excellent definition of advertising: "Ads sell more than products. They sell values, images, concepts of love and sexuality, romance, success, and of normalcy. To a great extent, they tell us who we are and who we should be."<sup>19</sup> From her documentary *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women*, this sentence sums up what Berger expressed earlier and continues to exemplify concepts of women's objectification and stereotyping with current famous advertising campaigns in mass media, visual media, and printed press. She asks the same questions regarding women as the previous authors and she elaborates an extensive research on what advertisers tell us about women. The answer is invariably similar to the predecessors: the most important thing is how women look.

The first thing advertisers do is surround us with images of ideal beauty. Women learn from a very early age that they must spend enormous amounts of time, energy and above all, money striving to achieve a perfect look and feeling ashamed and guilty when they fail.

"Advertising contributes to people's attitudes about gender, sex, and violence," states Jean Kilbourne in her article, *Two Ways a Woman Can Get Hurt*. With advertising agencies standing by the notion that "Sex Sells", it is not uncommon to find sex tied into many advertisements seen everywhere daily. The objectification of women in our society is more prevalent than many would like to believe. Women being portrayed as passive, easy, innocent, needy, submissive, and dependent creates an understanding that women are less human than men. And when advertisers continuously use women as sex objects in order to sell their products, they begin to form the mindset that "all women, regardless of age, are temptresses in disguise, nymphets, sexually unstable and seductive."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jean Kilbourne: *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women*, documentary 2010, and *Can't buy my love: how advertising changes the way we think and feel*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Kilbourne: *Can't buy my love: how advertising changes the way we think and feel*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000, pag. 281.

We can see examples in many campaigns. A famous one is BMW's German automaker brand, 2008 advertising campaign for second-hand cars. The controversial ad was created by BBDO Greece and first published in Greece. This advertisement portrays a young, blonde, light-eyed female model lying in bed, looking seductively at the camera. The tagline of the ad, 'You know you're not the first. But do you really care?' promotes an explicit sexual connotation; it is emphasized that the young woman has had sex at least once before and that nobody should care about it. The ad has caused outrage in the advertising world because there is no car in the ad; instead, only a seductively looking young blonde woman. Most automotive companies utilize the sexual objectification power suggestions in their advertisements. Cars are like a 'sex' object. In general, since women are the ones to represent sexuality, women and cars are inseparable while forming an automotive ad's strategy. This ad has a strong use of sexual objectification of a woman being likened to a commodity-second hand car- and it is placing women again to an incompetent level as a sexual object. There are numerous other samples: especially campaigns for perfumes and the fashion industry, all very well known. See Pepe Jeans fall/winter ad from 2014, where a woman is literally put into the garbage bin or Dolce and Gabbana's extremely polemic ad from 2007 depicting the woman as an object, controlled by the four men around her. The sexual dimension of this photograph goes so far in the violence, that this scene has been assimilated to a gang rape by some people. The woman is maintained on the ground by a man above her, while the other three are watching, she seems completely dominated. And the list could interminably go on, with old and new examples, but the point has been made.

## **Conclusions**

We have travelled from the beginnings, early medieval centuries to modern western art to see how the images and roles of women have evolved, both as males portrayed them and as authors themselves of artistic endeavours. We have reached the present times imaging in advertising. Moreover, we have seen that, although steps have been taken against objectification and stereotyping, women are still submerged in them, surrounded by misconceptions and fighting in a world of men. Nevertheless, the current social value system does not appreciate the stereotyping, gender inequality, sexual and useless images, objectification of women. It is now expected from companies to promote the mental aspects and capabilities for all genders in advertisements to avoid offensive reactions. There is a growing trend in advertising, termed as 'Femvertising', which appropriates women's value and their empowerment to encourage consumption; yet this strategy

needs further adapting by most brands and advertisers. Deliberately selecting degrading women images and ensuring that they are represented in advertisements repeatedly destroys social values and acceptance of equality between genders. With this, future research on the subject should be further conducted to analyze the impact of all the above elements in our culture and create more awareness to promote real change in society.

### List of illustrations (Source: J. Paul Getty Museum Images, free of copyright)

Fig. 1. (<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/1407/unknown-nicolaus-of-prussia-vita-beatae-hedwigis-silesian-1353/>)

Unknown

*Vita beatae Hedwigis*, 1353, Tempera colors, colored washes, and ink on parchment bound between wood boards covered with red-stained pigskin

Leaf: 34.1 × 24.8 cm (13 7/16 × 9 3/4 in.), Ms. Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126)

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig XI 7

Fig. 2. (<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/4032/unknown-maker-saint-hedwig-and-the-new-convent-nuns-from-bamberg-settling-at-the-new-convent-silesian-1353/>)

Unknown

*Saint Hedwig and the New Convent; Nuns from Bamberg Settling at the New Convent*, 1353, Tempera colors, colored washes, and ink on parchment

Leaf: 34.1 × 24.8 cm (13 7/16 × 9 3/4 in.), Ms. Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126), fol. 56

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Fig. 3. (<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/2734/master-of-sir-john-fastolf-saint-anne-teaching-the-virgin-to-read-french-or-english-about-1430-1440/>)

Master of Sir John Fastolf (French, active before about 1420 - about 1450)

*Saint Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read*, about 1430–1440, Tempera colors, gold leaf, and ink on parchment

Leaf: 12.1 × 9.2 cm (4 3/4 × 3 5/8 in.), Ms. 5 (84.ML.723), fol. 45v

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Fig. 4 (<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/255124/master-of-the-chronique-scandaleuse-denise-poncher-before-a-vision-of-death-french-about-1500/>)

Master of the Chronique scandaleuse (French, active about 1493 - 1510)

*Denise Poncher before a Vision of Death*, about 1500, Tempera colors, ink and gold

Leaf: 13.3 × 8.7 cm (5 1/4 × 3 7/16 in.), Ms. 109 (2011.40), fol. 156

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Fig. 5. (<http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/3947/workshop-of-master-of-the-first-prayer-book-of-maximilian-mary-magdalene-with-a-book-and-an-ointment-jar-flemish-about-1510-1520/>)

Workshop of Master of the First Prayer Book of Maximilian (Flemish, active about 1475 - 1515)

*Mary Magdalene with a Book and an Ointment Jar*, about 1510–1520, Tempera colors, gold, and ink on parchment

Leaf: 23.2 × 16.7 cm (9 1/8 × 6 9/16 in.), Ms. Ludwig IX 18 (83.ML.114), fol. 264v

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig IX 18, fol. 264v

Fig. 6. (The Oxford History of Western Art, Ed. Martin Kemp, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000)

Ghent, *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, late 1440s, Vienna, Österreichische

Nationalbibliothek – Ms. 1857, Fol. 14v

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## **Thematic traditions and new-media multidisciplinary in the exhibitions from the Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași**

**Cătălin Soreanu\*, Lavinia German\***

**Abstract:** The present research aims to analyse the thematic diversity of the exhibition activities in the Aparte Gallery of "George Enescu" National University of Arts (UNAGE) in Iași, respectively artistic projects carried out by students, teachers or guest artists of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design (FAVD), between 2005 - 2020. Furthermore, we will place heavy emphasis on a multitude of formats of artistic events (exhibitions, workshops, conferences, symposia, artistic residencies), associated with various artistic mediums, such as painting, graphics, sculpture, photography, installation, performance, etc. The gallery has become, over time, an authentic space for contemporary art projects, which encourages the experiment and artistic research of all specializations within the faculty. All in all, the purpose of this article is to relate the diversity of artistic event formats, themes and their media variety, in the institutional context of art education, analysing the course and evolution of the Aparte Gallery space.

**Keywords:** Aparte Gallery, exhibitions, multidisciplinary, visual arts, art mediums

Aparte Gallery was established in 2004 on the initiative and through the collective effort of the following professors: Dan Acostioaei, Matei Bejenaru, Cătălin Gheorghe and Bogdan Teodorescu, in building B of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design<sup>1</sup> in Iași, 189 Sărărie Street. The first exhibitions took place in January 2005, and in the next years, Cristian Nae, Lavinia German, Mihai Vereștiuc, as well as other professors from FAVD joined the curatorial team<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of the Aparte Gallery was to offer an

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<sup>1</sup> At that moment, the title of the faculty was the "Faculty of Fine Arts, Decorative Arts, and Design" (FADD), and it became Faculty of Visual Arts and Design (FAVD) few years later, in 2012. (UNAGE Iași 2021).

<sup>2</sup> A presentation catalogue with artworks from FAVD professors was published in 2020, while celebrating 160 years since the foundation of UNAGE Iași. (Simionescu and Bălăiță 2020).

exhibition space dedicated to student activities – as a matter of fact a natural consequence of the need to deepen and complete their artistic projects, the development of the faculty infrastructure and to experiment with the exhibition as an artistic format. Over time, its usefulness as a multifunctional space for artistic events has become evident, the gallery hosting - in addition to visual arts exhibitions – many symposia, biennials, exams exhibitions, workshops and admission sessions, etc.

As a basis for artistic practice for students of all faculties of the UNAGE Iasi, Aparte Gallery has become one of the most important infrastructures for supporting teaching activities as a project space that mediates the direct contact between the university artistic events and the general public, either local, national or international. The gallery hosts interdisciplinary artistic events, thus mediating the exchange of ideas and experiences specific to contemporary culture, being one of the few university exhibition spaces in Romania.



Fig. 1. Image with the exterior of the Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, at the opening of the first exhibition included in the “Myth-Body-Space” project from 2011

In 2020 and 2021, an artistic research project was carried out around the gallery and it aimed at stimulating and streamlining the exhibition activities performed in the Aparte Gallery (as a practice -based learning for students within UNAGE Iași) - part of the contemporary interdisciplinary

teaching process<sup>3</sup>. One of the results of this project was the creation of an archive of projects within the past 15 years since the establishment of the gallery, chronologically structured and organized in a database providing a retrospective x-ray of the evolution of the exhibition space in a cultural, educational and artistic context. The effort involved identifying, structuring, retrieving and, in some places, reconstructing information representative of these events, with the assumption of inherent shortcomings and inaccuracies. This consistent accumulation of case studies (over 250 events with over 1600 participants, students, teachers and guest artists) can be inventoried and interrogated from multiple perspectives, producing both landmarks for understanding the development of artistic space identity and symptoms of evolutionary changes in its relationship with artistic and cultural context.

The analysis perspectives of the Aparte Gallery archive include the study of artistic formats that integrate exhibitions, colloquia, symposia, in short elements that reveal the versatility of this space and the plurality of artistic concerns of generations of students over the past 15 years. One direction of the analysis is the exhibition as an artistic format, compared to other exhibition formulas in which the artistic artefact, the narrative of the concept or the structural formality of the works is prioritized, all these being found in the Aparte Gallery, proving once again the plurality of exhibitions as part of FAVD, UNAGE Iași. Another thematic perspective is related to the subject itself and research topics approached, which complete - in a synchronous manner - the understanding, adaptation and appropriation of exhibition formats, and also the understanding of space and institutional criticism (ranging from personal mythologies and formulas of psychological and social intimate introspection, to subjects of social, political or economic criticism, or studies of artistic mediums and artistic criticism).

In the present research, we will prioritize those directions that allow us to avoid the simple historical, archival, taxonomic inventory of case studies (although these particular aspects give substance to our research). In addition, we will summarize the conclusive premises of the study that favour artistic practices, speculative thinking and creative strategies. We will also approach the study of the project archive from two perspectives: one regarding the status of the gallery space in the institutional and artistic context, and another one that touches the analysis of the exhibition program, respectively of the events calendar, relevant due to the diversity of exhibition formats, thematic versatility, and variety of artistic mediums.

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<sup>3</sup> Two publications were realized in 2020, "Aparte Gallery. Exhibitions", coordinating editor Cătălin Gheorghe in English (Gheorghe, German, et al., Aparte Gallery. Exhibitions 2020) and Romanian (Gheorghe, German, et al., Galeria Aparte. Expoziții 2020), and "Aparte Gallery. A guide for exhibition practices", coordinating editor Lavinia German (German, Gheorghe, et al. 2020).



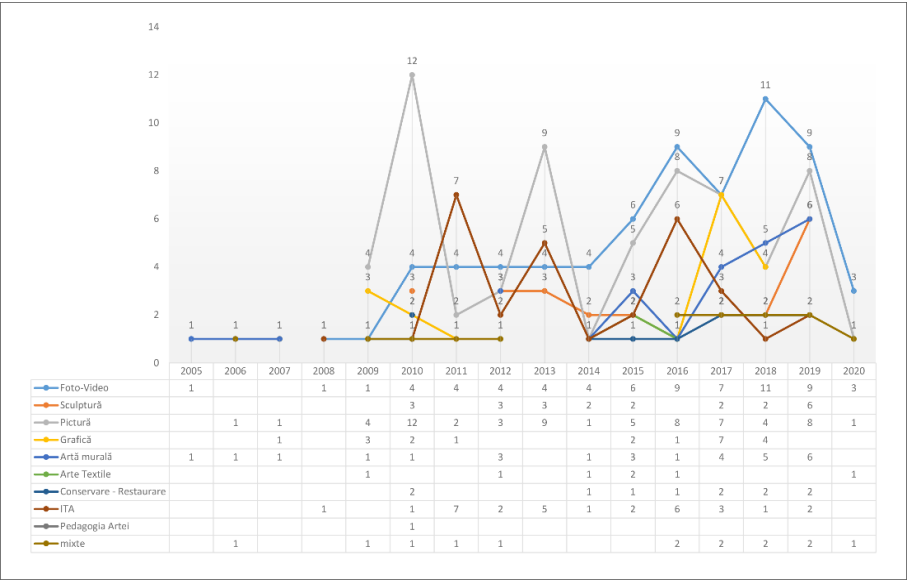


Fig. 2. Statistics on the presence of FAVD specializations in the Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, between 2005 and 2020, realized by Cătălin Soreanu, October 2021

The working methods have involved the quantitative analysis of the body of case studies, highlighting the criteria and establishing selective analogies, distribution and interpretation of results and their translation into presumptive research conclusions.

**The specificity of the educational and artistic context**

As a basis for artistic practice for students within all faculties of the UNAGE Iași, Aparte Gallery is one of the most important infrastructures for supporting teaching activities, being established as a project space that mediates direct contact between Iași university artistic events and the public showing interest towards art. The gallery hosts interdisciplinary artistic events, mediating the exchange of ideas and experiences specific to contemporary culture, being one of the few university exhibition spaces in Romania<sup>4</sup>.

The city of Iași benefits from several spaces of the Union of Visual Artists in Romania (UAPR), respectively the Victoria, Pallady and Tonitza

<sup>4</sup> There are similar exhibition spaces within art universities or faculties in Cluj, Bucharest and Timișoara.

Art Galleries, in addition to some other private spaces, such as Dana Galleries and Borderline ArtSpace, along with exhibition spaces developed inside institutions (museums, memorial houses, libraries, universities, etc). In this context, Aparte Gallery is one of the few art spaces in Iași with a high degree of artistic autonomy, protected from the pressures of the art market (which often involves commercial compromises from exhibiting artists or institutions that own galleries). It is happily complementing the artistic infrastructure of Iași, precarious compared to other cities, such as Bucharest, Cluj or Timișoara<sup>5</sup>.

### **The conditions of the space of the gallery**

The gallery has a physical space located in D-Building of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design in Copou, Iași, in a building with a construction specific to its initial destination (a stable) - respectively a long nave, later divided into working and administrative areas throughout its length. The structural reminiscences of the initial functionality of the space are present in the gallery in the form of the four central pillars, which were incorporated into the architectural structure by plastering and applying elements specific to the electrical system.

When the gallery was established in 2005, the space benefited from an entrance in the northern part of the construction (as seen in Figure 1), with two windows and it was arranged with white walls, lighting system with halogen lamps and grey tiles. The precariousness of the arrangement is evident in the images of the first exhibitions, marked by the additional light of the windows, the insufficiency of the lighting system and the rudimentary nature of the apparent heating structures (pipes and radiators). At the beginning of 2015, there was a renovation of the space and a substantial structural restoration of the building, with the complete cancellation of the windows, followed by the realization of a floor covered with epoxy paint for heavy traffic, the replacement of the lighting system with modern projectors, the relocation on the southern wall of the entrance, including a glass canopy with steel fasteners, granite steps and a disabled access ramp. Subsequently (during the Camera Plus biennial in 2016<sup>6</sup>), the radiators were covered with wooden structures, and in 2018-2019 two air conditioning units were installed. In 2020 and 2021, the third major arrangement of the space took place when, within the FDI projects "The Aparte Base" and "The Extended

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<sup>5</sup> As noted by Oana Maria Nae in her introduction to "Galeria Aparte. Index 2005 – 2020", published by Galeria Aparte, UNAGE Iași in October 2021, coordinating editor Cătălin Soreanu. (Soreanu, German and Gavrilean, et al. 2021, 12-13).

<sup>6</sup> CAMERA PLUS - Biennial of contemporary photography and dynamic image, published by CFC –Center for Contemporary Photography in Iasi, 2021, coordinating editor Matei Bejenaru (Bejenaru, et al. 2016).

Aparte Base", the floor and the painting of the walls were restored, the lighting system was completely replaced with LED lamps of colour controlled temperature, specific exhibition furniture was built (frames, additional movable walls, steps and cubes) and a creative socialization area was designed outside the gallery by arranging a space with urban furniture.

We should mention that all these arrangement stages have preserved the initial white-cube structure of the gallery - an exhibition concept of neutral, impartial, objective space, able to enhance the thematic aspect of the exhibition events. Through its generous surface area, through the modularity of the space dictated by the presence of the central pillars and through the symmetrical arrangement towards the entrance, Aparte Gallery is a space with artistic personality and recognizable exhibition potential.

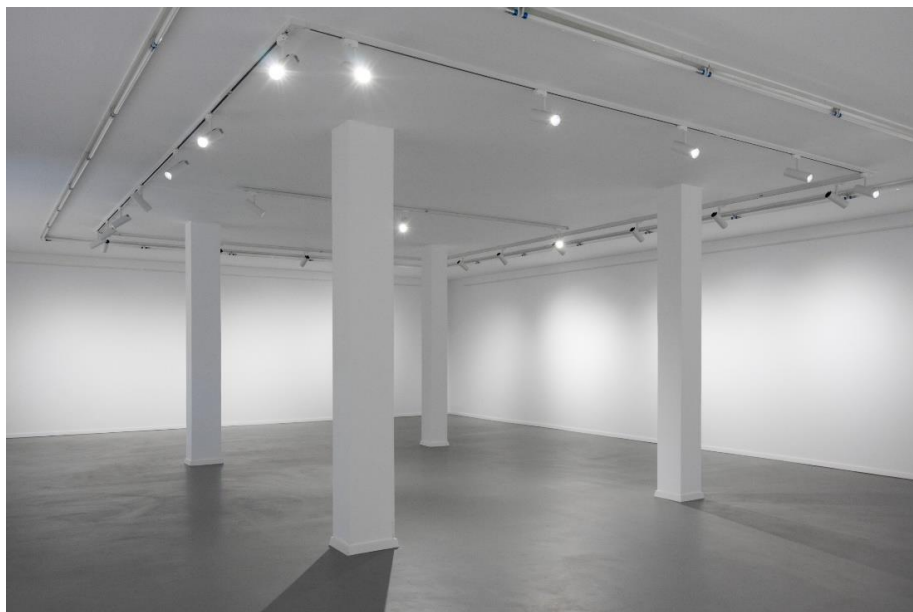


Fig. 3. Image from the interior of the Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, with the four pillars, the white walls and grey floor, and the new LED lightning system in place. Photography by Lavinia German, September 2020.

### **The exhibition program**

The calendar of events of the Aparte Gallery is very dynamic and it is positioned around the program of the academic year, offering an event – namely an exhibition – at its opening, various exhibitions of specializations scheduled throughout the semesters. As a consequence, the gallery hosts

exam sessions for undergraduates and dissertations, in February and July, under the form of short exhibitions (daily events, that follow each other quickly in the few weeks interval allocated to the exams session), also exhibitions of doctoral students within the professional component of their doctoral thesis, etc. There is a variety of exhibition formats, from visual art exhibitions to interdisciplinary exhibitions, to recurring events, such as art biennials or international exhibitions, symposia, workshops for FAVD students or the general public, artist-talks and presentations of artistic activities, etc.

In the analysis of the exhibition archive of the 15 years of activity in the Aparte Gallery, a constant is offered by the typology of the exhibitions, the nature of their participants, and the distribution within the specializations of the faculty (as seen in Figure 2). Specifically, we identify group, collective or personal exhibitions, which vary over the 15 years, with moments of active recurrence corresponding to the peaks of 2010 and 2018 (which coincide, for example, with the very moments of the gallery renovations). We also note how group exhibitions are prevalent, a natural consequence of the university nature of the gallery where student groups constantly exhibit (specialization exhibitions), and personal initiatives or those of micro-organization in artistic groups appear with difficulty. As for the educational specifics of the gallery, we can also remark the balance between the presence of students' exhibitions (on average, 15-20 exhibitions per year) and those of teachers, along with projects by guest artists in collaborations with specific artistic partner's initiatives (an insignificant number of exhibitions until 2015, then 8 - 10 exhibitions annually). The sequence of the 2010 and 2015 peaks showed the lack of interest of teachers to exhibit in this space (before 2010), but also its transformation into a desirable option (after 2010), given the precariousness of the artistic exhibition infrastructure of Iași.

### **The thematic diversity**

The thematic diversity of the gallery's exhibitions follows the artistic, cultural, social-demographic, economic and political changes of this 15-year interval, as they are perceived in the local artistic space. Particularly heterogeneous, this thematic dimension is characterized by extremely varied artistic practices, such as: artistic attitudes tributary to traditional mediums, intimate-introspective psychological investigations, capitalization of formal aspects regarding traditional mediums, synchronicity with current major political events, the dominant recall to the technological advance, the mixing of the formal experiment with the critical argumentation, the exploration of the specific expressiveness of the artistic mediums, etc.

Within those artistic manifestations that we associate with traditional media, we discover the predilection for artistic objectivity, the interest towards the plastic arts or the excellent mastery of these mediums (painting, graphics, sculpture, decorative arts), with a major stake on the subject, often to the detriment of the exhibition space offer. Such exhibitions point to the theme of classical subjects concerning the genre of portraiture and landscape compositions, the exploration of volumes and space, the compositional exercise with the specific language elements of artistic mediums.

A part of the exhibition experiments in the Aparte Gallery is dedicated, thematically, to those intimate-introspective investigations, with psychological accents, which exploit the creative personal mythologies of the authors, transposed at the level of representation, medium or discursive offer. We can mention here the series of exhibitions "Myth-Body-Space" initiated by the Photography, Video, and Computer Image Processing Specialization in collaboration with the History and Art Theory Specialization, coordinated by Matei Bejenaru, Bogdan Teodorescu, Lavinia German and Andrei Cozlac, in June 2011. Andreea Dănila (curator Raluca Ciocoiu), Emanuela Boros (curator Cătălin Soreanu), Alex Gheorghiiță, Ciprian Niculescu and Bianca Boros (curator Cristina Moraru) exhibited here, whose projects explored the themes of intimate space versus private space, the unfamiliar as a narrative element<sup>7</sup> or the creative erotica of photographic intimacy. We also could mention other exhibitions realized by students of Painting specialization, such as George Cernat, author of the exhibition "(Un) caught in the mood", Gabriela Stoica ("The voice inside"), Melania Hangan ("Identity"), Delia Andrieș ("The last day of magic"), all from 2010. It was a student promotion coordinated by professor Mihai Tarași, remarkable for its special sensitivity towards the act of painting and its narrative and introspective availability. To take another example, Andreea Hajtajer, a student of the Photo-Video specialization, elaborates in the video exhibition "Give me beauty, give me death" from 2009 - neo-romantic poetics of private life and radical loneliness<sup>8</sup>. In the "Real-un-Real" exhibition from 2012, the students of the Photo-Video specialization treat issues of gender and sex identity and social integration, through photographic image and artistic installations. The exhibitions "Libidoland 1" in 2017 and "Libidoland 2" in 2019 are also notable, which explore the paradigm of contemporary consumerism from the perspective of inventorying the landmarks of an apparent eroticism, systematically called from the direction of contemporary art criticism.

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<sup>7</sup> German, Lavinia, in the article „The relation between ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’: a diachronic perspective on photographic view”, published in the volume “Interpersonal communication. Art and education as means of communication”, coordinated by Marinela Rusu, Ars Longa, in Iasi 2018. (German 2018, 187-193).

<sup>8</sup> The Foto-Video exhibitions are presented in the 2021 publication “Foto-Video. Exhibition projects 2005-2021”. (Soreanu and German, Foto-Video. Proiecte expoziționale 2005-2021 2021).

The valorisation of the formal aspects of the traditional mediums through validating bridges of critical connection with the post-modern artistic practices is another thematic direction that we associate with the exhibitions in Aparte Gallery. The series of exhibitions "Visiting Art History" initiated by Cristian Ungureanu in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and respectively 2013 (Figure 4) has as stake the offer of contemporary artists, navigators through thousands of years of visual civilization, in order to know closely, through direct and interactive experience, the conceptual programs of the great masters of art history, but also the pictorial, compositional and chromatic techniques, together with the symbolic, religious or philosophical structures related to these visual practices<sup>9</sup>. Another direction of exploring the personal mythologies through the painting medium includes Ioana Palamar with the painting exhibition "Inner Shadows" from 2017, or the exhibitions "New Earth" and "Interior Explorations" from 2017, events signed by Bogdan Maximovici.



Fig. 4. View from the opening of the exhibition "Visiting Art History", a project initiated by Cristian Ungureanu, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iasi, May 2010.

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<sup>9</sup> Description of the "Visting Art History" program made by Cristian Ungureanu, published in "Aparte Gallery. Index 2005 - 2020", coordinating editor Catalin Soreanu. (Soreanu, German and Gavrillean, et al. 2021, 43).

We can also mention projects such as "Pop Icons Condensed" from April 2013, an exhibition of students specializing in Painting, curated by Oana Maria Nae and Cristian Nae, or the series "Levels of Reality", coordinated by Ioan Pricop (in 2015, 2016 and in 2018), which are significant examples of the relationship between the referential values of the visual arts and the exhibition practices of FAVD students.

A constant feature of the concerns of contemporary visual artists and, by extension, of visual arts students are socio-political issues, marked by insertions synchronous with current major events, such as election periods, social events reflected in the media, the emergence of the COVID19 pandemic, global economic conflicts, elements of instructional criticism, or the exploitation of the communist heritage still present in Romania (and in Eastern Europe). Notable examples are the exhibitions "Scratch disk is full" (2007), curated by Dan Acostioaei, those made by Bogdan Armanu and Silvia Amancei, such as "Metropia" and "A map of indifference" (2014), "No hope for a future" (2015), "Constellations of Desire" from 2016, in which Bogdan and Silvia build narrative scenarios about desirable or utopian political alternatives.

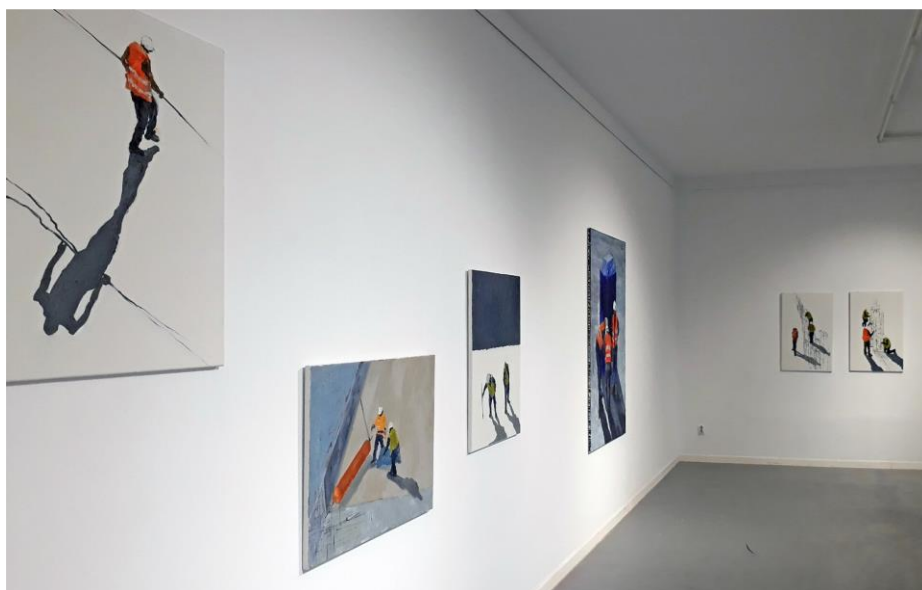


Fig. 5. View from the exhibition "The paradox of white labor" by Sarah Daria Muscalu, curated by Cătălin Gheorghe, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, November 2017

We can also point out the exhibition "#Irresistible" made by Dan Acostioaei and curated by Cristian Nae in 2017, "Artist, I buy an apartment in this block" and "The social factory of desire: work and cultural memory in

the creative industries after the 90s", both conducted by Andrei Timofte in 2019. "The paradox of white work" (2017, Figure 5) and "Altered Visions" (2020), realized by Sarah Daria Muscalu, explore the legacy of the communist tradition interpreted in a political key of the present, against which the artist actively positions himself, with a critical reading of his condition in the contemporary socio-political context. The project "Popcorn fields forever" by GMTW and Dumitru Oboroc, curated by Ivan Polliart in 2013, deals with the aspect of formal borders and conceptual artistic migration.

Another feature of the exhibitions is the thematic exercise characterized by the repeated appeal to elements of the technological advance, in which the artistic factuality is justified by experiments of internet art, new media, remote locations online, light projections etc. Here are some examples: the exhibition "Video.2: at the edge of simple things", coordinated by Andrei Cozlac, professor at the Foto-Video specialization, also coordinator of the exhibition "Metropia" from 2014 by Bogdan Armanu and Silvia Amancei (SABA group), the technological experiments signed by Andrei Botnaru, student of Photo-Video within the collective exhibitions realized together with his colleagues, the "Input-Output" project, coordinated by Andrei Cozlac and Radu Salahoru in June 2011. These new-media approaches echoed the technological evolution of the artistic medium<sup>10</sup>, which became widely accessible to the nowadays artists and to UNAGE's students, as part of their artistic training.

Other exhibition events touch on the formal experiment, doubled by critical argumentation, such as the "Table Talk" project from 2008, curated by Dan Acostioaei and Cătălin Gheorghe, "Recycling Ghosts" by SATELLITE (Social Artistic Tendency group), curated by Cătălin Gheorghe (2010), workshops like "Critical curatorial practices in the visual and performing arts", supported by Guillaume Désanges and "Exhibition design" supported by Tilman Wendland, both in 2011, or the project "Gallery", curated by Luminița Apostu in 2012. Since Aparte Gallery was built around this concept of experimenting with artistic expression in both professional approach and curatorial takes, the infusion of criticality and artistic theory brought the necessary support for the UNAGE students' exhibitions, providing a sustainable environment of discursive conditions for all the specializations within FAVD.

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<sup>10</sup> As discussed in the articles "From Media to Mediums of Expression. Visual Art Communication and Meaning from Fine Arts to Advertising" published in "Anastasis - Research in Medieval Culture and Art" VII.2, 2020, (Soreanu 2020, 261-276), and "New Media Art: Aligning Artistic Creativity and Technological Media" published in "Review of Artistic Education" journal, issue 22 (Soreanu 2021, 206-216).



One of the most important thematic directions of the exhibitions in the Aparte Gallery explores the specific expressiveness of the art mediums, with an emphasis on the analysis of language elements and their trans-media interpretation<sup>11</sup>. Notable examples are the exhibition "Working title", coordinated by Dan Acostioaei and Ramona Biciușcă in 2015, the exhibition "Clinical architectures for a future compositionist", curated by Cătălin Gheorghe, part of the events of the Biennial of photography and dynamic image "Camera Plus" in 2016, the painting exhibition "Think about the box" by Lucian Bruma in 2016, the artistic installation "Babilonia" (2017), created by Adrian Stoleriu (Figure 6), the exhibition project that included photographic image and sound performance "Contra.punct", signed by Cătălin Soreanu in 2017<sup>12</sup>, the exhibition based on photography and dynamic image "Reflector", made by Matei Bejenaru in 2018, also "Film, curatorial project", a collective exhibition curated by Matei Bejenaru in 2018 as a plea for the dynamic image and its specific expressions, or the exhibition "On the edge of the surface", made by Lavinia German in 2020.



Fig. 6. View from the exhibition "Babilonia" by Adrian Stoleriu, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, June 2017.

<sup>11</sup> The difference between (communication) media and (artistic) mediums was discussed by Cătălin Soreanu in Chapter II of "Art and Advertising. Mediums of expression in contemporary advertising", Artes Publishing House of UNAGE Iași. (Soreanu, *Artă și publicitate. Medii de expresie în publicitatea contemporană* 2018, 24-29).

<sup>12</sup> The "Counter.Point" exhibition was realized in 2017 with the contribution of tenor Renato Ridiche, as a guest artist from Iași, Romania. A photography book was published 3 years later containing images from the exhibition. (Soreanu, *contra.punct / counter.point* 2020).

All these exhibition manifestations propose, along with the "Insitu" and "Insitu (2)" (projects from 2018 of the artistic group formed by Lavinia German, Cătălin Soreanu and Mihai Vereștiuc), a critical reflection on the perspective of the artistic mediums, in the light of the elements of language and specific expressiveness.

Using artistic mediums such as photography, video, artistic installation, painting or sound-performance, these exhibitions illustrate the interest of the authors to approach the creation act from a theoretical point of view conceptually applied to the professional art medium, while considering the intrinsic expressiveness of both the art product and the exhibition as components of the art practice.

Furthermore, we can mention the student exhibitions such as those from the Photo-Video specialization, coordinated by Cătălin Soreanu, like "I'll be back!?" (2017), "Life on hold" (2018), "Duplex" (2019) and "Intamplabil" (2021), a series of exhibitions realized with the students from the second year of licence studies of the Foto-Video specialization, as part of their studies in dealing with the exhibition as artistic format and experience<sup>13</sup>. We must not forget the exhibition entitled "Digging in the mirror", coordinated by Bogdan Teodorescu in 2020, the exhibition "Caprice" signed by Alexandra Asaftei, student of Sculpture specialization under the coordination of Mihai Vereștiuc and the exhibition "Domestic", coordinated by Lavinia German and Mihai Vereștiuc, both events from 2019, as well as the multitude of exhibitions for licenses and dissertations exams of FAVD specializations within UNAGE Iași.

### **Thematic and media multidisciplinary**

A close analysis of the exhibition themes and artistic mediums in 15 years of activity in the Aparte Gallery prove the flexibility and versatility of the space, able to host different exhibition formulas and artistic mediums specific to the artistic practices of all FAVD specializations. We include here drawing and perspective exhibitions, such as the "Book-object exhibition" from 2009, coordinated by Cezarina Caloian and Modesta Lupașcu, the "Artistic Perspective" from 2016, coordinated by Maria Urma and Daniel Sofron (Figure 7), the exhibition "Vis-a-vis" signed by Cătălin Soreanu from 2017, that combines drawing and photographic image, along with the graphic

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<sup>13</sup> The exhibitions of the Photo-Video students are an important resource of experience and practice before the next year main graduation exam (and exhibition), realized as a public exhibition in Aparte Gallery, in July exams sessions. (Proiectele absolvenților Foto-Video 2021), (Proiectele absolvenților Foto-Video 2020), (Catalogul absolvenților Foto-Video UNAGE Iași 2019).

gestural artworks of the late Ion Truică from the dedicated memorial exhibition at the beginning of 2018.

In terms of artistic expressivity and space flexibility, Aparte Gallery comprise a wide range of exhibition art mediums, including decorative and applied art, conservation and reconstruction experiments of old paintings or mural artefacts, religious and iconographic painting, contemporary art with a thematic inspiration derived from the religious subjects<sup>14</sup>, such as Bogdan Maximovici's painting exhibition or Simon Cristea's sculptures, along with various students exhibitions coordinated by the Conservation – Restoration, Painting, or Sculpture specializations within FAVD.



Fig. 7. View from the students' exhibition "The artistic perspective", coordinated by Maria Urmă and Daniel Sofron, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, June 2016

They exhibit a diversity of art medium and formats, from drawing, to painting, to mural interventions or sculpture restorations. These religious painting and thematic elements of Christian inspiration are visible in the thematic exhibitions in the Aparte Gallery<sup>15</sup>, such as "Art and Restoration"

<sup>14</sup> Soreanu, Cătălin, "The Sacred In Contemporary Advertising", published in "ANASTASIS - Research in Medieval Culture and Art" 3(1), edited by Codrina-Laura Ioniță, Puiu Ioniță and Brîndușa Grigoriu (Soreanu 2016, 149-158).

<sup>15</sup> For a wider understanding of the phenomena, the article of Oana-Maria Nae (Nicuță 2018, 110-129) and the book of Bogdan Gavrillean are to be consulted (Gavrillean 2011). Both Oana

from 2010, exhibition coordinated by Constantin Tudor and Bogdan Gavrilean, the exhibitions "Sinopia" and "Proplasma", coordinated by Constantin Tudor in 2016, the project exhibition "Methodological aspects of conservation - restoration interventions", coordinated by Bogdan Gavrilean and Bogdan Ungurean in 2018, "Icon, guiding image" made by Severian Luca in 2019 (Figure 8), along with the refined volume of sculptures made by Simion Cristea in the exhibition "Hypostasis" from March 2019 (Figure 9), or the asceticism of Ionut Filimon's sculptures from the 2019 "Witness" exhibition.



Fig. 8. View from the exhibition "The icon: the guiding image" by Severian Luca, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, January 2019

Within FAVD and with the support of Aparte Gallery, development perspectives are offered to both students concerned with new media and those interested in cultivating plastic media and traditional artistic values of UNAGE Iași. The diversity of the mediums of artistic expression cultivated in the Aparte Gallery is also emphasized by the presence of performative areas, as they appear in exhibitions or events such as "Sugar" from 2009, or

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Maria Nae and Bogdan Gavrilean are visual artists and members of the academic staff of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from "George Enescu" National University of Arts in Iași. (Stoleriu 2020, 160-163).

the "Live love life" performance made by George Hneda, under the coordination of Dan Acostioaei.

We also note in this context the expressiveness of the stage performance of the dancers Corina Tătăraș, Eliza Trefaș, and Vlad Benescu, guests of Galeria Aparte within the project "Explore festival # 11" of WASP Bucharest in 2016, the sound performance of tenor Renato Ridiche in the project "Counter.point" from 2017, made by Cătălin Soreanu, another performance by Jamie Morgan (the artist invited to the exhibition of Ioana Palamar from 2017), the performativity exercises in front of the camera of the "In situ team" project from January 2018<sup>16</sup>, held inside the Aparte gallery, the project "Yes, thank you" by the guest artist John Dillard from 2019, coordinated by Zamfira Birzu and Ioana Palamar (Figure 10), or the performance of Maria Maftai, student of the Photo-Video specialization, from the "Duplex" exhibition (2019), coordinated by Cătălin Soreanu.



Fig. 9. View from the exhibition "Hypostasis" by Simon Cristea, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iasi, March 2019

The experience of the artistic installation as a medium of expression and its transposition at the level of the entire exhibition space is one of the favourite subjects of the students within FAVD. Being one of the goals of the gallery's establishment, the exhibition as an artistic format is part of the constant searches of its coordinators. Some relevant examples could be "Mercurial age", made by Ioan Pricop in 2006, the exhibition - installation "Scratch disk is full", curated by Dan Acostioaei in 2007, the exhibition "Parrhesia" in 2011, made by Emanuela Boros and curated by Cătălin

<sup>16</sup> "In situ" is an artistic group formed by Lavinia German, Catalin Soreanu and Mihai Verestiuc, professors at the UNAGE Iasi. (In situ 2018), (Aparte Gallery. Exhibitions 2020, 280-285).

Soreanu, the project "The complaint" by Andrei Venghiac from 2012 or "Interlock" from 2013, both curated by Cătălin Gheorghe. Other examples include the exhibition "... and with the rest of us" by Mihai Vereștiuc from 2016 or the installation "In situ (II)" from 2018, made by the homonymous artistic group.



Figure 10: View from the performance "Yes, thank you" by guest artist John Dillard (USA), coordinated by Zamfira Bîrzu and Ioana Palamar, Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași, January 2019

## **Conclusions**

Since its establishment in 2005, the Aparte Gallery of UNAGE Iași has become an active presence in the local artistic context, then gradually in the national and international background, having an extremely important role in promoting the artistic creation of students in the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design. Within the exhibition events in the Aparte Gallery, we can easily notice the imports of artistic knowledge (in the form of theories, approaches, themes, mediums, practice and specific knowledge), through interferences with national and international artistic circumstances and events, such as a series of exhibitions and biennials, various artistic

residencies, mobility and university exchanges, itinerant exhibition programs, etc. Such imports have led to the constant enrichment of the exhibition vocabulary of FAVD students, as well as to the connection of their artistic practices to the values of international art.

Finally, we pay particular attention to the constant interaction between the Aparte Gallery and the local, national and international professional artistic environment, facilitating the exchange of artistic ideas and experiences, proven by the presence of teachers' exhibition in the Gallery, while offering artistic models to young generations of FAVD students of Iași; by the convergence of curatorial approaches and the activation of invited artists in punctual exhibition events or in recurring programs; by hosting invited exhibition events that introduced the Aparte Gallery in the exhibition circuit of spaces with major visibility.

Consequently, we discover 15 years of constant (and natural) evolution of the exhibition thematic and artistic mediums used in the Aparte Gallery, which demonstrate the flexibility and versatility of the space, able to host exhibition formulas that include different types of artistic mediums. At the same time, they prove the plurality of artistic concerns, specific to all specializations within FAVD, which denotes the artistic and educational maturity of the vocational education system practiced within the university, offering development perspectives to the students concerned with new mediums, while cultivating traditions and associated artistic values with UNAGE Iași.

### **Acknowledgements**

All figures and illustrations in this article were initially published in "Aparte Gallery. Index 2005-2020", a catalogue realized in 2021 by Aparte Gallery of "George Enescu" National University of Arts (UNAGE) in Iași, and they depict public events and exhibition projects realized in the physical space of Aparte Gallery, under the tutelage of UNAGE Iași. All rights belong to the UNAGE Iași and rightful authors who have contributed through personal efforts to document and archive this information over time, to which the editorial team thanks.

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## **BOOK REVIEWS**



## *Images de l'Invisible*

**Mihail-George Hâncu**

Luminița Diaconu, Alexandra Lițu, Ecaterina Lung (eds.), *Images de l'Invisible. De l'Antiquité tardive à la fin du Moyen Âge*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2020, 228 pp. (ISBN: 978-606-16-1192-8)



This volume is the outcome of the eponymous conference organized by the Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of Bucharest on December 9, 2017, at the French Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. The participants whose papers were included in this volume are mostly professors or at least alumni of the University of Bucharest, along with one independent researcher and PhD at the “Nicolae Iorga” History Institute of the Romanian Academy of Sciences. The editors themselves are professors at the University of Bucharest: Luminița Diaconu teaches at the French Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, whereas Alexandra Lițu and Ecaterina Lung teach at the Faculty of History.

As stated by the editors in the introductory chapter<sup>1</sup> (penned by Luminița Diaconu and Ecaterina Lung), the theme shared by the contributions collected in this volume is that of the importance of representing invisible forces (such as God, the Sacred, the forces of Evil or the Devil) or human emotions in European culture. To wit, these articles present the various answers found since the beginnings of Christianity to the conundrum of whether it is even *possible* to represent such things that ought to be beyond human understanding.

It should be noted from the very beginning that the papers presented within the confines of the conference in 2017 were exclusively in Romanian (which is also reflected in its actual title – *Imaginea Invizibilului. Texte și iconografie*), which means that this publication deserves credit not only for

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<sup>1</sup> Luminița Diaconu & Ecaterina Lung, « Comment rendre visible l'Invisible, de l'Antiquité tardive à la fin du Moyen Âge », in Diaconu, Luminița, Lițu, Alexandra, Lung, Ecaterina (dir.), *Images de l'Invisible. De l'Antiquité tardive à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Editura Universității din București, colecția „Mediaevalia”, n°. 9/ 2020, p. 7-13.

publishing several of these papers, but for doing so in foreign languages, making them accessible to a wider academic public. As a result, the vast majority of the papers included in this volume are published in English, whereas the introduction as well as two further contributions are in French, and a single article is in Spanish. Nevertheless, each of them is accompanied by an abstract in French (for the English contributions) or English (for the remainder of the papers), which can only be to the benefit of foreign scholars who gain access to these Proceedings.

The volume opens with a contribution by Ilinca Damian, curator at the National Museum of Art of Romania, PhD in Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. The author discusses the representation of the death of Jesus Christ in Christian art, noting that although the moments immediately preceding or succeeding his last breath are frequently represented, the *exact instant* of his death was depicted considerably later and more atypically. Conversely, Early Christian art was less concerned with a historically and biologically accurate illustration of Jesus's death, opting instead for a more symbolical view, notably associating it with the culmination of his final prayer. A similar interest in Christian art is shown in the following article, penned by Vladimir Crețulescu from the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest. Its subject is the famous portrait of Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora in the mosaic of the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, which, as noted by previous commentators and confirmed by the author, played an important role in Byzantine propaganda, owing much to its geographic and artistic position to the boundary between the late Roman heritage and the early Byzantine sphere.

The two editors from the Faculty of History, Ecaterina Lung and Alexandra Lițu, dedicate their article to the artistic representations of melancholy via specific gestures from the Antiquity to the Renaissance, with particular attention being paid to the apparently contradictory association with Saint Joseph, even though melancholy was associated with the profile of the demons generating the capital sins. Mihaela Pop, who is a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, discusses the iconographical representations of the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ in the two narthexes and the funerary chapel of the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora, in modern-day Istanbul. In her endeavour to reconstruct the conceptual thought behind this iconographic plan, the author refers to the various meanings of the word *chora* in Platonic and Christian religion.

The following articles move from the visual arts to medieval literature: the first of these, written by Mihaela Voicu, professor at the Faculty of Catholic Theology and currently professor emeritus at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures (University of Bucharest), is dedicated to an episode from Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal*, namely the "three blood drops" scene. The key element of this scene is that Percival, the protagonist,

recognizes the face of his beloved Blanchefleur in the pattern created by the three blood drops falling from a wild goose's neck onto the snow: thus, in the author's view, this image makes her absence *present* to Percival by means of contemplation.

Robert Mirică, an independent researcher and holder of a PhD degree at the "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, writes on the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century treatise on witchcraft, dwelling more specifically on the exceptional figure of one sorcerer, Stadlin, whose case is used by the authors – Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger – to explain the existence of witches and sorcerers from a theological point of view. The final contribution stemming from the aforementioned conference, authored by Șarolta Solcan, professor at the Faculty of History (University of Bucharest), is also concerned with the matter of witchcraft, albeit from a more historical point of view. To wit, she refers to the treatment of witches in 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Transylvania, citing concrete cases and testimonies and thus allowing readers to reconstruct the way people understood witchcraft at the time, especially given that their existence was attested in Transylvanian documents as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The final three articles are, in the editors' own perspective, less connected to the subject of the Invisible, which is why they were grouped in a section titled *Varia*. That being said, the editors immediately warn their readers that these three contributions are linked by more than just them not being a direct product of the aforementioned conference: all three deal with the matter of Origins, which was the object of the conference held by the Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of Bucharest in November 2018. Although they did not – strictly speaking – result from papers presented at the same scientific event, it is hard to disagree with the editors' assertion that they enrich the present volume.

Thus, in the sole Spanish article, Ruxandra Toma, a doctoral student of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures (University of Bucharest), focuses on one of the founding texts for the Order of Santiago, namely the *Compilación de los Milagros de Santiago*, written by the 15<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler Diego Rodríguez de Almela. This text contributed to the development of the ideological view that the Reconquista owed its triumph to the intervention of the Apostle James, whose cult was restored following the pilgrimage of the kings of Castile to Santiago de Compostela. Lavinia-Elena Vieru's article is dedicated to the votive paintings at the "Holy Archangels" (*Sfinții Voievozi*) Church of the former Meculești monastery near Pitești. The author, who currently teaches at the "Dinu Lipatti" Art School in Pitești and obtained her PhD title at the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest, provides a richly illustrated description of these frescoes, which, although painted in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, respect the tradition of the votive

paintings of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries when representing the patrons from those time periods.

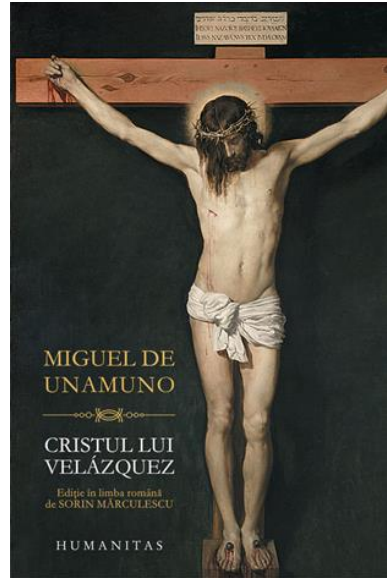
The final contribution to this section – and to the volume – belongs to Sorin Langu, who teaches at the “Vasile Alecsandri” High School in Galați and who, like the previous author, obtained his PhD title at the same faculty. His text refers to philately and its use in royal and communist propaganda in Romania, focusing on the representation of founding figures: thus, during the royal era, the depiction of the first two kings, Carol I and Ferdinand I, as the founder and, respectively, the unifier of the country – alongside more ancient figures such as Trajan and Michael the Brave – served to legitimise the reign of Carol II. The communist regime, however, focused on medieval historical figures and, most notably, on the Dacian roots of the Romanian people, which reflected their key ideological role.

This volume helpfully assembles these very diverse contributions dedicated to a subject that may, at first, appear to be rather narrow or even arcane in their scope. These articles will doubtlessly attract the attention of readers interested in the specific fields covered by each author – be it literature, medieval history, or art history – and accomplish the editors’ wish to make the proceedings of the conference in 2017 (and of the Centre for Medieval Studies in general) available to a wider, hopefully international, public.

***The Poem of a Distinguished  
Spanish Writer and Professor on  
an Acclaimed Spanish Painting***

**Ana-Magdalena Petraru**

Miguel de Unamuno, *Cristul lui Velázquez/ El Cristo de Velázquez* (*The Christ of Velázquez*), translated by Sorin Mărculescu, Humanitas Publishing House, 2015, 320 pages



The poet, translator and essayist Sorin Mărculescu prefaced and annotated the first complete faithful translation into Romanian of Unamuno's 1920 masterpiece in verse on Velasquez's 1632 masterpiece on canvas. The learned edition accompanied by a minute chronological table and its extended preface, consisting of almost ninety pages, is a thorough study of the poem, a book in itself, to celebrate approximately 150 years from the Spanish author's birth. Considerations on the translation are of interest to any Translation Studies scholar, Mărculescu complaining about the poor quality of various 'sub-poems' previously rendered into Romanian in an anthology. Unamuno's Spanish is considered a difficult one and that of the poem written in ten years makes no exception. Apart from the problems that the translation of poetry raises, be they 'prosodic, semantic or syntactic', the Spanish writer's text, a strong opponent of 'poetic artifice', "is enriched by many rhetorical and stylistic devices: a lexis of regionalisms from Salamanca, a syntax arguing for the distortions of the hyperbaton and gains in expression, a prosody in which the hendecasyllabic is freely developed, in enjambments and unexpected phonetic associations (rhymes and interior assonances), a construction which could be labelled as 'hypertextual' considering the hundreds of marginal references to biblical texts that are an integrating part to the poem (despite Unamuno's claim that they were added for ignorant people), hence the multidimensional space of reference that we need to



observe...”.<sup>1</sup> Among the translation technicalities, the Romanian translator also preserved the small and capital letters preferred by Unamuno when addressing the Divinity and the Divine Person.<sup>2</sup>

*The Christ of Velázquez* is one of the most important poems in Spanish literature and its author, a unique poetical figure, was accused of Unamuno-centrism (the author himself spoke of *yoismo* as his landmark) which defined all his works, not just the lyrical ones. Rooted in religion and philosophy, despite a temporary socialist background, Unamuno rose against reason and rationalism, hence his adherence to doubtfulness and an aversion for the sentimentalism that generally characterised Spanish poetry. Fascinated by the figure of Jesus Christ, the inaccessible face of Divinity, the writer needs the figure of the Saviour on the cross, in flesh for adoration. Drawing on German philosophy (Kant, Hegel) and other prominent figures (Pascal, Kierkegaard), on the one hand and mainstream Christian theology (St. Augustine) and protestant contemporaries, on the other hand, to name but a few of his influences, Unamuno became an existentialist with the main concern of man in relation to transcendence. This may explain the choice of Velázquez's Christ depicted alone, unaccompanied by the other figures as in mainstream representations dictated by traditional canons, thus inviting the viewer/ audience/ readers to contribute externally outside the painting.<sup>3</sup> The poem shows “a fierce fight against doubt, in a monophonic discourse addressing a unique recipient, both immobile and mute in an unmentioned duration: a painted canvas whose ascendance is neither documented by the painter, nor by the poet who declaims his successive interventions, less so by the translator meant (and resigned) to the unceasing breaking of overlapping veils. Unamuno does not address (...) an instance of Christ ready to answer with mercy (...) and the distance between the praying soul and the invoked figure was/ is/ will be practically inexistent.”<sup>4</sup>

A Basque raised by his mother and grandmother in a traditional Catholic environment, Unamuno distinguished himself as a family guy that was about to become a priest who lost faith during his studies at Madrid and switched to agnosticism due to the socialist ideals in the pipeline at the time. His health problems, a sick child and the quasi-evangelical wife bring him back to the path of religious meditation until his death in 1936. Essayist, playwright, diarist, columnist, the Spanish writer's debut as poet was a late one, he was never engaged politically, religiously or literarily. He was concerned with man's life on earth and the fact that he was put there by God to finally die, i.e., destined to suffer without the certainty of regaining the body *post*

<sup>1</sup> Sorin Mărculescu, *Notă liminară (Introductory Note)*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Sorin Mărculescu, *idem*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Sorin Mărculescu, *De la ecfrază la extază (adnotări și divagări)/ From Ekphrasis to Ekstasis (Adnotations and Divagations)*, pp. 9-16, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, pp. 38-39.

*mortem*. The uncertainty of afterlife, the craving for immortality rooted in Kantian anthropology best define his agnostic side and along with his mystical traits, a religion of uncertainty. With the many bleeding figures of Christ depicted by Velázquez, it is argued that Unamuno actually lives in a spiritual Catholic environment, despite his intellectual adhesions. The hope in the love of God is a hypostasis of the love for Spain in the author.<sup>5</sup> As translator, Sorin Mărculescu admits he preferred to choose his authors, as often as possible, “to render into Romanian great deceased writers of ‘dead languages’, of vernacular ‘stases’ of the supra-idiom which becomes its creating mirror; in other words, in the spirit of Unamuno, the spoken language is understood as gradual death, as ‘in-dying’, the only living way to the inaccessible eternity of the word. And through translation, such stases are reborn (...). This subtle archaeological revival of lexemes, as well as the inclination towards religious or dialectal forms in Unamuno (...) could be interpreted as expression of the same ‘willing to hope’ (...).<sup>6</sup> As he advanced in the Romanian rendering of the Spanish book-poem, he started asking himself who was actually translating it, as literary historians and theologians were wondering who was the person the poem talked about (the character’s voice or the author’s). “It was an Orthodox Christian poet, maybe not less dilemmatic and in agony than the catholic Unamuno with a deep respect for Catholicism (...) a humble admirer of a Spain that tried to include it in his own personal mythology, a soul split between two seemingly intense pulsations: the love towards his own country and Eastern Romanian traditions, of a remarkable unity (...) and profoundly attached and concerned by Western Latin pole represented by Spain (...).”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the answer was found by the translator, the who being someone close to his own end, with no obligations and dogmatic constraints or other that felt the need for a climate of finding humility in life. The why came after the first version when stylistic doubt and philological exigence occurred. It was a desire of silent greatness more than poetic affinity, a feeling of ontological completeness.<sup>8</sup>

Marking what could be called an accident in his artistic development, the Christ of Velázquez cannot be circumscribed to Spanish religious paintings (in the tradition of Francisco de Zurbarán). In the context of *Las Meninas*, labelled as ‘a theology of painting’, the Spanish artist proves his detached realism, his grotesque, the suggested royalty prefiguring an absent, yet implicit inner and outer audience; similarly, his Christ implies the lance of Longinus he was pierced with in the poet’s interrogating ‘dynamism’ whose (role) model remains unknown to us. A living proof of poetry as blind painting, overcoming the impossibility of comparing static and dynamic arts,

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<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, pp. 12-34, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, pp. 84-85, *passim*.

Unamuno's book-poem takes the linguistic and dynamic sign in poetry to new horizons (of expectation) to a static and iconic sign in visual arts, in general and painting, in particular aiming at a deliberate disconnectedness of the work of art and literature that permanently alludes to itself.<sup>9</sup> A part of *Iliad* in itself in the acception in which Achilles's tendon is accounted for, the book poem praising the 17<sup>th</sup> century painting exhibited at Prado, Madrid could also play the role of a large counterpoint in Spanish literature of John Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.<sup>10</sup>

Unamuno's desire to make a Christian, biblical and Spanish thing, as he confesses in a letter to the Portuguese poet Teixeira de Pascoaes, in 1913,<sup>11</sup> leads to this book-poem of 2540 white iambic pentameters divided into four parts (I – 1065 verses; II – 448 verses; III – 774 verses; IV – 283 verses), in their turn consisting of 'sub-poems' numbered in Roman style, all entitled except the first four ones in part I. Numerological, alchemic, astrological aspects and other are not excluded from the exegesis, yet it remains safe to argue that most titles and epigraphs are of concrete nature drawing on parts of Velázquez's oil on canvas or of an abstract/ moral nature, inviting to reflection.<sup>12</sup> Mărculescu argues that "Part one assumes the role of universal-prophetic introduction, of founding 'will' of this modern gospel for the Spanish people, as Unamuno saw his poem. Part two is a transition section in which the great opposites are brought into play, namely life/ death, death/ rebirth, father/ son, body/ soul, sacrifice/ salvation, Old Adam/ New Adam, etc. Part three comprises quasi-anatomical meditations (...) on the various parts of Christ's body as can be seen in Velázquez's painting, similarly to the stages of meditation in Ignatius de Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (...), the number of sub-poems in this part equalling that of the New Testament books, i.d., 37. Part four has eight numbered sub-poems and an unnumbered one which is the longest."<sup>13</sup>

The complex book-poem of almost 200 pages in the Romanian translation, footnotes included, takes the initiated reader on a journey to unveil biblical mysteries in treats designed as 'sub-poems', literary jewels inspired by Velázquez's oil on canvas. The Spanish painter's 'magic brush' is the key to our vision and understanding<sup>14</sup>, we become anew by admiring it, Christ's death, and then rebirth.<sup>15</sup> Seen only as Judge, Diego, the artist,

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<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, pp. 40-47, *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, p. 48, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> *Apud*. Mărculescu, *idem*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, p. 60-61, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Cristul lui Velázquez/ The Christ of Velázquez*, Part One, I, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, p. 118.

depicted Him to resemble Apolo, a deification in art.<sup>16</sup> The moon is the symbol of Christ and the first sub-poem with a title (V, pp. 128-129), followed by *Ecce Homo* as Christ's white body is gospel to men.<sup>17</sup> In VII, *God-Darkness*, the pitch black of the background contrasts with the white body<sup>18</sup> and we are invited to use His chest as a pillow.<sup>19</sup> Christ gave His blood for ours which is 'poisoned'<sup>20</sup>. Did he die or just faint for three days?<sup>21</sup> He is a friend, now in death's peace who came to earth to bring the war, the fighting creation.<sup>22</sup> As white as the sky at dawn<sup>23</sup>, as white as a five-petal rose is His body<sup>24</sup>, shining as a river in the sun<sup>25</sup>, a white cloud that guided the people of God<sup>26</sup>, a white lamb of God that forgives the sins of the world and stops Cain's blood from the wound.<sup>27</sup> The wine is sad in the desert where there's no water and so is the wine-blood and His soul,<sup>28</sup> whereas white linen is His fragile body,<sup>29</sup> a white eagle that enlightens us.<sup>30</sup> Was it a black cloud given by His hair,<sup>31</sup> a lion of deserts, a white bull that fell under the burden of the cross<sup>32</sup>, a Sphynx, a Cherub of our flaws<sup>33</sup>? A white gate that opens to whoever knocks<sup>34</sup>, a lily from the valley of pain full of Adam's sweat and tears?<sup>35</sup> It is like a sword that Christ's body feasts the eye<sup>36</sup>, a white dove from the sky, a sign of promise<sup>37</sup>, Mary's white milk and a mother's that gives peace to humankind.<sup>38</sup> Our love for Christ's body burns us.<sup>39</sup> Jacob's ladder is His cross<sup>40</sup> and He is a white snake that heals those that look at

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<sup>16</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, II, p. 119-120.

<sup>17</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VI *Ecce Homo*, p. 130.

<sup>18</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VIII *Blood*, p. 138.

<sup>21</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, X *Life is a Dream* p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XI *Peace in War*, p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XII *Dawn*, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIII *Rose*, p. 147.

<sup>25</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIV *River-Spring*, p. 150.

<sup>26</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XV *Cloud-Music*, p. 152.

<sup>27</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XVI, p. 155.

<sup>28</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XVIII *Wine*, p. 159.

<sup>29</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIX *Linen*, p. 161.

<sup>30</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XX *Eagle*, p. 163.

<sup>31</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXI *Black Cloud*, p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXIII *The Bull*, p. 167.

<sup>33</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXIII *Cherub-Book*, p. 169.

<sup>34</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXV *Gate*, p. 171.

<sup>35</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXVI *Lily*, p. 173.

<sup>36</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXVI *Spade*, p. 175.

<sup>37</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXIX *Dove*, p. 179.

<sup>38</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXX *Milk*, p. 180.

<sup>39</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXXII *Eucharist*, p. 183.

<sup>40</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXXV *Ladder*, p. 189.

Him<sup>41</sup>; His nails are keys that open the lock of death through life<sup>42</sup> and like a buck running through the woods, He rose to the Calvary to die from so much bleeding<sup>43</sup>, silence, nakedness, calm and night are Jesus's garments.<sup>44</sup> The second part finds Christ abandoned by His Father and in solitude on the empty mountain<sup>45</sup>, where the sea is a trembling mirror of the eyes of God and a prime cradle of life<sup>46</sup>; He came to spread fire on earth<sup>47</sup> and the soul and body are inseparable.<sup>48</sup> The sky is black forecasting a tempest<sup>49</sup> and His Parent holds the cross for Him, weighing the stars like a scale<sup>50</sup>. The crowds wanted to proclaim Him king after the miracle of the bread and fish but He escaped to the mountains for His kingdom was not in this world.<sup>51</sup> Part II concludes with the calvary of love that breaks the clouds on Sinai like the son so that our hope may spring.<sup>52</sup> Part III opens with Pilate's statement, "What I have written, I have written" and puts the inscription above His forehead<sup>53</sup> where the crown on his head stands for our sins, as many as the thorns.<sup>54</sup> The head rests on the chest as a lily withered by the sun<sup>55</sup>, the long black hair falls<sup>56</sup>, the burnt forehead<sup>57</sup>, the face was kissed by His mother goodbye<sup>58</sup>, His eyes became shadow in the long wait for the Father<sup>59</sup> and the ears are covered by the long hair, a Father's charm<sup>60</sup> and the nose shines like a knife<sup>61</sup>. The cheeks turned pale from the salt of the tears<sup>62</sup>, the chest holds the infinite in agony<sup>63</sup>, His bones are as a rock, a bone of the earth's bones<sup>64</sup>, His

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<sup>41</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXXVI *Snake*, p. 190.

<sup>42</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXXVII *Nails*. *Art*, p. 192.

<sup>43</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXXVIII *Buck*, p. 194.

<sup>44</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXXIX *Silence*, p. 197.

<sup>45</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, Part II, *Solitude*, p. 201.

<sup>46</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, III *The Sea*, p. 205.

<sup>47</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, IV *Fire*, p. 208.

<sup>48</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VI *Soul and Body*, p. 212.

<sup>49</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, X *Tempest*, p. 223.

<sup>50</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XII *Scale*, p. 229.

<sup>51</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIII *King*, p. 230.

<sup>52</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIV *From Sinai to Calvary*, p. 234.

<sup>53</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, Part III, *The Inscription*, p. 237.

<sup>54</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, II *Crown*, p. 239.

<sup>55</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, III *Head*, p. 242.

<sup>56</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, IV *The Long Hair*, p. 244.

<sup>57</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, V *Forehead*, p. 249.

<sup>58</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VI *Face*, p. 250.

<sup>59</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VII *Eyes*, p. 252.

<sup>60</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VIII *Ears*, p. 255.

<sup>61</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, IX *Nose*, p. 256.

<sup>62</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, X *Cheeks*, p. 258.

<sup>63</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIII *Chest*, p. 264.

<sup>64</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIV *Bones*, p. 267.

shoulders hold the flock of sheep resting on the hills<sup>65</sup>, the hands opened blind eyes, cured deaf ears<sup>66</sup> and the wound caused by Longinus's lance gave him faith<sup>67</sup>. Part IV starts with death to whom Christ belongs to as first born of the tree of endless life<sup>68</sup>; not death, but salvation is the passage from this life to the immortal one for Him<sup>69</sup>. He is truth as His death ends in resurrection and gives us life.<sup>70</sup> The poet finally asks for God's urge as a hurricane to love Him<sup>71</sup> and in the end, the supplicant demands the silent Christ to hear our groans from the valley of tears, to give us His flesh and blood as Eucharist for our redemption and guidance on the path to the light.<sup>72</sup> A final prayer that all the faithful should make, a must read for all those interested in literary approaches to art, interdisciplinarity and biblical reception in literature.

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<sup>65</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XIX *Shoulders*, p. 273.

<sup>66</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XX *Hands*, p. 274.

<sup>67</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, XXII *The Wound in the Flesh*, pp. 278-279.

<sup>68</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, Part IV, I *Death*, p. 293.

<sup>69</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, II *Health*, p. 294.

<sup>70</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, III *Truth*, p. 300.

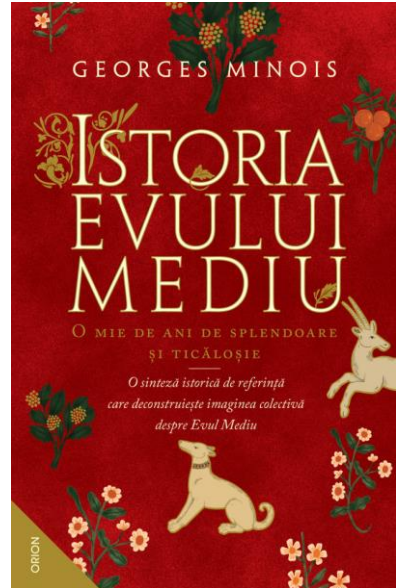
<sup>71</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, VII *Struggle to Love*, p. 303.

<sup>72</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *op. cit.*, *Final Prayer*, pp. 310-315.

## An Updated History of the Middle Ages

Paula-Andreea Onofrei

Georges Minois, *Istoria Evului Mediu: o mie de ani de splendoare și ticăloșie* / *The History of the Middle Ages: a Thousand Years of Splendour and Abjection*. Translation from French and notes by Doru Mareș, Orion Publishing House, Nemira Publishing Group, Bucharest, 2021, ISBN 978-606-43-0684-5, 543 pages



Given the fact that the Middle Ages continues to be a period that fascinates and intrigues, because there, in the Middle Ages, lie our roots for our present goals and dramas, ranging from religious obscurantism to spiritual aims, from collective violence to the search of a high purpose in life, from the fear of future up to the dream of returning to nature, we have decided to analyze this worth-reading volume, written by Georges Minois in a manner that avoids clichés and sheds light on historical events interpreted in an exigent and valid manner.

In order to have a brief, but enlightening portrait of the author, we mention that Georges Minois is a PhD Professor in History, being one of the most respected historians of mentalities and collective representations from the Western space. He wrote more than 40 well-documented history books through which he managed to transmit valuable information in an accessible manner.

Furthermore, returning to the image of the Middle Ages created in our minds, we can state that most of it is artificial, sometimes fake and reduced to anecdote, transformed into legend which receives either a dark shadow or a glittering aura. When we speak about the Middle Ages, it is necessary to see its true face, to have coherence regarding its understanding and its impact on the present, because it is a connection between the medieval European individual and the nowadays human being, regarded from the point of view

of the rapports with one's neighbours, the Byzantine Orient and the Muslim world.

Moreover, almost half a millennium separates us from the Middle Ages and we continue to be fascinated by this period. Even though we are living in a time when information is at the tip of our fingers, not everything that is accessible is also verified and we believe it should not be absorbed without having cultural landmarks and the ability to think critically, judging things in correlation. Our opinion is that this period is insufficiently presented in history books, at school and one needs to know more in order to have a comprehensive image about what is situated between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Renaissance (between 400-1500 A.D.)

This book includes recent information and it is meant to be a reaction to the deforming process of vulgarization and to the intended sabotage of history in schools. To continue, it brings logical and chronological order to a period which had, like all the ones from the history of humankind, its strong and weak points, its blooming and its decay. The intention of the author is to present both sides, the paradise and hell of the Middle Ages in order to grasp the meaning and their reflection on the present society. The present volume is a balanced radiography of that time, catching political, economic, socio-cultural aspects having chronology as its spine.

As far as the structure of this volume is concerned, there are three main parts, divided into fifteen chapters, as it follows:

**Part 1: 400-1000 A.D. The Time of the Orient and the Age of Illusions**

Chap.1 The Fall of the West (5<sup>th</sup> century)

Chap.2 Byzantium and the Barbarian Kingdoms (between the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries)

Chap.3 The Shock of Islam (630-750)

Chap.4 Byzantium and Bagdad: the Glory of the Orient (between the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries)

Chap.5 From Charlemagne to Otto or from the French Imperium to the Germanic Imperium (between the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries)

**Part 2: 1000-1300 A.D. The Time of the Occident and the Time of Reason**

Chap.6 The Fall of the Orient: Political Weaknesses and Cultural Pitching

Chap. 7 The Affirmation of the Occident: Christianity between Theocracy and Caesaropapism

Chap.8 Feudal Monarchies and the European Expansion

Chap.9 Church, Society and Culture: an Ideal of Faith and Reason

Chap.10 The Economy and the Society of a (too) full World: the Limits of a Stationary Ideal



**Part 3: 1300-1500 The Time of the Apocalypse and the Time of Transition**

Chap. 11 The Knights of the Apocalypse: Hunger, Wars, the Plague and their Sequelae

Chap.12 Disoriented Spirits: the Flaws of Christianity and the Divorce of the Couple Faith-Reason

Chap.13 A Divided Occident: Towards National Monarchies

Chap.14 A Reunited Orient: from the Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Empire

Chap.15 A Changing Economy: Towards the Ruling of Money

Underlining in the introduction of the book that “History is not an exact science”<sup>1</sup>, Georges Minois underlines the fact that the interpretation of historians is the one which brings subjectivity, taking into account the values and norms of the society they live in. What is essential is to avoid considering a specific version of history as the sacred, the ultimate one. To conclude, Minois proposes a detached perspective on the Middle Ages, regarded both with humour and irony, respecting, in the same time, the materiality of facts.

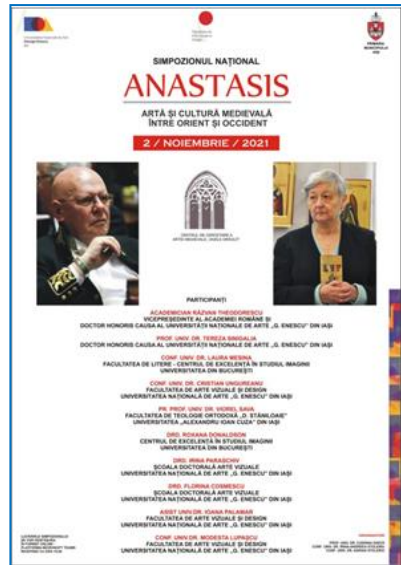
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<sup>1</sup> Georges Minois, *Istoria Evului Mediu: o mie de ani de splendoare și ticăloșie*, Editura Orion, grupul editorial Nemira, București, 2021, Page 16.

## The National Symposium "Medieval Art and Culture between the Orient and the Occident"

Adrian Stoleriu

The National Symposium  
"Medieval Art and Culture between the  
Orient and the Occident"  
the 2nd of November 2021



The pandemic has not succeeded to detain the organization, this year also, of the National Symposium **Anastasis – Art and Medieval Culture between the Orient and the Occident**. Although shortly before the beginning of events, there was still a lot of uncertainty, many of the proposed activities being cancelled or postponed, the main event of the symposium, the scientific lectures held by the invited guests was done online, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2021. Having the nostalgia of the times when these types of impediments had not appeared yet in the projection of the cultural-artistic events of the Research Centre of Medieval Art "Vasile Drăguț", this year's edition of the symposium (organised by Professor Codrina Ioniță, Associate Professor Irina-Andreea Stoleriu and Associate Professor Adrian Stoleriu, PhD from the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from Iași) was held entirely online, through the means of online communication (the platform Microsoft Teams of "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași).

Continuing the tradition opened a few years ago, by organizing cultural-scientific events having as main focus the interest for the research of art and medieval culture between the Orient and the Occident, this year's edition of the symposium has reverted to the general theme of previous editions, which is inexhausted in form and content, regarding the diversity of approaches and studies which can be done in this large territory of knowledge. Medieval art between the Orient and the Occident has represented the thematic challenge addressed to well-known personalities of our contemporary culture, with a rich research experience in the historical and cultural autochthonous and universal space, having in the centre the Academician Răzvan Theodorescu

and the Profesoor Tereza Sinigalia, PhD, both of them holding the distinction of Doctor Honoris Causa offered by "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași.

The papers of the symposium were opened by Mr. Academician Răzvan Theodorescu, who presented the lecture having the topic "East-European Art and Spirituality from Iconoclasm to Kandinsky". The treated subject has envisaged political and spiritual peculiarities which, once the end of the Roman Empire started (*Imperium Romanorum*), towards the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, have defined that "pars orientis" (the oriental part of the Empire), the large space of Christianity, of constitutional hierarchies (the tetrarchy), of Caesarpapism, of the apophatism of the Greek parents of the Church. Having a bird's eyeview on the history of this space, Mr. Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu has revealed three moments in which monumental art, architecture and painting have expressed major specificities of theological thinking and of Byzantine philosophy, for more than one millennium. We are talking about the iconoclastic period of the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, of the isichastic one of the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also of the rediscovery of the Middle Ages around 1900. Evoking the significant role that the Byzantine icon has played in this context, as a materialization of the dogma of the two natures – divine and human – of the Saviour, it has also been noticed the major importance of the sign of the cross, in a new artistic climate, lacking sacred images, a sign which has become, in time, a fundamental ecclesiastical symbol of Christianity. There were underlined key aspects of artistic and spiritual evolution, reminding moments, personalities and significant monuments. From the current parietal ornament, to the ecclesiastical and spiritual symbol of redemption through the suffering of the Saviour, the cross appears in numerous representations, indicating over centuries the Christian origins of today's Europe, also as an obvious inheritance of iconoclasm. From the initial cross, as a parietal ornament, to the cruciform architecture of stavrocentric monuments, that replaced the Paleochristian basilica plan of the first Byzantine period.

Another important phase of the East-European spirituality, extraordinarily presented by Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu was that of Palamit Hesychasm between the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, in which the accent fell on mystic meditation, silence, prayer, and the revelation of the light from Tabor, that marked the history of the paleolog Byzantium and of the spaces influenced by it, among which the Romanian Countries, numerous monumental examples from this era are a proof in the East-European space.

Finally, the third analysed East-European register was the one of Russian modernity, in which the Middle Ages has represented a common denominator of cultural unity. Based on the crisis from Russia from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the appeal to the local medieval elements, enriched by the Russian religious philosophy of Vladimir Soloviov and the

one of Nicolae Berdiaev, proposes a new change of vision by analysing the destinies of Russia, through the accent on the medieval period. The Christian sociological anthropology defined by Serghei Bulgakov, Pavel Florenski, the studies of the Byzantine period of the school represented by Vasilevski, Kondakov and Uspenski, enriched the cultural revolutionary area of that period.

Modern artists use the medieval imaginary, as a source of medieval inspiration, announcing a true creative avant-gardism, having W. Kandinsky as the main representative, as a link between the Russian and the Western culture. In this cultural environment, the icon is rediscovered, becoming a symbol of Russian spirituality, signalling the obvious signs of a new modernity, based on the tradition of medieval and modern Orthodoxy.

The next lecture belonged to another important representative of the research in the field of art and medieval culture which is autochthonous and universal. Mrs. Professor Tereza Sinigalia, PhD, presented the research having the title "Iconographic Themes from the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries and their Balcanic road towards Moldavia", stirring the interest of the participants through the richness and relevance of the presented information. It was also underlined the relevance of the presented information. It was presented an image of the Balcanians from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, having direct connections with secular history, politics, religion, art and culture in Romanian Countries. It was signalled the importance of travelling of people and ideas in the field of arts, and also of the travelling of painters with their luggage of iconographic models, which facilitated the transfer of some compositional themes fully agreeing with the Liturgical message of the Church, defining an iconography which will become, in time, almost canonical. There were also numerous exceptions, drifts and innovations of this specific iconography, in order to support certain ideas and dogmatic concepts. Regarding Moldavia, it has searched for models and painters capable of expressing his political and religious ambitions, magisterially reflected through mural paintings, without copying the models of Balcanic painting, but adapting them to autochthonous specificity. Mrs. Professor continued to present some of the multiple iconographic themes which could have been approached in this cultural space, among which a special place is held by the scene called *Deisis*, meaning prayer (Greek), which has known a large spreading in the entire Balcanic space. Explaining the iconographic, theological and artistic meanings of this scene, the presentation was enriched with numerous examples and case studies which stir interest for interdisciplinary research, by the stylistic connections with the Byzantine cultural and imagistic inheritance. Moreover, there have been evoked other iconographic representations having specific meanings, among which the images of the Virgin Mary, of the Saviour Christ represented as an emperor and bishop, underlining the peculiarities, the differences regarding the artistic manner and

the interpretative meanings of such themes from an area to another (Macedonia, Serbia, Epirus, The Romanian Countries). The analysis of the chosen images did not limit itself only to the above-mentioned aspects, but it also underlined numerous compositional, portrait or chromatic features, opening new ways of analysis over the evolution of iconography in the Balkans, placed at the conjunction of oriental culture with the one of the Occident.

Furthermore, the next lecture having the title "Art as History, History as Art. The Prince Neagoe Basarab approached in a new manner" belonged to Associate Professor Laura Mesina, PhD, from the Doctoral School "Space, Image, Text, Territory" (SD SITT) – The Centre of Excellence in the Study of Image (CESI) of the University of Bucharest. Mrs. Mesina described a long trajectory in the analysis of new approaches of visual European cultures and of the historical and cultural references of Neagoe Basarab. The research was developed in an interdisciplinary manner, outside the history of art, from a field of interflow of visual cultural studies, cultural histories and the history of ideas, around the concepts of imaginary, representation, power or collective memory.

Furthermore, the collective imaginary is the one which has the ability of representing or underlining the meaning of the power rendered through image. The presented ideas smoothly connected to the next lecture of Mr. Associate Professor Cristian Ungureanu, PhD, from "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași, having the topic "Meanings of Geometric and Symbolic Anatomy in Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholy*". The idea of collective memory found its correspondent in the area of visibility artistically transposed, the feeling of melancholy rendered in the painting of the German Renaissance artist being described in extremely eulogistic terms in the writings and commentaries of the exegetes from the periods that followed. The analysis of this important work of art has led to its presentation in complex formulas, being regarded as an allegory of deep thinking, as an expression of iconography and painting tradition, a true unprecedented lyrical confession of Northern art, or even an allegory of virtue, opening numerous ways of reading and analysis of this work filled with metaphoric, symbolic, geometrical or alchemical meanings.

The multitude of meanings which shape the interdisciplinary analysis of such an artistic creation with deep overtones also in the spiritual plan has opened the way for the next invited guest of the National Symposium "Anastasis" Art and Medieval Culture between the Orient and the Occident, that is Professor Viorel Sava, PhD from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology "Dumitru Stăniloae" from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iași, having the topic: "Church Architecture and the Adornment of a Cult Sanctuary – Mundane Clothes for Divine Worship". The research has underlined the theological meanings of the sacred (Liturgical) space, and its

dual connotations: the one of physical, earthly space, respectively those of divine or celestial space, having sacred meanings, sending to the sacrament of God. According to the Christian vision, the Liturgical space is vowed to God, being taken out of the current usage of the secular world and introduced in the sphere of divine worship. All these ideas have been supported by relevant case studies, offering examples and punctual iconographic analysis from the interior Liturgical space of the church "The beheading of St. John the Baptist" from Iași. The priest Professor has underlined the fact that the understanding of these aspects has an extremely important role in saving the mobile and immovable heritage from our country, by the culturalization and spiritualization of traditional communities which will assure the non-dissolving of our national identity.

To continue, the next presentation was the one of Miss Assistant Ioana Palamar, PhD from the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from the National University of Arts "George Enescu" from Iași, having as topic: "Selfportrait between Normality and Psychosis". The author has underlined the fact that the idea of portraying reflects a series of psychic latent needs of self-expression, stored in the artist's subconscious, selfportraying being understood from this perspective as a form of visual therapy or of visual representation of the most hidden human feelings. Selfportrait marks existential crisis and the healing of some self-conflictual situations at a psychic level, the present research searching for bridges between the level of psychic expression and the one of artistic expression. In the context of an event dedicated to art and medieval culture, in which portraiture has played a significant role in transmitting the deepest or the most relevant ideas through iconography, the research of Miss Assistant Ioana Palamar, PhD is the expression of interdisciplinarity in this field of research, finding numerous connections with other branches of knowledge, such as the one of fractals and the theories associated with them, evoked in the research of Miss Associate Professor Modesta Lupașcu, PhD from the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from Iași, having the title: "A Study about 3D Graphics in Culture". By introducing and developing a series of notions and specific fundamentals, such as the connections between the inferences of semiotics and digital artefacts 2D and 3D, her research has underlined the appearance of some digital surrogates or of some digital environments, based on epistemic premises having a special role in different fields of study. It is particularly interesting the connection that the author of the study makes with these concepts which are specific to the digital culture of the contemporary period, with a series of decorative motifs, such as entrelac motifs, taken out of the miniature manuscripts of the Middle Ages.

Thus having taken place, this year's edition of the National Symposium "Anastasis" Art and Medieval Culture between the Orient and the Occident has been a real success both for professors, students and the researchers who

love this field of art and medieval spirituality, thus opening the way for interesting discussions and debates on the contemporary artistic phenomena, connected to the artistic creations, events and monuments of the medieval period.