



ENTRE LA LETRA Y EL PINCEL:

*el artista medieval.
Legenda, identidad y estatus*

MANUEL ANTONIO
CASTIÑEIRAS GONZÁLEZ (ED.)



Círculo Rojo
EDITORIAL

AGRADECIMIENTOS

ENTRE LA LETRA Y EL PINCEL: EL ARTISTA MEDIEVAL LEYENDA, IDENTIDAD Y ESTATUS



MANUEL ANTONIO CASTIÑEIRAS GONZÁLEZ (ED.)



Círculo Rojo
EDITORIAL

ÍNDICE

INTRODUCCIÓN

Introducción

MANUEL ANTONIO CASTIÑEIRAS GONZÁLEZ, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

PRIMERA PARTE La leyenda y el retrato del artista

Autores homónimos: el doble retrato de “Mateo” en el Pórtico de la Gloria

MANUEL ANTONIO CASTIÑEIRAS GONZÁLEZ, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

San Luca come Petrarca: visioni dell’artista-letterato nell’Evangelario di Giovanni da Opava (1368)

MICHEL BACCI, Universität Freiburg, Suiza

SEGUNDA PARTE La firma del artista

La “signature” au Moyen Âge. Mise en perspective historique

JACQUELINE LECLERCQ-MARX, Université Libre de Bruxelles

L’artiste lettré? Compétence graphique et textuelle de l’artiste roman à travers les signatures épigraphiques

EMILIE MINEO, Université de Poitiers

Opere firmate nell’arte italiana / Medioevo: il caso di Siena, tra alfabetismo degli artisti ed errori presunti

GIAMPAOLO ERMINI, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa

Signatures of Byzantine Painters in Macedonia: deciphering the Astrapades code

ANASTASIOS PAPADOPOULOS, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

TERCERA PARTE Formación, itinerancia y “biografía” del artista medieval

Formación, viaje y memoria visual: los escultores de Auvernia y su evolución artística
TÉRENCE LE DESCHAULT DE MONREDON, Université de Genève, Suiza

Un pittore del Trecento tra storia e letteratura: Buonamico Buffalmacco e “sua compagni”
LORENZO CARLETTI, Opera della Primaziale Pisana

CUARTA PARTE Roles profesionales en los talleres medievales

IV. A La práctica de la pintura

La réalisation d'un décor peint monumental: des outils, des savoirs et des savoirs-faire
ANNE LETURQUE, Centre d'Études Médiévales de Montpellier

La miniatura en diàleg amb l'entorn: intercanvis artístics als *scriptoria* romànics catalans
ANNA ORRIOLS, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

L'ús de models en la pintura mural gòtica lineal a la ciutat de València. La Cambra Secreta de la Catedral i el Palau d'En Bou

AURORA INMACULADA RUBIO MIFSUD, Restauradora de béns culturals

MARÍA ANTONIA ZALBIDEA MUÑOZ, Departament de Conservació i Restauració. Universitat Politècnica de València

Els *Planys sobre Crist mort* de Joan Mates i els procediments de seriació en els tallers pictòrics del gòtic català

CÈSAR FAVÀ, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

MIREIA CAMPUZANO, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

IV. B La organización del trabajo

Organización y perfiles profesionales en los talleres catedralicios de la Corona de Aragón (s. XII-XIII)

CARLES SÁNCHEZ, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Els orfebres a la Catalunya plenomedieval

JOAN DURAN-PORTA, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

QUINTA PARTE Los patronos y las artes

Le committenze di Ariberto da Intimiano e le Botteghe di pittori e di miniatori a Milano nella prima metà del secolo XI

MARCO ROSSI, Università Cattolica di Milano

Un reto para el “taller de Melisenda”: la decoración de Santa María en el Valle de Josafat y el proyecto monumental de la Jerusalén cruzada

ANITA HEYMAN, Independent Scholar

Mujeres y artistas: ¿un género subestimado?

VERÓNICA ABENZA, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Aloy de Montbray o cómo trabajar para el rey, la nobleza y la iglesia en el siglo XIV
EMMA LIAÑO, Universitat Rovira i Virgili

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

Fuentes y Bibliografía

VERÓNICA ABENZA, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

ÍNDICE DE NOMBRES Y LUGARES
HISTÓRICOS

Índice de Nombres y Lugares Históricos

SIGNATURES OF BYZANTINE PAINTERS IN MACEDONIA: DECIPHERING THE ASTRAPADES CODE¹

ANASTASIOS PAPADOPOULOS

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

In most of the cases the Byzantine artist is an anonymous artist (TODIĆ, 2001, p. 644). During the late byzantine period between the years 1261 and 1453, some artists are starting to emerge from anonymity and sign their work.² When we are referring to Macedonia, we mean the historical region of the Balkan Peninsula that is now divided between the states of Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria.

In this period we have very few signatures of painters. The most characteristic case is the signature of the painter Kalliergis in the church of the Christ Savior of Veroia,³ a small town near to Thessaloniki, famous for its many byzantine churches. In the dedicatory inscription of the church, dated exactly in the year 1315, we have the -unique for byzantine standards- self-flattering verses: "The painter is Kalliergis, the best painter of all Thessaly, together with my good and decent brothers". So, in this case we do not have only the signature of the painter, but also his boasting words that, in a way, he is the best painter of his times (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 146).⁴

But this is a very rare exception. In the gallery of the narthex of the church of St. Sophia in Ohrid, Ioannes Theorianos signed his name on the blade of the sword of the archangel in the scene of David's repentance, in about the year 1350 (DJURIĆ, 1976, p. 97-99; GROZDANOV, 1980, p. 189-195; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; RADUJKO, 2011, p. 155-162, 183-184, fig. 1, 2b). Finally in the same church, in the chapel of St. John the Baptist, the painter Konstantinos and his son, the sub deacon Ioannes, wrote their names and an invocation on both sides of a painted cross (SUBOTIĆ, 1974, p. 44-47; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 141).

The most important masters from this time are the painters Michael Astrapas and Eutykhios. These artists originate from Thessaloniki, from an artistic family related with manuscript illumination (KISSAS, 1974, p. 35-37), and it is very likely that they were relatives, and I daresay brothers. The Astrapades, as they are mentioned in bibliography, plural for the name Astrapas, have painted and signed five churches, while a few more, unsigned, are attributed to them. This

¹ I would like to thank Professor Manuel Castiñeiras for his invitation to participate in the *I International Symposium Magistri Cataloniae* (Barcelona, November 2014) and the Historian-Researcher Stylianos Kapsomenos for his supervision in the English translation of this paper. The final results published in this article are related to my recent incorporation into the research team of the project, *Movilidad y transferencia artística en el Mediterráneo medieval (1187-1388): artistas, objetos y modelos-MAGISTRI MEDITERRANEI (MICINN HAR2015-63883-P)*, which is directed by Manuel Castiñeiras at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB).

² For an excellent presentation of this issue see: KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994.

³ For the monument in general see: ΠΕΛΕΚΑΝΙΔΗΣ, 1973.

⁴ For the inscription: ΠΑΠΑΖΩΤΟΣ, 1994, p. 100-102.

is a rarity, because to my knowledge, this is the only case in the byzantine history of art that we have five monuments signed by the same workshop, apart from the frescoes that were made by the regional painter Ioannes Pagomenos in the island of Crete (KALOKYPHIS, 1958, p. 347-367; SPATHARAKIS, 2001, p. 34, 40-42, 48-49, 64-65, 71, 74, 77, 83, 207). The artistic value of the Astrapades workshop is of great importance. They are in a way innovators of their time, with great skills and a narrative desire. They introduce new scenes in their frescoes, influenced by the intellectual environment of the so-called *Palaeologan Renaissance*.

The monuments that bear their signatures are the Church of the Virgin Perivleptos in Ohrid, dated in the year 1294/1295 (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 18-21; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 227-228), the church of Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren from 1309-1313,⁵ the church of St. Prohor of Pcinja in 1315-1316 (SUBOTIĆ, TODOROVIĆ, 1975, p. 138-141; CVETKOVIĆ, 2013, p. 447-449.), the Church of St. George in Staro Nagonicino in 1316-1318 (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 120-200; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ, 1993, p. 26-27; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 233-242) and finally the church of St. Niketas near Banjani in the year 1320 (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 22-23; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 255-260.) (fig. 1). Also, some scholars are attributing to them, with persuasive arguments, the frescoes of the very important churches of Gračanica and Studenica, royal endowments of the Serbian King Milutin (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 213-216; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 242-255).



Fig. 1. Map showing the monuments signed by Michael and Eutychios Astrapades. © Anastasios Papadopoulos.

But the question that arises is where did these masters place their signatures? In most of the cases the Astrapades choose to sign in non-conspicuous places of the church (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139): upon the blade of the sword of a holy warrior, on the shields of some military saints, in the fabrics of the garments of martyrs and warriors and upon some ceramic vessels that are decorating scenes of the iconographical program. Also in some cases their signatures are like cryptograms, very hard to decipher and which were discovered by the scholars only during the last fifty years. This is something that is happening for the first time in byzantine monumental painting and in this paper we are going to propose a new suggestion for the deciphering of their mysterious signatures.

⁵ In the church of Bogorodica Ljeviška there are not signatures of Michael Astrapades and Eutychios or they are not preserved. An inscription at the outer narthex informs us that the name of the master painter that decorated the church was Astrapades. For further analysis see: TODIĆ, 1999, p. 230-234, fig. 134. For the transliteration and a drawing of the Serbian inscription see: PANIĆ, BABIĆ, 1975, p. 23.

Inscriptions on the swords of the warrior saints

The most “famous” signature of the Astrapades workshop, is the one that is inscribed on the blade of the sword of St. Merkourios in the church of the Virgin Perivleptos in Ohrid, which is the first church chronologically where their names are signed (fig. 2). We are reading: XEIP MIXAHA TOY AΣTPAΠA-By the hand of Michael Astrapas (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139, fig. 1; TODIĆ, 2001, p. 646-647, fig. 1; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 22, fig., 7a-7b). So, for the first time we have this innovation in Byzantine art: a painter chooses to write his name on the blade of a sword. There has been much discussion among scholars about this choice. Branislav Todic believes that in many cases, the Astrapades are choosing the military saints to put their signatures on because their cult was widespread in Macedonia in the beginning of the 14th c. (TODIĆ, 2001, p. 652-662), but in other cases they are also placing some letters in the garments of doctor saints like Cosmas and Damian (MARKOVIĆ, 2010, fig. 10-11) and their monograms upon some ceramic vessels and architectural parts. We believe that the signatures of the Astrapades are not related with the holy person depicted, but with the object itself.



Fig. 2. St. Merkourios, 1294/1295, Perivleptos, Ohrid. © Wikimedia Commons.

Inscribing the sword blades was a common practice for the workshops of armorers during the middle ages. In many cases these inscriptions refer to the manufacturer or the owner of the sword, while in other the inscription could have the meaning of an invocation to God.⁶ Fortunately, we have hundreds of swords preserved from the Middle Ages, especially in the museums and private collections of central and Western Europe, but also swords from southeastern Europe and the Balkans. Dozens of them bear inscriptions that inform us about the workshop, the manufacturer or bear invocations to God, Archangels and Saints. For example, the inscriptions INGELRII (OAKESHOTT, 1998, p. 29, 82, fig. 7; OAKESHOTT, 2000, p. 26-27, 32) and ULFBERHT (OAKESHOTT, 1998, p. 12; OAKESHOTT, 2000, p. 5-7, 25, fig. 5i) are both known from several swords and probably refer to the armorer or the workshop where they were made. There are also six blades from the beginning of the 12th century inscribed with the words GICELIN ME FECIT on one side and INNOMINEDOMINI on the other (OAKESHOTT, 1998, p. 34-35, fig. 4).

Because of the scarcity of the archaeological material, most conclusions concerning the sword types in Byzantium have been drawn on the basis of the visual sources. In the museum of Varna

⁶ E. Oakeshott in his books gives a lot of examples of swords with inscriptions both referring to workshops or invocations, see: OAKESHOTT, 1998; OAKESHOTT, 2000. Also see: PARANI, 2003, p. 132.

a byzantine sword is exhibited, very similar to the European ones, with the Greek inscription CAPAH on one side and the Greek letter ZHTA (Z) on the other. This inscription, according to Marko Aleksić, indicates the byzantine town of Sardis in Asia Minor as the place where the sword could have been made and the letter ZHTA is probably the signature of the craftsman or the workshop (ALEKSIĆ, 2007, p. 10, 121). In my opinion there is a possibility that this inscription refers to the city of Sofia, whose byzantine name was $\Sigma\alpha\rho\delta\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ -Sardica.

Another sword from the 11th century, now in the Sarajevo museum in Bosnia, bears the inscription +INGEII+FEZI+ (fig. 3), declaring in this unsophisticated way the name of the armorer.⁷ Finally, there is a sword in a private collection from Velika Morava in Serbia, dated between the 11th and the 13th century with the Latin inscription DOICTANH; maybe the religious invocation DEUS OMNIPOTENTIS IESUS CHRISTUS ALTISSIMI IN NOMINE⁸.

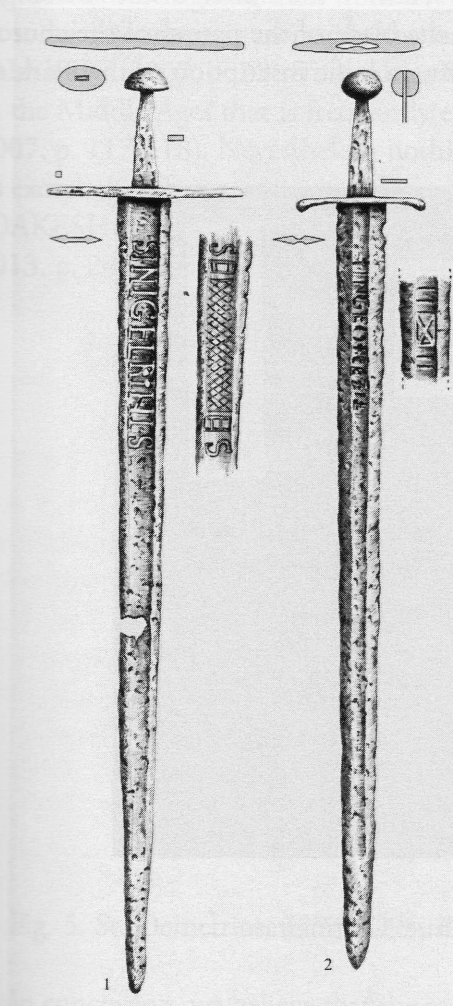


Fig. 3. 1. Sword, 11th c., National Museum BiH, Sarajevo (inv. nr. 6894). 2. Sword, 11th c., National Museum BiH, Sarajevo (inv. nr. 117). © Marko Aleksić.

⁷ These swords are related with the groups of ULFBERHT and INGELRII: ALEKSIĆ, 2007, p. 64, 120, pl. 9:2.

⁸ Dated generally from the 11th to the 13th c.: ALEKSIĆ, 2007, p. 77, 120-121, pl. 5:4.

The signature of Michael Astrapas on the blade of St. Merkourios in the church of Perivleptos in Ohrid, is the first of its kind, but we have more examples of inscribed blades from the Astrapades. In the same church, on the blade of the sword of St. Nestor we can detect some indecipherable symbols, similar to engravings that denote the name of the armourer. In the church of the Protaton in Karyes, which is traditionally attributed to “Manuel Panselinos”, there are some similar symbols upon the blade of the sword of St. Merkourios (fig. 4). Professor Manuel Castiñeiras and the writer believe that Michael Astrapas and Eutychios are definitely involved –if they are not the master painters- in the decoration of the church and that there is a lot of evidence that could support this argument⁹. The same convention is visible on the sword of St. George from the church of St. Nikitas near Banjani, also a work of Michael and Eutychios. Yet, apart from the Astrapades, we can detect this practice too in some other churches, like the church of St. Nicholas near Monemvasia in the region of the Peloponnese, Greece, from the second half of the 13th century, where we have decorative ornamentation on the blade of the sword of a military Saint (ΔΠΑΝΔΑΚΗΣ, 1977-1979, pl. 19b) that reminds us of the decorative motifs of a sword from Koprivnica in northern Croatia with a cross and horizontal parallel lines, dated in the second half of the 12th century (ALEKSIĆ, 2007, fig. 33). Also, in the church of the Archangel Michael in Pedoulas, in Cyprus, from the year 1474, on the blade of the patron of the church we can discern decorative ornamentation, possibly imitating a kufic inscription or the mark of a workshop.¹⁰



Fig. 4. St. Merkourios, around 1310, Protaton. © Manuel Castiñeiras.

⁹ Prof. Manuel Castiñeiras (UAB) and the writer are going to announce a new proposal in the context of the *Magistri Cataloniae et Mediteranei* Projects. We believe that Michael Astrapas and Eutychios are the painters of the Protaton and that the name Manuel Panselinos (Full Moon in Greek) is probably a paraphrase of the name Michael Astrapas (Lightning in Greek). The results of our research are combing historical and iconographical data, especially related with the common motifs that are depicted on the clothes and the armory of the depicted figures. Furthermore, some sources related to the looting and destruction of the *Protaton* by the Catalan Company (Almogàvers) between 1307-1309) should help us to propose in the near future a new date for these frescoes.

¹⁰ I would like to thank Professor Manuel Castiñeiras for informing me about the ornamentation on the sword of Archangel Michael and for providing me a photo from his personal archive. For the church in general see: STYLIANOU, 1997, p. 331-343.

The seeds of the pioneer Michael Astrapas have influenced Ioannes Theorianos, a significant painter of the Palaiologan Renaissance. About fifty years after the decoration of the Virgin Perivleptos, in the same town, Ioannes Theorianos painted the upper floor of the exonarthex, which is a 14th century addition to the existing cathedral of the 11th century, of the church of St. Sophia. Theorianos chose to write his name on the blade of the Archangel Michael from the scene of the Penitence of King David (DJURIĆ, 1976, p. 97-99; GROZDANOV, 1980, p. 189-195; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; RADUJKO, 2011, p. 155-162, 183-184, fig. 1, 2b), revealing in this way the great influence that the work of the Astrapades had in his years.

In the same context, the Astrapades have written in the form of monograms or just letters their initials upon the handles of the swords of some military saints. On the pommel of St. Demetrios in Perivleptos we discern the monogram MX (fig. 5), indicating the name of **MIXAHA Αστραπας** (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, fig. 1:3; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, fig. 4:3, 8b). In addition, on the handle of the sword of St. Theodore Teron, in the same church, there is the letter M, initial letter of the name **MIXAHA** (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967 fig. 1:7; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, fig. 4:7). There is enough historical and archaeological evidence that the craftsmen and armourers were signing their work not only on the blades of the swords, but also on the handles. In some cases there is an inscription on the handle of a sword that informs us about its owner (ALEKSIĆ, 2007, p. 22). To depict a Greek cross within a circle is a very widely spread practice in the Middle Ages that is frequently encountered also on the blades of the swords (ALEKSIĆ, 2007, p. 117-118). Nevertheless, nothing more could be said about the significance of these signs except that they constitute the stamps of the blacksmiths who have manufactured the sword (OAKESHOTT, 1998, p. 22-23, 53, pl. 16, 18; ALEKSIĆ, 2007, p. 119-126; CVETKOVIĆ, 2013, p. 240-241).



Fig. 5. St. Demetrios, 1294/1295, Perivleptos, Ohrid. © Miodrag Marković.

In conclusion, we believe that the master painters Astrapades had selected this way of signing upon the blades and the handles of the swords of some warrior saints, because they wanted to imitate the traditional, in these times, method of the blacksmiths, craftsmen and armourers, who were inscribing the name of their workshop on the swords that they were manufacturing. In this way, they declared their presence in the church and promoted their work without upsetting the donors of the monument. This innovation is also made clear by signing also on some other non-conspicuous places inside the churches.

Inscriptions on the shields of the warrior saints

Besides the swords, we are able to discern the signatures of Michael and Eutychios Astrapas on the shields of some military saints. In the church of St. Prohor of Pcinja the frescoes of Astrapades are preserved in a very bad condition. We have very few scenes from the decoration from the beginning of the early 14th century (about 1315), because the church was badly damaged by fire and it was repainted at the end of the 15th century. However, we are quite fortunate, because the signature of Michael Astrapas was discovered a few years ago, on the shield of St. Demetrius (fig. 6). Traces of letters reveal the name of the painter. We read the Greek letter X for the word Χειρ-by the hand, and the name of the artist in Greek ΜΙΧΑΗΛ-Michael (SUBOTIĆ, TODOROVIĆ, 1975, p. 138-141; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 233-234, fig. 135; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 32, fig. 6; CVETKOVIĆ, 2013, p. 447-449).

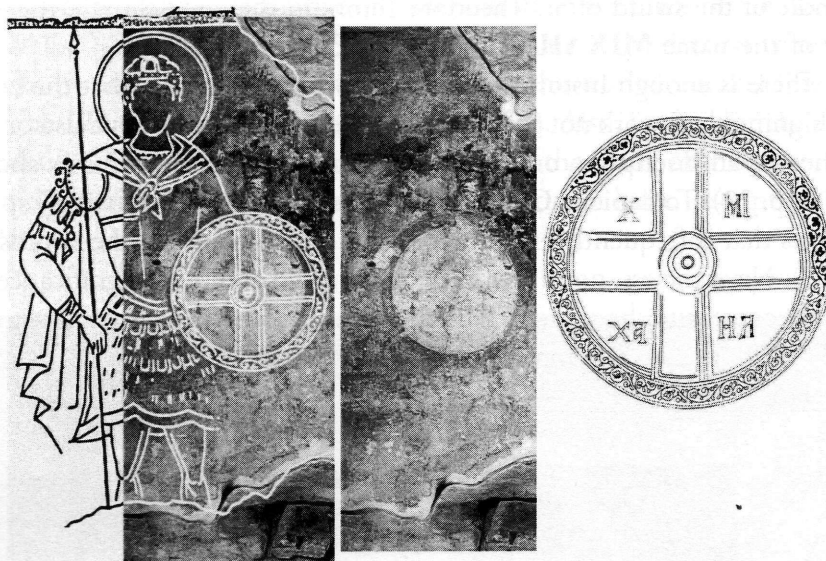


Fig. 6. St. Demetrios, c. 1315, St. Prohor of Pcinja. © Branislav Cvetković.

In the church of St. George in Staro Nagoricino, an endowment of the Serbian King Milutin, dated from the years 1316-1318, on the shield of the warrior St. Artemios, we notice again the signature of Michael (fig. 7). We read ΧΕΙΡ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΥ-by the hand of Michael the painter (TODIĆ, 1993, p. 26-27; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ, 2001, p. 648; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 9, fig. 2a-2c). So, now the artist is predicating his capacity as a painter, thus leaving no doubt to his contemporaries that he is the creator of the frescoes.



Fig. 7. St. Artemios, c. 1316-1318, Staro Nagoricino. © Miodrag Marković.

Finally, in the last signed work of the Astrapades, the church of St. Nikitas near Banjani, dated around 1320, on the shield of the warrior St. Theodore Teron we read: XEIP MIXAHΛ EYTYXIOY-By the hand of Michael and Eutychios (KALOPISSI-VERTI 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ 1999, p. 255-256; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 9, fig. 3a-3c) (fig. 8). In my opinion this last signature is of great importance, because this is the last monument of the Astrapades. It includes both their names, ending this way an artistic cycle of a long-lasting companionship that begun twenty-five years ago in the church of Perivleptos in Ohrid.

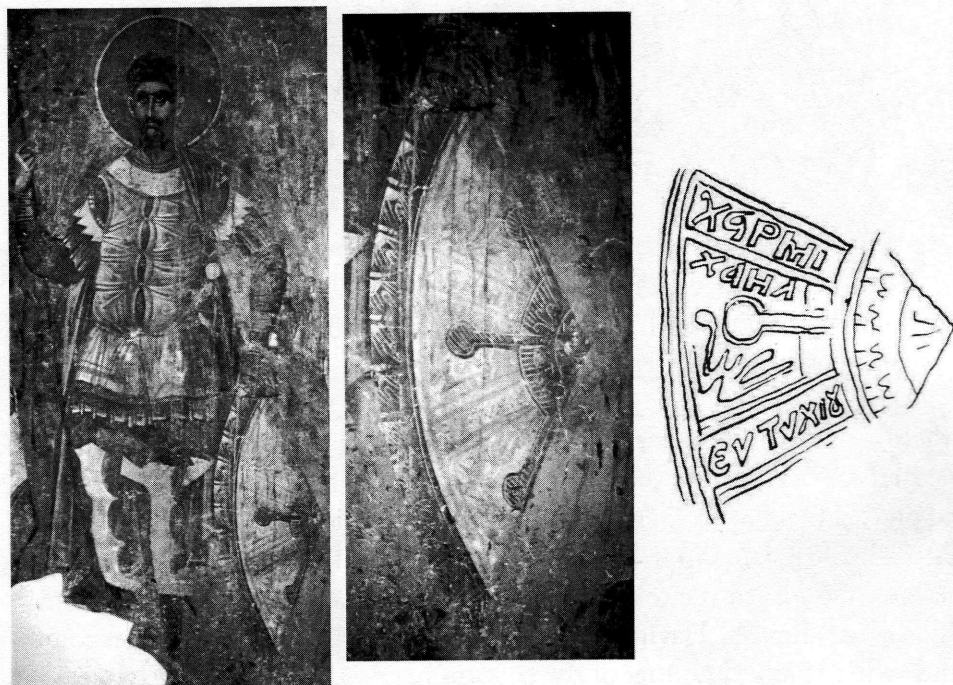


Fig. 8. St. Theodore, c. 1316-1318, St Niketas near Skopje. © Miodrag Marković.

We believe that the choice of signing on the shields of the warrior saints is not related with the holy person depicted itself, but with the tradition of decorating shields in Byzantium (GROTOWSKI, 2010, p. 238-254). Shields depicted in Byzantine art are frequently covered by a variety of ornamental motifs, as it is visible on the shield of St. Nestor in Perivleptos, a work of the Astrapades. George Miles speculates that when placing Kufic inscriptions on shields, Byzantine craftsmen were inspired by actual weaponry imported from Damascus (MILES, 1964, p. 27). Shields, like swords, had also a symbolic meaning for the Byzantines (GROTOWSKI, 2010, p. 250-254, 360-366). At coronations from the time of Julian the Apostate the new ruler would be lifted up on a shield by his soldiers as an expression of his acceptance by the army (WALTER, 1975; GROTOWSKI, 2010, p. 251-252). This practice is clearly depicted in this miniature of the Madrid Skylitzes, dated in the mid-12th century, which depicts the ascension to the throne of the Byzantine Emperor Michael the 1st (fig. 9). It shows two haloed figures, the emperor Michael and the Patriarch Nikephoros, raised on a large shield decorated with pseudo-kufic letters (TSAMAKDA, 2002, p. 43-46, fig. 3). Also, an inscription with pseudo-kufic letters is apparent on the shield of St. Merkourios from the illuminated Greek manuscript Parisianus Graecus 580, dated in the mid-11th century (SPATHARAKIS, 1981, fig. 118; GROTOWSKI, 2010, p. 241), and on the shields of St. Demetrios and St. Prokopios from the triptych of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, in Hermitage, dated in the mid-10th century (GROTOWSKI, 2010, p. 241, fig. 19a-19b).

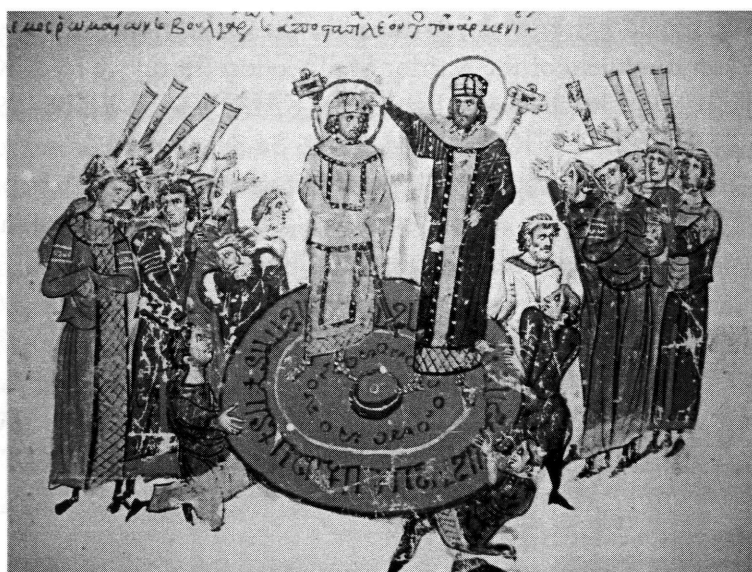


Fig. 9. Coronation of Michael I, mid 12th c., miniature 3, fol. 10v, Biblioteca Nacional de España. © Vasiliki Tsamakda.

Finally, there are also some inscriptions with pseudo-kufic letters on the shields of some figures of the mosaics of Nea Moni in the island of Chios (MOYPIKH, 1985, p. 144, 202-203, fig. 38, 106) and on the shield of St. Demetrius from the Cappella Palatina in Palermo (NICOLLE, 1983, p. 96-97, fig. 48), dated in the mid-11th and the mid-12th centuries respectively.

Shield blazons also played the role of identification signs of individual formations as well as of the shield's owner himself. Flavius Vegetius, in the late 4th century A.D., recommends the writing of the owner's name, and that of the cohort or legion to which he belonged, however as a suitable place for such an inscription he indicates the interior of the shield (GROTOWSKI, 2010, p. 236-238).

We believe that the Astrapades wrote their names on the shields of the warrior saints, emulating a common practice of the byzantine craftsmen to inscribe the shields with Kufic or pseudokufic ornamentation. Because of the lack of archaeological data we do not know if the craftsmen who were manufacturing shields for the byzantine army used to write the name of their workshop at the surface or in the interior of the shield but we cannot exclude this possibility. Either way, these master painters invented a new way of declaring their presence in the churches that they decorated, following a common practice of their times and thus making the sophisticated members of the congregation understand their talent and their confidence.

Inscriptions on garments and clothes

But the innovations of Michael and Eutychios are not exhausted only to the swords, pommels and shields of the warrior saints. We also have signatures of theirs on the clothes and garments of warrior and doctor saints. Once again we do not believe that the signatures are related with the holy person that is depicted, but with the old tradition of the Byzantine masters of silk weaving, to place inscriptions on the textiles of their workshops. At this point we must observe that it is very difficult even for the trained eye to detect these signatures on the garments of the saints, because they intertwine into the decorative pseudo-kufic motifs of the fabrics.

In the church of the Virgin Perivleptos in Ohrid, on the band of the garment of St. Prokopios (fig. 10), we discern the signature of Eutychios: KA<M>OY EYTI[XIO]Y-And me Etychios

(KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139, fig. 2; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 24, fig. 9a-9b). This signature is a kind of a response to the signature by the hand Michael Astrapas that is written on the sword of St. Merkourios (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139, fig. 1; TODIĆ, 2001, p. 646-647, fig. 1; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 22, fig. 7a-7b) (fig. 2), depicted on the west side of the north-west pillar of the church, while St. Prokopios is depicted on the same side of the south-west pillar. The meaning is: By the hand Of Michael Astrapas -on the sword of St. Merkourios- and me Eutychios -on the band of the garment of St. Prokopios.



Fig. 10. St. Prokopios, 1294/1295, Perivleptos, Ohrid. © Miodrag Marković.

In the same church, on the band of the garment of St. Demetrius (fig. 5), we read: **.ZON ΑΣΤΡΑΠ(Α) ΜΙΧΑΗΛ <X>[ΕΙ]Ρ ΖΩΓΡΑΦ[ΟΥ]**- By the Hand of Michael the Painter (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ, 2001, p. 646-647, fig. 4; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 22-24, fig. 8a-8b). So, already from the first signed monument of the Astrapades, Michael informs the viewer about his artistic identity with the Greek word **ζωγράφος**-painter, as Kalliergis will do about 20 years later in the church of Christ Savior in Veroia, however the latter will place his signature into the dedicatory inscription next to the names of the donors (ΠΑΠΑΖΩΤΟΣ, 1994, p. 100-102).

In the church of St. George in Staro Nagoricino, we are fortunate enough to discern on the band of the chiton of St. Theodore Teron (fig. 11) not only the names of both painters, but also the exact year that the church was decorated by them: **<XEIP MI>XAHΛ EYTYXIOY ΣΤΩΚΕ** (6825)- By the Hand of Michael and Eutychios in the year 1316/1317 (MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 9, 22, fig. 1a-1c). This is the only paradigm of the signatures of Michael and Eutychios where they put the date of their doings.

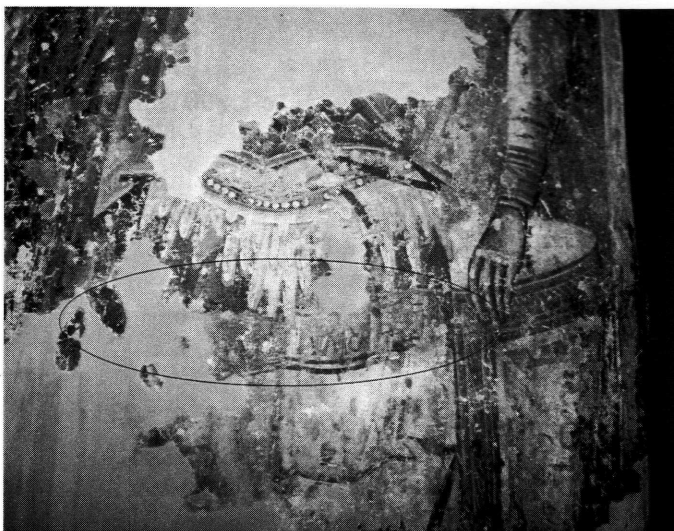


Fig. 11. St. Theodore, c. 1316-1318, Staro Nagoricino. © Miodrag Marković.

Except the aforementioned distinct signatures of the artists, there are a lot of indecipherable pseudo-inscriptions on the garments of saints that are imitating kufic letters, a practice that as we are going to propose, was very often used by byzantine silk weavers.

Howard Bloch, in his book about the Bayeux Tapestry, notices that out of the hundreds pieces of silk that survive from what must surely have been thousands, many contain information. Writing on silk, or writing woven into silk, is an Eastern phenomenon and distinguishes the world of Byzantine silks from that of Scandinavian textiles, which show no traces of written inscriptions. The inscriptions on Byzantine silks are on the order of a signature, and though one cannot tell who actually made them, one knows under whose command they were made (BLOCH, 2006, p. 152-154).

For example, five silks with pattern lions are known to have been woven under imperial patronage. On the imperial lion silk of Cologne we read: *Επί Κωνσταντίνου και Βασιλείου των φιλοχρίστων δεσποτών*-During the reign of Basil and Constantine the Christ loving rulers. The inscription refers to the Emperor Basil the 2nd and his brother and co-emperor Constantine the 8th, so the silk is a product of an imperial workshop of Constantinople between the years 976 to 1025 (BECKWITH, 1961, p. 100, fig.127; MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 34-37, fig. 4a-4b).

Another very important byzantine silk is at the Aachen Munster Treasury (fig. 12), with a design of elephants in medallions that was taken from the shrine of Charlemagne (LOPEZ, 1945, p. 6-7, 36, fig. VI; BECKWITH, 1961, p. 100, fig. 128; MUTHESIUS, 1992, p. 247-248, fig. 1-2; MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 38-39, fig. 5a-9a). Along the lower edge of the Aachen Elephant silk are two rows of pearl shapes where the following inscription is twice repeated:

†Επί Μιχ(αήλ) πριμι(κηρίου επί του) κοιτ(ώνος) (και)
ειδικού
†Πέτρου άρχοντ(ος) του Ζευξήπου ινδ(ικτιώνος)

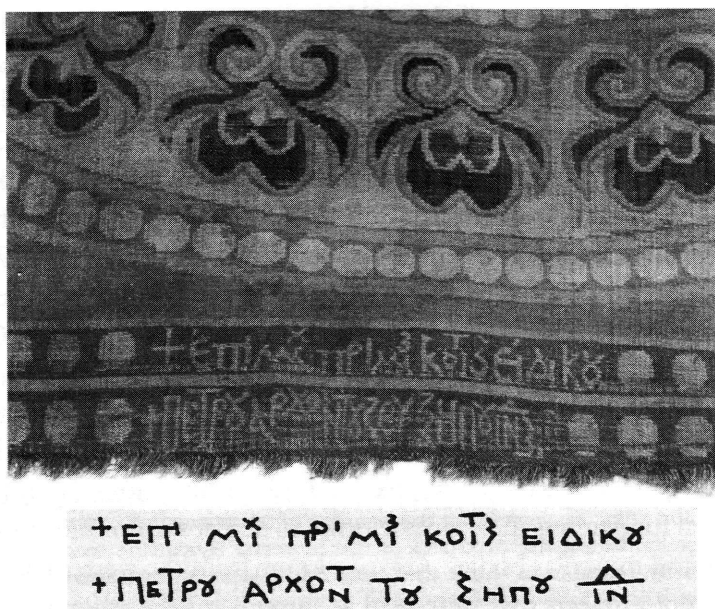


Fig. 12. Elephant Silk, 11th c., Aachen, Munster Treasury. © Anna Muthesius.

The inscription may be translated:

†In the time of Michael Primikirios Koitonos Eidikou
 †When Peter was the Archon(Lord) of Zeuxippos, In-
 diction(year).

The **κοιτών** or sleeping quarters of the Emperor were served by the private imperial guards that were normally eunuchs (RINGROSE, 2003, p. 128-143, 166-183). Primikirios is the title used to denote the rank of a eunuch (RINGROSE, 2003, p. 167-168). The name **Ζεύξιππος** actually refers to an imperial weaving establishment (MUTHESIUS, 1992, p. 247).

Other surviving elephant silks are mostly Islamic fabrics, like the St. Josse silk in the Louvre Museum (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 39, 197, fig. 9b). But the Islamic empire inherited various textile traditions and established a state-run industry of textiles, especially silk. This system was called *tiraz*, a Persian word for embroidery. In the Islamic context the word referred to textiles with the border inscribed with reigns of Muslim rulers and date of manufacture in Arabic or Persian. The inscriptions were executed through embroidery or tapestry weaving with silk thread. The *tiraz* system flourished and persisted to the thirteenth century. The inscriptions start with the religious statement that appears at the beginning of most chapters of the Quran ("In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful"), followed by the name and title of the ruling caliph, and a blessing, such as "May God prosper him" or "May God strengthen him." On a garment made in caliphate *tiraz* shops, there should also be the name of the wazir, or prime minister, who was also in charge of the royal *tiraz* workshops. The next phrase usually indicated the royal or public *tiraz* shop and the city in which the garment was made, followed by the date in the Islamic calendar (XINRU, 1995, p. 28, 41-47).

In another Arabic silk, divided today between St. Ambrogio in Milan and Victoria and Albert Museum in London, dated between 1010-1025, according to the above mentioned *tiraz* system embroidery we can read in an inscription referring to the ruler of the Marwanid dynasty of Upper Mesopotamia Nasir-ed-Daulah (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 121, 195, fig. 34b). Similar is the silk head shroud from the grave of Pope Clement the 2nd, stating that he died in the year 1047, with a Kufic inscription with blessings to Allah (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 194, fig. 117b), of which probably the Pope did not know the exact meaning.

Very important for our survey is one silk from Palermo dated in the mid-12th century, now exhibited at the Kestner museum in Hannover. Although it imitates Kufic letters, the inscription is in Latin, and it states the name of a workshop in Sicily. The inscription is: OPERATUM IN REGIO ERGAS-T[erio]-Made in a workshop of the realm (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 115-116, 202, fig. 110a).

Among the hundreds of examples that are preserved, one can observe a constant “dialogue” between the Islamic and byzantine silk decoration. For example the stylistic similarities between the bird silk from the diocesan museum of Salamanca (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 88, 233, fig. 91b), the lion silk of St. Martin (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 233, fig. 89a) and the byzantine Shroud of St. Potentian in the Sens Cathedral (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 119, 195, fig. 61b) are more than obvious.

In this context we believe that the Astrapades chose the bands of the garments of some saints to place their signatures because they were influenced by the common Byzantine, Islamic or Sicilian silk-weaving workshop practice of their time to embroider inscriptions upon their products. Of course, it was very usual for painters in byzantine times to depict warrior saints in luxurious clothes with shining armours and muscular bodies. Also, we know from the western examples that byzantine silks were so luxurious objects that were used as shrouds for the relics of the saints, a practice that was exercised in Byzantium too. On the so-called coronation mantle of Roger the 2nd from the Schatzkammer of Vienna we easily discern an embroidered inscription around the lower hem, in Kufic scripture (fig. 13). The translation of this inscription is: In the royal workshop of the capital of Sicily in the year 528H (1133/1134) (MUTHESIUS, 1997, p. 196, fig. 60b; TRONZO, 2001, p. 241-244). This inscription reminds us of the signatures of both Michael and Astrapas on the border of the chiton of St. Theodore Teron (fig. 11): “by the hand of Michael and Eutychios, in the year 6825 (1316/1317)” (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139).



Fig. 13. Roger's II Mantle, 1133/1134, *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna. © Wikimedia Commons.

Finally one could say that the production of byzantine silks was a monopoly of the state and that these workshops provided their goods only for imperial and patriarchal use.¹¹ But we must

¹¹ For a general presentation of this issue see: LOPEZ, 1945.

bear in mind that four of the five churches that display the signatures of Michael and Eutykhios Astrapas were endowments of the Serbian King Milutin who was asserting the title Emperor of Serbs, and also that of the Romans from the byzantine empire.¹²

The other one, Perivleptos, was an endowment of the Heteriarch, something like a very high ranked military official of the byzantine army, Progonos Sgouros (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 18-21; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 227-228). The other two churches of Studenica and Gracanica that do not preserve the signatures of the Astrapades, but are with certainty attributed to them by scholars, are also imperial donations of the Serbian King Milutin (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 213-216; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 242-255). So, in a way, the Astrapades painted only royal foundations and enjoyed a high social status as master-painters in the service of the emperor.

Inscriptions on ceramic vessels and pottery

Apart from the above signatures, in some cases, we can discern letters inscribed upon some ceramic vessels that are decorating scenes of the iconographical program. For example, on a ceramic vessel from the scene of the Last Supper in the church of Perivleptos at Ohrid (fig. 14), we can discern the signature of Michael (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 18-23, fig. 1:5, fig. 32; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, fig. 4:5). Also, in the scene of *Wisdom hath built herself a house*, from the same church, we can distinguish the probably initial letters M and N (MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 18-23, fig. 1:9; MARKOVIĆ, 2010, fig. 4:9) (fig. 14). According to some scholars these initials, among a few others that are visible especially in the church of Perivleptos, are attributed to Astrapades and possibly to some of their assistants that were secondary members of their workshop (MARKOVIĆ, 2010, p. 27-28). We would like to add here, that the scene of wisdom hath built *herself* a house, derives from the psalms of King David, and this is the first and only time in byzantine iconography that it is depicted in this way, showing once more the innovative spirit of Michael and Eutykhios.

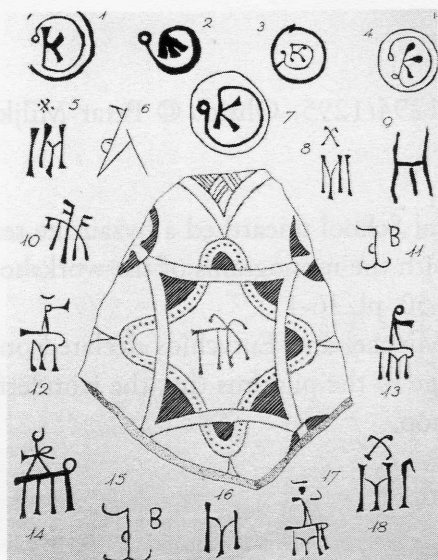


Fig. 14. Monograms on Ceramics from Mangana, Constantinople. " Robert Demangel, Ernest Mamboury.

¹² i) The church of Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren, TODIĆ, 1999, p. 230-234. ii) The church of St. Prohor of Peinja, SUBOTIĆ, TODOROVIĆ, 1975, p. 138-141; CVETKOVIĆ, 2013, p. 447-449. iii) The Church of St. George in Staro Nagoricino, MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 120-200; KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 139; TODIĆ, 1993, p. 26-27; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 233-242. iv) The church of St. Niketas near Banjani, MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, 1967, p. 22-23; TODIĆ, 1999, p. 255-260.

Stamping ceramic vessels, as it is well known, is an ancient technique that was widely used by the Greeks, the Romans and the Byzantines. Stamps on amphorae, craters, lamps and even bricks are very useful for the specialists of ancient and medieval pottery, because they are a very helpful tool for the understanding of the pottery workshops, and especially for the trade between the regions of the roman and byzantine world. Even in the 13th and 14th century, the craftsmen of Constantinople and other regions of the Byzantine Empire, like Thessaloniki or Thasos, continued this practice, imprinting in the form of monograms or letters the name of their workshop (MIAKIPTZHΣ, 2003, p. 82-84).

For example, during the excavations that were held in the 1930's in the district of Mangana, in Constantinople, the archaeologists R. Mamboury and E. Demangel published an important number of fragments of luxurious byzantine glazed pottery, dated from the 13th and the 14th centuries (fig. 15). In many of these fragments the monogram, namely the signature of the workshop (DEMANGEL, MAMBOURY, 1939, f. 195-196, 200-201), is apparent, reminding us of the contemporary tactic of the Astrapades that we saw in Perivleptos (fig. 14).

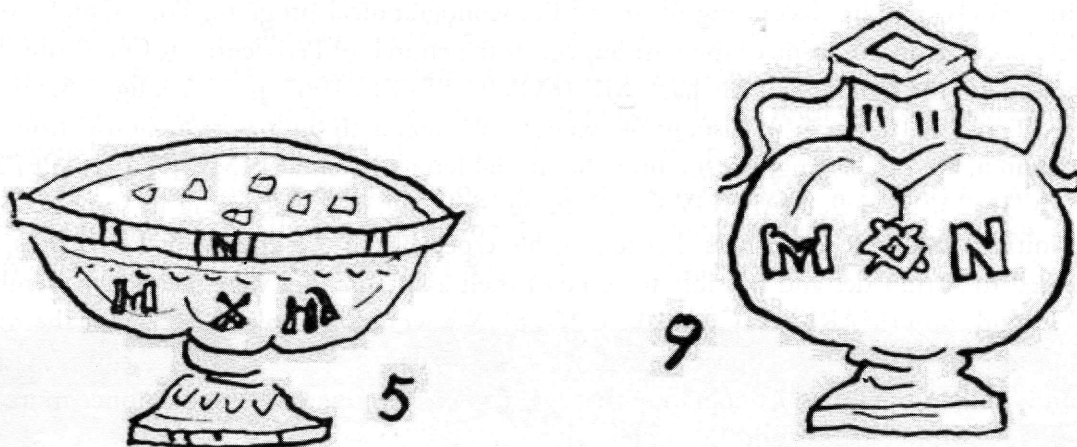


Fig. 15. Drawings of Ceramic Vessels, Perivleptos, 1294/1295, Ohrid. © Petar Miljković-Peppek.

Also, in the island of Thasos, the French Archaeological School unearthed a byzantine settlement and found a lot of late byzantine glazed pottery with the monograms of the workshops depicted in the central medallions (FRANÇOIS, 1995, f. 50, pl. 16-17).¹³

By putting their initials upon some ceramic vessels, Michael and Eutychios declared once more their presence in the church and gave a clear message to the pilgrims that the wonderful frescoes that surround them are attributed to their workshop.

Conclusion

As Sophia Kalopissi states, the evidence of church inscriptions reveals the low status of fresco painters especially in the provinces. The fresco painter, in most of the cases, is a simple craftsman. In the major urban centers of Byzantium there are scarce indications of a certain rise in

¹³ Véronique François proposes also some other explanations about the monograms.

the social and economic status of the painters. For example, we do not know the name of the workshop that adorned with magnificent mosaics and frescoes the Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora, Kariye Camii, in Constantinople (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 150-151).

Although written sources are silent about the organization of painters in Constantinople and other major Byzantine cities in the Palaeologan period, parallel information seems to indicate that, like masons and other craftsmen, in all probability, joined associations, whose organization was presumably close to that of those in the Italian towns of the same period. The elevation of the status of a painter from that of a craftsman to artist was only accomplished in the time of Renaissance (KALOPISSI-VERTI, 1994, p. 150-151).

The Astrapades were proud for their work, so they wanted to leave the “brand” of their workshop in the churches that they decorated. They had confidence and they wanted to differentiate themselves from their contemporaries showing an intention that is going to be a common place for the great artists of the forthcoming Renaissance in the west.

Finishing this paper, we would like to add, that our aim was to propose a new suggestion for the decipherment of the signatures of the Astrapades. We believe that these great innovators of the byzantine art during the distressed period of the 14th century discovered a new brilliant way to state their presence in the churches that they decorated. Their method was to use the material objects as their implements to asseverate the quality of their workshop. They preferred the swords, the shields, the garments and the ceramic vessels, because these artifacts were made by craftsmen who commonly inscribed their names or the name of their workshops upon them. So, they created a self-evident association between the depicted object and its maker, but in this case, because the object is painted the signature refers to the painters.

In this way the self-confident Astrapades emerged from anonymity and left behind them these magnificent frescoes and their mysterious signatures upon them, which continue to trouble modern researchers until now.



ⲭⲉⲓⲣⲙⲓⲭⲁⲛⲁⲛⲱⲃⲁⲫⲉⲁ

Lámina 6. Escudo de san Artemio con la firma del pintor (POR LA MANO DE MIGUEL EL PINTOR), c. 1316-1319, iglesia de Staro Nagoricino. © Miodrag Marković.

Signatures of Byzantine Painters in Macedonia: deciphering the Astrapades Code

ANASTASIOS PAPADOPOULOS

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

In late Byzantine monumental painting, works are rarely signed by the artists and even when they are, it is very scarce for us to have more than one signed work by the same painter. Exceptions to this “rule” are two masters, Michael Astrapas and Eutychios (Astrapades), who left their signatures in five different churches. All of these churches are located in the historical region of Macedonia, which is today divided between the states of Greece, FYROM and Bulgaria. The Astrapades painted their signatures or monograms and even other undecipherable letters not in apparent places, but almost hidden among the garments of some saints, the weapons and the armory of holy warriors and upon some ceramic vessels that are decorating some scenes of the iconographical program. Their signatures in some cases are like cryptograms and some of them have only been recently discovered in the last fifty years. This paper suggests a new way of deciphering their inscriptions, based on the material of the objects bearing the signatures, letters or monograms. We argue that these outstanding masters of the Palaeologan Renaissance, as great innovators of their time, intentionally “invented” a new ingenious way to declare their presence in the churches that they have decorated.