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MONASTIC CEMETERY AND HOSPITAL CHAPELS
OF THE BALKANS:
FUNCTIONS AND ICONOGRAPHICAL PROGRAMS

The origin, function, development, disposition and decoration of
cemetery and hospital chapels have never been the subject of an
extensive, systematic research, although in the last decades interesting facts about them have been published. The accumulation of rich archeological and historical material about the subsidiary chapels, in
general, and its analysis in concrete monographical studies enabled
the passage to functional classification and examination of the available information. The present article has a similar thematical
character. Its purpose is to trace the main stages in the decoration of
monastic mortuary chapels, to explain the formation of its concepts,
its development and function in view of the recent discoveries.
Naturally, this requires the omission of many interesting details and
circumstances having only local significance, but in compensation
gives an overall picture of the process and allows us to understand
its essence and movement. Such a generalization has particular
reasons at the present state of investigations, when different problems concerning, in some measure, the monastic funerary chapels,
have been discussed. And not least my special study of the cycle of
the Baptist brought out many new facts which allow a re-examination
of the question from a particular point of view.

1 G. Babić, Les chapelles annexes des églises byzantines: Fonction liturgique et
programme iconographique (Paris, 1969); S. Ćurčić, The Twin-Domed Narthex in
Paleologian Architecture, ZRVI 1971/13, 333-344; Idem, Architectural Significance of
Subsidiary Chapels in Middle Byzantine Churches, JSAH 1977/36, 94-100; T.
Mathews, Private Liturgy in Byzantine Architecture: Toward a Reappraisal,
CahArch 1982/30, 125-138; A. Papageorgiou, The Narthex of the Churches of the
Middle Byzantine Period in Cyprus, Rayonnement Grec; Hommage à Charles Delvoye (Brussels, 1982), 437-448; N. Tetereiatnikov, Burial Places in Cappadocian
Churches, "The Greek Orthodox Theological Review", New York, 1984/29, 141-175; Idem, Upper-Story Chapels near the Sanctuary in Churches of the Christian East,

2 M. Stoyanova, Le cycle de la vie de saint Jean-Baptiste dans l'Orient chrétien,
During research concerning the development of the eschatological ideas in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods as well as their reflection in contemporary art and architecture, I was faced with some monuments from the 16th and 17th centuries, the decoration of which seemed at first unusual within the orthodox iconographical tradition.

Even though the freestanding architectural structures showing remains of liturgical furnishings such as apses and a small altar, enclosed by an iconostasis, depict subjects traditional for East Christian churches, their naves are decorated only with the scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist and do not include the Christological cycle obligatory for the regular orthodox churches.

Specifically, the monuments I plan to discuss are a cemetery church, in one case, and in the other, according to the historical sources, a hospital chapel. The destination of both – funerary and monastic – is unequivocally proven by their location close to the monastic cemetery.

The geographical and chronological distance between the cemetery church (Rožen, South-west Bulgaria, 1662) and the hospital chapel (the bolniţa of Bistriţa-Vilcea, South-west Rumania, c. 1522) discount any direct connection in the choice of their iconographical program. Nor can we interpret the particular preference for the cycle of the Precursor as dedication to the patrons, Saint John the Baptist of the cemetery church, and Saint Pacomius of the hospital chapel, or to those of their founders, the abbot Silvestrus and Barbu Craiovescu.

Evidently, the reasons to choose the life of the Precursor as a leading theme in the iconographical decoration of both chapels are

Venise 1990.


2 About the fondation and history of both the sanctuaries cf. Stoyanova, Rožen, pp. 25-27, pl. 10; A. Efremov, Pictura interioară din paraclisul monastirii Bistrița-Vilcea, BMI Bucarest 1972/3, 67-78 (p. 71: “Most probably”, the hospital chapel was built on the place of the sepulchral chapel “SS. Apostels”, founded by Neagoe Basarab, and was destined to sepulchral of Barbu Kraiovescu (Pachomius); Dumitrescu, Fondateurs et iconographie au XVIe siècle en Valachie, “Revue Romaine d’histoire de l’art”, Bucarest 1977/14, 21-49 (p. 23: “... la bolnița a été destinée non seulement aux offices pour les moines malades et mourants, mais probablement aussi pour les moines retirés dans les grottes des environs” (c’est pour ça que la bolnița fut dédiée à la Transfiguration du Christ).
not due to concrete historical circumstances. I would rather connect them with other similar examples from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine epoch, because the cycle of Saint John the Baptist was introduced in the iconographical programs of the subsidiary chapels with funeral functions (or the places in the church where the rituals for the dead took place) earlier than the 16th century. Beside the *diaconica* and the *presbyteries* where the most important scenes from the life of the Baptist appear already in the middle of the 11th century ⁹, the first chapels known to me, exclusively depicted with almost the full cycle, date from the beginning of the 14th century: St. John at Kunavi, Crete and the chapel of the Precursor in the North gallery of the church of the Holy Apostles at Thessaloniki ¹⁰. It is interesting to note that scenes from his life have been witnessed in the crypt of Saint John’s monastery at Sebasta in the 12th century ¹¹. This crypt, built on the place where, according to the legend, the first invention of the saint’s head took place ¹², was independent from the architectural body of the church, but its liturgical function was most probably in accordance with that of the *katholikon* ¹³. The available archeological and literary evidence, very scanty really, gives no

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¹ In some Old Slavonic liturgical books there are special indications about the liturgy held before the bishop-burials, cf. S.V. Bulgakov, *Nastol'naja kniga dlja sviaštenno-čerkovno služitelej*, Čar'kov 1900, 1254. The body of the dead bishop was posed in the altar, and not in the narthex as at funerals of ordinary Christians.

² It may be not occasionally that the cycle of the Baptist appeared for the first time in the *diaconicon* of the episcopal church of St. Sophia in Ochrid where, in the lower register, the portraits of some bishops are depicted (cf. Babić, op. cit., 121). A similar tradition to collocate the Precursor-cycle in the *diaconicon* or in the *presbytery* is common for a group of Old Russian churches from the 12th century near Novgorod, cf. Stoyanova, *Le cycle*, Cat. N. 14, 16, 17, 18, 19.

³ Notes about their disposition and further bibliographical indications in: Stoyanova, *Le cycle*, cat. N. 32 and 33.

⁴ According to Saint Gerom, Rufin and Theodoret, the sanctuary existed already in the fourth century, cf. DACL 2168-69.

⁵ In 453, another sanctuary arose in the diaconicon of the cathedral in Emesa where the head of the Precursor after its second invention was transferred, cf. Babić, op. cit., 73.

⁶ Cf. The Memories of the famous Greek pilgrim John Phokas who visited the monastery in 1185.

⁷ In Byzantine liturgical practice the functions of main church and subsidiary chapels (or cemetery churches) were coordinated in a relatively late period. The earliest testimonies date from the 11th-12th centuries: the Charters cited in n. 35. They attest the destination of the cemetery chapels for services whose character does not coincide with the spirits of the principal ecclesiastical feast of the day. Subsequently, the complementary function of these chapels was sanctioned in the *typikon* of Peter Mogila. For the period before the 9th century cf. Babić, op. cit., 9-13 and passim.
ground to think that this crypt-martyrium, very famous at the time; did serve as a model for the iconographical program of the monastic funerary chapels, in the way the Baptist, the monks’ patron and protector, with his ascetic life served also as their moral model.

An extensive investigation of the Precursor’s *vita*, its origin, iconography, distribution, semantics, relation to the liturgical services etc., shows that the cult of this saint, already in its pagan manifestations, had a close link with the ideas of death and resurrection, with the spiritual health attained through purification with holy water (baptism) and through repentance, in so far as sin was considered to be at the origin of every malady. The figure of the Precursor continues not only the ancient veneration of the water and moon as *fons vitae*, but some eschatological beliefs as well, which saw in him a new Elijah and an important protector before Christ’s Last Judgment. With its profound symbolism, the life of Saint John the Baptist was an example for spiritual and moral purity which was, according to the Christian eschatological concepts, the decisive condition for the successful transition to the divine kingdom. There are not only the para-liturgical texts of the Vesper, the Deisis-composition in the apses of the funeral chapels or the illustrations of the Last Judgment, from the 11th century on, that give us an idea about the important role attributed to Saint John the Baptist by Christian eschatologists. Some phenomena from the early Christian period also manifest a tendency to relate the “miraculous” functions of the Precursor with the mystic of the resurrection. In the first place, I should mention the early Christian baptisteries-martyria and the dedication of these chapels to Saint John the Baptist. In Northern Italy, the usage continued right up to the 13th-14th centuries. One

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11 Evagre, *Traité d’oraison*, 63 and 68.

12 About the personification of the water and moon cult in the figure of the Precursor cf. Stoyanova, *Le cycle* (Les origines païennes); *Idem*, Rožen, p. 29, n. 12 and 13.

13 *Idem*, *Le cycle* (Les origines païennes).

of the most interesting and valuable examples is the baptistery of Saint-Mark’s church in Venice, designed to serve, at the same time, as a private and funerary chapel of the Dandolos.

The decoration of the monastic cemetery and hospital chapels with cycles of Saint John’s life is a reflection of the eschatological beliefs which the Precursor, considered to be the first New-Testament hermit and exclusively respected by the monks, represents symbolically. In certain monasteries such as the Studion at Constantinople and Dionissiou at Mount Athos, the traditional veneration of the Precursor was still more emphasized for patronomical reasons, and their typika order special services for the feasts of Saint John. Through the ecclesiastical-political relations of these monasteries, their liturgical tradition penetrated into other monasteries in the Balkans, too.

In fact, the very “anomaly” in the iconographical program of both discussed cases is the omission of the Christological cycle. The liturgical furnishings, even when on a small scale, as well as the figures of the liturgists in the altar-space (Saint Basil the Great, Saint John Chrysostom and Saint John the Theologian in Rožen; Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great and Saint Athanasius of Alexandria in Bistrița) indicate unequivocally, that the divine liturgy was held there.

Let us examine now in brief the prehistory and the proceedings of the monastic funeral rituals established in the different redactions of typika, in order to understand in more detail the logic and the successions of the changes in the iconography of the mortuary chapels, in general, and, in second plan, to explain, to what the two “anomalous” examples from the late post-Byzantine period are due.

Monastic funeral rituals and functions of the mortuary chapels

In view of the different statutes of the earliest Christian churches, as well as for lack of sufficient documentation about the monastic

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funeral rituals at that time, the early Byzantine period cannot be included in our conclusions. At any rate, it is necessary to make, in brief, an excursion to the past through the prechristian epoch, in order to distinguish the principle evolutionary stages in the veneration of the dead.

It is known that the Christian funeral rituals, of which monastic funerals are a derivation, have old pagan origins. There existed the belief, in ancient times, that the world of the dead exercised a direct influence upon all human activities, determining their exit. That is why every ritual which was designed to assure fertility and abundance included ceremonies as well, that give homage to the spirits and praise their graces.

The calendar feasts, many of which, in some measure, could stand for the beginning or the end of the year, were thought to be a direct manifestation of the cosmic forces. According to the beliefs of various Indo-European peoples, the spirits came out from their tombs and visited their living relatives. In winter, the most important dates were the feasts of Saint Martin and of Saint Andrew (they mark the beginning of the winter, considered a kind of death), as well as of Saint Lucy and Saint Thomas. In summer, the world of the dead “opens” on 24th of June, the Nativity of the Prodrome, and on 24th of August, the feast of Saint Bartholomew. On these transitional days, when the times confound and the future and the past become present, guessing and fortune-telling were usual. They occurred in public or private rituals, accompanied by complex magic ceremonies of gestures, costumes and plays.

During the winter calendar feasts the idea of death and the presence of spirits were emphasized. In order to propitiate them, special food was prepared and left at determined places and some ceremonies were enacted which resemble the Christian commemorative services discussed here. It is important to note that death was understood as an outset of new life. Its visible appearance


20 Krautheimer, op. cit., 31 and 39; Kyriakakis, op. cit., n. 47 and 48; Serov, op. cit., 49.
coincides with the coming of the spring, Easter, that, in the old calendar, stands for start of the year. During the spring cycle, the return of the dead to the world of the living took place. According to the beliefs, this occurred on the feasts of Circumcision (2nd of February), when winter meets spring, in the period of the carnival, on the feast of Saint George, from Easter-Thursday to Easter-Sunday, on the 1st of May and in the period before the Ascension.

Although the Christian church separated carnival from Easter by the 40-day long period of Lent (in direct relation, like the carnival, to the sacred time, but with an opposite mood), it could not entirely eradicate the pagan tradition which presented the idea of fertility in a series of erotic plays, associating the reproduction of human life with that of the vegetable and animal worlds. By the elaboration of its calendar rituals and festive ceremonies the Christian church was constrained to take into consideration also the pagan myth of the dying and rising deity. This penetrated into European culture from the ancient Eastern civilizations and left profound traces in folklore. The cult of the pagan deities was replaced by the Christian martyrs, but very often this occurred simply by changing to a Christian name with phonetic resemblance.

In pagan, as well as in Christian traditions, funeral rituals constitute a part of the family feasts. In both cases, homage to the dead relatives was given on the 3rd, 9th and 40th days after the death, and again after one year. Then the commemorations were made in accordance with the annual calendar. In this way, the family feasts became common and the stages of the individual life were inscribed in the cosmic cycle.

Historically, the cult of the pagan heroes as well as that of the Christian saints arose out of the common veneration for the dead relatives. With regard to early Christian North Africa (where the first monastic movements appeared), this circumstance was proved by

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21 Serov, op. cit., 50.
22 To intend here the “anti-gaiety” as dominant emotional mood of Lent in comparison with carnival’s joyfulness. For example, during the Lent-period the prayers on bended knees and the dark dressing were recommended by the Church.
23 Kalendarne obyčaj, 206-208.
25 One of the most characteristic examples is the Caucasus, cf. V. Baradavelidze, Kalendar svanskich narodnih prazdnikov, Tbilisi 1939, Idem, Iz istorii drevneishih religioznih veroannyh grusin (about the deity Barbar-Barbar who became the Christian Saint Barbara); G. Charachidze, Le système religieux de la Géorgie païenne, Paris 1968, 286-7.
26 Kyriakakis, op. cit.; Bulgakov, op. cit., 1202.
27 I.S. Sventitska, Tajnute pismita na pîtrete christijani, Sofia 1981, 204-205.
the profound investigation of V. Saxer. He demonstrated the gradual differentiation of the martyr's cult during the 2nd and 3rd centuries from the homage given by the ordinary Christian families to their dead. In the succeeding period, 4th and 5th centuries, the celebrations of the martyrs was not distinguished by any special services, but by their intensity or *cura propensior* in occasion of the annual feast. In a similar way, in coexistence with pagan inhumations and rites, the martyr-cult developed also in other Mediterranean areas. Its evolution and reflection in the architecture and pictorial decoration of the martyria was investigated in detail by A. Grabar. Here it concerns us in so far as the veneration of the relics inspired the monastic funerary rites, but, contrary to certain opinions, historically it was not at their origin (cf. infra).

As is well known, monasticism arose as a passive reaction against the profound social and spiritual crisis of the late Roman society. The first monks appeared in Upper Egypt and Cappadocia already in the 2nd century and there was neither church, nor priest in their establishments just to 340 circa. The lay anchorites organized the first monasteries with a proper monastic clergy in order to escape the control of the Church.

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The earliest literary sources known to me that give concrete information about the proceedings of monastic funerals date from the 11th century. And it is about 11th-12th centuries that the privileges of the monastery property became permanent and the transformation of the personal possessions in monasteries – advantageous. Thus, after the death of the founders, their monasteries became a sort of family sepulchres like, for example, the Pankrator-monastery at Constantinople. The tombs of the founder’s

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family were usually collocated in the main church or in any other (cemetery) church within the monastery walls \(^n\), while the ordinary monks had to be buried in a cemetery outside the walls, generally closed to the laity. This rule is witnessed by the typika of several famous Byzantine monasteries: Panagia Kosmopotira, Ton Iliou Vomon, Saint Mamas (similar to that of Iliou Vomon), Pantokrator, Theotokos Evergetis, from 11th-12th centuries. Such different treatments were justified in terms of social segregation between founders and ordinary monks. The opposition ordinary monks/founder which with the development of Christianism in the feudal system became more profound, interests us in the social structure of a monastery which resembles the structure of the feudal state. The relation between ordinary Christians and Martyrs, in the Christian church, corresponds to the relation between ordinary monks and founders (resp. abbots). In fact, monks' commemorative services did not include an annual celebration like the saints' feasts. The monks could not, as the founders did, require special posthumous veneration of their memory \(^b\).

The taxis of the monastic funeral rituals in the more popular redactions of typica \(^n\), show, by their humility, a close relation to the funerals of ordinary Christians.

The isolation of the monastic cemetery and hospital chapels and their inaccessibility for the laymen is consistent with the spirit of the monastic rule that prohibits the contact of monks with the outside world \(^b\). On the other hand, it had to secure the sanitation of the monastic community. One of which was the preservation of the water-sources in the monastery. After some time the wooden coffins


— XII century: manuscript from the Sinai-libr., n. 963 [Dmitrievskij, v. II, 135 ff.].

— XIII/XIV century: manuscript from the Sinai-libr., n. 964 [Dmitrievskij, v. II, 246 ff.].

— XII/XIV century: manuscript from the Sinai-libr., n. 971 [Dmitrievskij, v. II, 260 ff., similar to Sinai n. 133].

— XV century: manuscript from the Jerus. Patr. lib., n. 73 (274), [Dmitrievskij, v. II, 516 ff.].

in which the monks were buried decayed, only the stone tombs did not pose any threat to the water supply. This also explains the custom in the orthodox and in the Latin churches of exhuming the bones of the monks after three or four years and moving them to special ossuaries. Some of the cemetery churches in the Christian East used the upper story of these ossuaries, while for the bones, washed with wine as a kind of symbolical Communion of the dead before being reburied, the lower story was destined. 37

The monastic funeral services differ from those of the laity in the choice of the liturgical texts. There was the tendency to replace the Canon of Andrew of Crete by a long series of gradual antiphonies and by commemorative stichera in eight parts. The antiphonies are regarded as the song of the hermits and as a song about the hermit’s life, the last being an “impulse towards God”. To represent the striving movement of the believer’s soul towards God, the songs at the monastic tomb are gradual 38. In the iconography, the idea of the monk’s gradual perfection and aspiration towards God is illustrated by the famous “Jacob’s ladder”.

Information about the liturgical function of monastic funerary chapels is conserved in the Charters of several Byzantine monasteries from 12th century on, or in their later copies. In ms. gr. Cosl. 402, 13th c., from the Paris Nat. Library, we find, in fol. 266, the prescription that during Easter, on Wednesday and Friday, after the ὑδρογον, ἡ λειτή ἔξω τοῦ μοναστηρίου 39.

In the typikon of the monastery of saint Sabba at Jerusalem (ms. gr. 784, Bibl. Vatic., 14th c., fol. 135), it is specified that the akolouthia of the hours on Easter-Saturday had to be held in the narthex 40. Cod. Palatin. 101, Bibl. Vatic., 1373, (typikon of the Holy Lavra at Jerusalem) indicates, that on Easter-Friday the commemorations were transferred to the cemetery 41. With regard to the calendar year in general, in cod. CXVII, Class. II (Nanian. 173), Bibl. Marc., 1387, fol. 8r it is written:

Χρή εἰδέναι, ὅτι ἐν πάσας ταῖς κυριακαῖς, ἡγοῦν τῷ σαββάτῳ ἐσπέρας, ὡς φάλλομεν τὸν ἐσπερινὸν ἐνόπλω εἰς τὸν ναόν,

37 The wall-paintings conserved in the ossuary of Bačkovo as well as some liturgical texts (cf. Dmitrievskij, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 447, 693-694) indicate that the upper story was used for the liturgy and the lower story, the real ossuary – for commemorations.

38 Athanase, op. cit., 231.
41 Ibidem, 167.
According to the archeological and textual evidence, we must distinguish between cemetery chapels and cemetery churches with an altar for the daily service. The latter functioned as independent churches. They arose in the Ancient East “over a martyr’s tomb, whose previous existence on the site is the reason for construction of the church... The Christian or pagan tombs of the preexisting cemetery on the site were razed, and the grave or memoria, set aside from the nave and aisles of the church, became the focal point of the cemeterial basilica.” In the later period, the erection of cemetery churches over martyr’s or saint’s graves was not compulsory, although their architecture, in certain zones, was inspired by the martyria-architecture (f. ex. South-West Bulgaria where, after the foundation of the Georgian monastery in Bachkovo, a direct connection with the Caucasian (and Syrian) traditions was established). The cemetery and hospital chapels (not churches!) are located in the monastic cemetery and were not adapted for the Holy liturgy but only for commemorative services. Very often they form a part of the cemetery church (f. ex. in Ikalto, Georgia; Bačkovo, Bulgaria; Cozia, Rumania) completing its liturgical function or that of the katholikon, when they are subsidiary chapels to the main monastic church. Also when separate architectural buildings, they serve as subsidiary chapels of the main monastic (or cemetery) church and were used to isolate the dying monks and for funeral services and prayers. The anchorites and the dying monks could use the hospital and cemetery chapels for prayers and offices which did not interfere with the regular ecclesiastical ones. Some commemorative offices were also

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\(^{\text{1}}\) Ibidem, 171.


\(^{\text{3}}\) Most probably the seats and arcosolia founded near some monks’ graves (cf. n. 51 and 52) must be related to the *mensae*.

\(^{\text{4}}\) About the statute and functions of the hospital churches cf. Dmitrievskij, op. cit., pp. XC-XCI.

\(^{\text{5}}\) Bulgakov, op. cit., p. 1215; Dumitrescu, *Fondateurs*, 23.

\(^{\text{6}}\) Athanase, op. cit., 171.
transferred to the cemetery chapels on certain days when they could not take place in the main church. During the most solemn celebrations, for example that of the patron saint and of the Circumcision, the commemorative offices, particularly frequent during Lent and Pentecost when the complete celebration of the office for the dead on the preceding Saturdays take place, could not be held in the main church but only in the cemetery chapels — when present, or at specially designated, separate altars. Even for the celebration of lesser feasts such as that of certain calendar saints, the vigils, too, had to be transferred from the main church to the narthex, to the monks’ cells or to the cemetery chapels.

The substitution of the monastic commemorative services for the days of the pagan veneration of the spirits, more frequent during Lent and Easter, is a testimony to the shaping role of the pagan cosmogony for the Christian liturgical calendar ⁴⁹. Certain monastic funeral ceremonies have their prototype in the pagan burial rites, but they were reinterpreted in conformity with the Christian faith ⁵⁰.

In view of the above, the hypothesis, according to which the monastic cemetery chapels arose from ancient martyria destined to commemorate the Christian martyrs/heroes and not the ordinary Christians/monks, needs reexamination and specification. First of all, the proceedings and the single elements of the monastic funerals are closer to commemorations of ordinary Christians than to those of martyrs. The repetition, in the architecture of certain monastic cemetery chapels, of the ancient Syrian martyria, is a quite limited phenomenon. It cannot serve as a sufficient proof of the discussed supposition, due in great extent to the methodologically erroneous treatment of the Byzantine monuments apart from the prechristian cultural tradition and from their liturgical function as well as to the confusion between historical and ideological facts. In effect, the cemetery chapels were only inspired by the martyr-cult and the martyria, but their function is closer to that of the narthex.

⁴⁹ On the patron-feast, on 24th of June (Nativity of the Precursor), 29th of August (Decollation of Saint John), 29th of June (the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul). The services of these days proceed like the greatest ecclesiastical feasts and in antiquity they had one day after-feast, cf. archbishop SERGIJ, Polnij Mesjaszoslav Vostoka, v. II, 263. In the Studion monastery as such were considered also the days of the first, second and third Inventions of the Precursor’s head.

⁵⁰ Under the “shaping role” of the pagan tradition is intended not only the genetic link of the Christianism with the preceding religious-cultural systems, but also their antagonism expressed in the continuous struggle of the Church against the different heretical movements.

Cf. KRAUTHIEFER, op. cit., 33.
Development of the iconographical programs

One of the earliest representations in direct link with a monastic burial is conserved in Cappadocia, in the church of Saint John at Gullu Dere (Ayvali Kilise), and dates from the beginning of the 10th century. It is interesting to note that, according to the dedicatory inscription, by the planning of this church the requirements of a private individual, a certain monk John, were taken into account. His grave is located in the passageway between the two aisles. There is a seat placed above the head of this grave and an altar niche over the feet designated, undoubtedly, for commemorative services. In the passageway, the Holocaust and the Ascension of Eliab are depicted. In the apse of this chapel, there is the Deisis-composition, and opposite it — the image of the earth and of the sea giving back their dead. In principle, the association of the Deisis, the intercession-prayer, with the theme of the resurrection, is a very widespread phenomenon in Byzantine art. But as iconographical sign of the Resurrection Christ's resurrection is usually represented. That is why the case of Gullu Dere, to which we can add the Deisis and the Vision of Ezekiel in the ossuary of Bachkovo monastery, rests apart from the Byzantine tradition or, more precisely, is only a stage in its evolution.

In Cappadocia, the only parallel I know is the Ascension of Eliab, conserved in the funerary chapel of Karabulut Kilisesi. The votive character of this fresco proves that the Ascension of Eliab was chosen by a socially privileged person. The same supposition can be made in the case of Ayvali Kilise, built in conformity with the requirements of the monk John. Another Ascension of Eliab, that in the North-West chapel of Saint Luke at Phocida the funeral function of which is attested by an arcosolium in the wall, also seems to have a symbolical reference to the post-mortal itinerary of the soul of a concrete, socially elevated person, who had the possibility to commission the painting.

32 Thierry, op. cit., 153-5, fig. 53, Pl. 70a.
34 Thierry, op. cit., 155.
A little freestanding chapel for prayers and commemorative services in the nave of the Sviatishoveli-church in Georgia, probably from the 13th century, is also decorated with scenes from the life of Saint Eliah. On one of its walls, there is the portrait of a royal person.

The last case where the Ascension of Eliah appears in a monastic funerary chapel is the diaconicon in the church of the Holy Virgin at Udabno, Georgia, 13th century. In the apse of this chapel, there is the Deisis-composition usual for the funerary chapels.

The archeological evidence is too scarce to draw general conclusions, but it seems that initially, the decoration of monastic funeral chapels was usually commissioned by socially and politically eminent persons who became monks. This circumstance explains the choice of the Ascension of Eliah as illustration of their faith in the resurrection. Eliah was not only the Old-Testament prototype of anchorites and monks. In classical Greek mythology Eliah = Helios was the personification of the sun. Because of the belief that at night the sun is passing through the subterranean world of the dead, his cult contains well determined chthonic elements and is connected with burial rites. His name is mentioned between other Old-Testament prophets, favoured by the Divine grace, in a prayer ("Commendatio animae" of George of Antioch) from the end of the 2nd century. According to the Bible Enoch and Eliah are the only two human beings who have not known death. It was a commonplace of early Christian exegesis that they were taken straight to paradise to await there the end of days. In the role of victor over wild animals (symbols of death and evil) Eliah was represented in the mosaics at Nikopolis. The representation of Eliah in the ascending chariot illustrates the myth of the ascension of the hero, of the socially and politically privileged person and is a projection of the Platonic and new-Platonic eschatological beliefs in the immortality of the soul. Although the idea of the moral-ethical test before the ascension to the gods already existed in certain ancient religions: by the Egyptians during the 3rd and 4th dynasties; in the Zoroastrianism and in the

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61 Chatzidakis, op. cit., 55, 62-3; Stoyanova, Le cycle, 24-37.
62 DACL IV/2, 2671-72.
63 E. Kitzinger, Mosaiques at Nikopolis, in: Studies on Late Antique and Early Byzantine Floor Mosaics, DOP 1951/6, p. 119, n. 155.
64 Ibidem, p. 118, n. 148 and 149.
65 Stoyanova, Le cycle, 31-35.
Mithra-religion, the inevitability of the “Last Judgment”, whose iconography was established about the 11th century, evidently did not pose serious problems to the higher social circles up to the 13th century circa.

At the same time, about the 11th century, another trend in the decoration of monastic cemetery chapels appeared. The earliest example is attested only by descriptions, in the cemetery-chapel of the Kiev-Peterfskaja Lavra from 11th c. 57, in the gallery of the upper narthex of Saint Sofia-church at Ochrid and in the funerary chapel of Chilendar (in the Saint George-tower), both from the 14th century 58.

The decoration of these chapels is analysed by S. Radojičić who finds a close relation between their literary base, the 'Αξολουθία εἰς φυγὸς αγωγοῦντα on the one hand, and on the other, a Buddhist poem that describes the nine states of the body after its death 59. There is a precise correspondence between the number of the songs in the 'Αξολουθία and in the Buddhist poem. According to Radojičić the illustrations in Chilendar do not correspond to the text of the 'Αξολουθία but more to that of the Buddhist poem, whose sixth song says: “How not to think that our bodies should be devoured by the dogs”. The image which illustrates this song shows the dead monk attacked by ravens that pick his eyes and by dogs tearing his body. The supposition of Radojičić about the eastern provenance of the iconographical model, based on the textual analysis, was confirmed by a more recent study of the raven-representations in early Christian and Byzantine art 60. In favour of that hypothesis I would cite the ancient Indo-Iranian belief that the raven, as messenger of the Sovereign heaven and of the Logos, of the Divine wisdom, brings the conscience into the living body and takes it back after its death 61. The affinity of the Chilendar fresco with the Indo-Iranian iconography and ideology is also confirmed by the dogs. After Herodotus, the Mithra-priests esteemed the life of a dog equal to that of a human and no Persian could be buried before a dog or

58 M.M. Zaharinčenko, Kiev teper i prezde, Kiev 1888, 101; Povest vremennyh let, 1/2, Moscow-Leningrad 1950, 107 and 307.
60 Ibidem. 49-50.
62 Campbell, op. cit., 205 cites the poem Bundahisn (44, 3).
animal of prey, called ἐνταφιασματι had attacked his body. In classical and early Christian literature as well as in Christian iconography, the images of these birds of prey and dogs, of wild animals in general, became symbols of passion, evil and death.

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The decoration of the monastic funeral and hospital chapels described above shows a slow, gradual maturation of the ancient Neo-Platonic eschatological concepts and their replacement by Christian apocalypticism. During this complex process, the faith in the unconditionally assured immortality of the soul gave way to the fear of the Last Judgment. According to the Christian teaching spread repeatedly by all possible means, including the liturgy and iconography, sins have to be paid for, and this condition made particularly actual the question of the moral and spiritual purity. The mourning prayers to Christ and Mary asking them to save the soul of the dead could not assure its salvation as the sacrament of penitence did. And it was Saint John the Baptist himself, preaching penitence as the only way to salvation, who gave the most congenial illustration to this teaching. The appearance of his life (cf. supra, p. 4) in the decoration of mortuary chapels is connected precisely with the growing importance of the penitence sacrament in medieval eschatological concepts.

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The need of places to transfer the services to which did not coincide with the character and with the spirits of some ecclesiastical celebrations imposed the architectural separation of the cemetery and hospital chapels from the main monastic church and their location near the cemetery where a part of the funeral rituals took place. In the late post-Byzantine period, the functions of cemetery and hospital chapels were taken over by the cells, in consequence of the development and privatisation of the liturgy.

Particularly important for the explanation of the iconographical

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68 Herodot 1.140; Diodore 11.11.3; Cf. also J. Bernolles, Le chien de la mort d'Asie stephique, RHR 1968/1, CLXXXII/1, 43-84.
69 Kitzinger, op. cit., 118.
70 Cf. New Directions in Apocalypticism, discussed in RHR, 1985/25.1, 92-95.
71 Bulgakov, op. cit., 492 and passim (Triod postnaja).
72 Ibidem, 1195.
73 Athanase, op. cit., 170; About the process of privatisation cf. Mathews, op. cit.
program of the mortuary chapels is the circumstance that there, during Easter, the commemorative services began with the theme of the Last Judgment, while the theme at the Pentecost-vigils was the Resurrection of Christ. In fact, these are the main themes in the iconographical programs of the chapels where the commemorative services took place. The monuments discussed here demonstrate that, in different historical periods and local Christian traditions, their illustration varied in conformity with the development of the eschatological beliefs.

The liturgical function and the iconographical program of these chapels are very close to those of the narthex where, according to the Charters, the bodies of the dead monks were placed at the beginning of the funeral service and where the commemorations sometimes took place. That is why we can find the representation of Saint John’s martyrion in the narthex of many Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches. Turning back to both the anomalous cases discussed at the beginning of this article, one can only conclude that the omission of the Christological cycle there and the transformation of the naos into a kind of narthex were due to lack of space and to the preeminence of the specific funeral destination above the functions of a normal church. Arguments for such a supposition also provide some evidence that, except for the burials of founders or high-ranking clerics which required more solemn ceremonies (ever in conformity with the individual rules of the monastery), for the commemoration of the dead usually the liturgy of the pre-consecrated wine and bread was held or any other shorter variant.

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24 Athanase, op. cit., p. 46; Bulgakov, op. cit., 509.
26 Bulgakov, op. cit., 511, 524.
List of Abbreviations:

BMI  Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice, Bucarest.
CahArch  Cahiers Archéologiques.
DOP  Dumbarton Oaks Papers.
Glas SKA  Glas Skopskoj Kralskoj Akademije. Filosofsko-filosofsko društvene i istorijske nauke.
JöB  Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik.
MEFRA  Mélanges de l'école française de Rome. Antiquité.
REB  Revue des Études Byzantines.
RHR  Revue de l'Histoire des Religions.
TXAT  Tetradia Hristianikis Archeologias ke Technis.
ZRVI  Zbornik Radova Vizantoložkog Instituta.

PLATES

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