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**EVIDENCE ON THE ROLE OF TEXTILES AS A MEDIUM
OF ORNAMENT TRANSMISSION BETWEEN SELJUK
ANATOLIAN AND LATE BYZANTINE ART, THE CASE
STUDY OF TWO MARBLE SLABS FROM EPISKOPI, ANO
VOLOS, WITH DOUBLE-HEADED EAGLES FIGHTING
DRAGONS**

Medieval, especially oriental precious textiles, due to their portability and high status, were a premium luxury medium for the transmission of various art motifs, ornaments, cultural legends and illustrations of myths¹. There are numerous imitations of historic textiles in the medieval world, especially in the Latin West (e.g. in France)². This case study presents the iconography of the dragons with double-headed eagle which has a symbolic character in Seljuk Anatolian Art and its transmission through textiles to Byzantium.

The Muslim conquests, the Crusades, the presence of the Latin States in the Levant, the increase of the flow of pilgrimage in the 12th and 13th centuries, the diplomatic relations with precious gifts (including Near Eastern silk fabrics)³

¹ For this role of textiles see in particular C. Bier, "Pattern Power: Textiles and the Transmission of Knowledge", *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* (Paper 444), University of Nebraska- Lincoln 2004, 144-153.

² See for instance P. Deschamps, "L'imitation des tissus dans les peintures murales du Moyen Âge", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année-Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 98e année, N. 3, 320-326.

³ See *Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa al-Tuhaf* [The Book of Treasures and Gifts], ed. by M. Hamidullah, Kuwait 1959; M. Hamidullah, "Nouveaux documents sur les rapports de l'Europe avec l'Orient musulman au moyen âge", *Arabica* 7.3 (1960), 281-300; R. Cormack, "But Is It Art?", in: *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin, Aldershot 1992, 219-236; A. Cutler, "Les échanges de dons entre Byzance et l'Islam (IXe-XIe siècles)", *Journal des Savants*, January- June 1996, 51- 66; G. al-Hijjāwī al-Qaddūmī, *Book of Gifts and Rarities, Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuh. Af*, Cambridge, Mass., 1996; A. Cutler, "The Empire of Things: Gift Exchange between Byzantium and the Islamic World", *Center 20. Record of Activities and Research Reports, June 1999-May 2000*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts 2000, 67- 70; Idem, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies", *DOP* 55, 247-

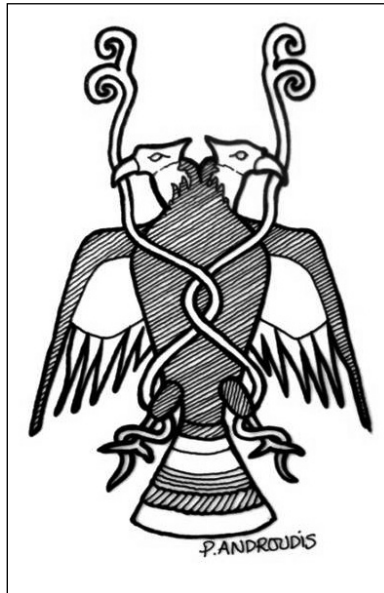


Fig. 1 Detail of a fresco with double-headed eagle and serpents. Kizil, Chinese Turkestan (dated to 7th-9th century A.D., design: P. Androudis)

Сл. 1 Деталј фреске са двоглавим орлом и змијама. Кизил, кинески Туркестан (датирано од VII до XI века (цртеж П. Андрудис)



Fig. 2 Silk fragment with double-headed eagle and dragon-headed wings, from the shrine of Saint Apollinarius at Siegburg (Germany)

Сл. 2 Фрагмент свиле са двоглавим орлом и крилима са змајевом главом, са олтара Св. Аполинера у Зигбургу (Немачка)

and all trade exchanges wove a dense network from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf, with many cross-cultural interactions. All these mobilities in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Europe resulted to a “shared culture of precious objects and artifacts”, especially for the Islamic and Christian courts and princes⁴

278; E.R. Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century”, *Art History* 24.1 (2012), 17-50. On the complexities of gift exchange, see C.J. Hilsdale, “Gift”, *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012), 171-182.

⁴ A. Grabar, “Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens”, *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, Dritte Folge, Band II (1951), 32- 60; O. Grabar, “The Shared Culture of Objects”, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 115-129; D. Jacoby, “Silk crosses the Mediterranean”, in: *Le vie del Mediterraneo. Idee, uomini, oggetti (secoli XI-XVI)*, Genova, 19-20 aprile 1994 (Università degli studi di Genova, Collana dell’Istituto di storia del medioevo e della espansione europea, n. 1), ed. G. Airdi, Genova 1997, 55-79; E. Hoffman, Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century”, *Art History* 24 (1), 1999, 17-50; D. Jacoby, “Silk Economics and Cross-cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World and the Christian West”, *DOP* 58 (2004), 197-240; M. Parani, “Intercultural Exchange in the Field of Material Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Evidence of Byzantine Legal Documents (11th to 15th Centuries)”, in A. D. Beihammer, M. G. Parani and C.D. Schabel (eds), *Diplomatics in the Eastern Medi-*

. In this context, we find many luxurious silks with single and double-headed eagles (alone or together with other emblems of power) in Byzantium, in Andalusia, the Latinate Europe, as well as the Near East⁵. The eagle silks present eagles alone or clutching lions or other quadrupeds (e.g. lions)⁶.

Apart from these textiles there are also textile fabrics with the iconography of double-headed eagle with other real or fantastic animals, e.g. dragons.

The aim of the present study is to show that this iconography of the double-headed eagles with dragons reached the world of textiles and how the latter spread this iconography to other cultures and expressions of art. It will also be examined the only known representation of the motif in byzantine art, in two marble slabs in Mt Pelion, Thessaly (Greece).

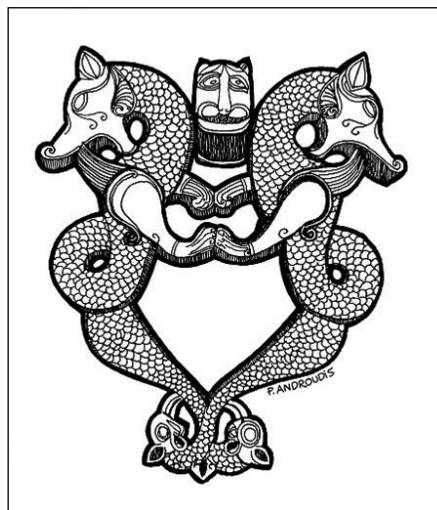


Fig. 3 Seljukid Door-Knocker, Staatlichen Museen, Berlin (design: P. Androudis)

Сл. 3 Селџучки звекир, Национални музеј, Берлин (цртеж П. Андрудис)

Double-headed eagle and dragons in oriental and Seljuk art

The double-headed eagle and dragon motif is originated in the East. Its iconography is associated with the iconography of the ancient Eagle and Serpent myth⁷. In the oldest known representations of the motif, the double-

terranean 1000-1500: Aspects of Cross-cultural Communication, Leiden 2008, 349-371; A. Walker, "Cross-cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts: The Islamic Appropriation of a Middle Byzantine Rosette Casket", *Gesta* 47, no. 2 (2008), 99-122; Idem, "Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl", *Art Bulletin* 90, no 1 (March 2008), 32-48; Idem, "Patterns of Flight: Middle Byzantine Appropriation of the Chinese Feng-Huang Bird", *Ars Orientalis* 37 (2010), 188-216; C. Archangeli-Schmidt-G. Wolf, *Islamic artifacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, Venice 2010. On the issue of "exotic" elements in Byzantine art see in particular: A. Walker, *Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art, 843-1204 C.E.*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge MA. 2004; Idem, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power: Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.*, N. York 2012; Idem, "Islamicising Motifs in Byzantine Lead Seals: Exoticising Style and the Expression of Identity", *The Medieval History Journal* 15.2 (2012), 385-413.

⁵ A. Cutler, "Imagination and Documentation: Eagle Silks in Byzantium, the Latin West and 'Abbāsīd Baghdad", *BZ* 96, Band 1 (2008), 67-72.

⁶ See P. Androudis, "Les premières apparitions attestées de l'aigle bicéphale dans l'art roman d'Occident (XIe-XIIe siècles). Origines et symbolique", *Niš and Byzantium. Eleventh Symposium, Niš, 3-5 June 2012*, Niš 2013, 209-225.

⁷ R. Wittkower, "Eagle and Serpent", *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II, 1938-

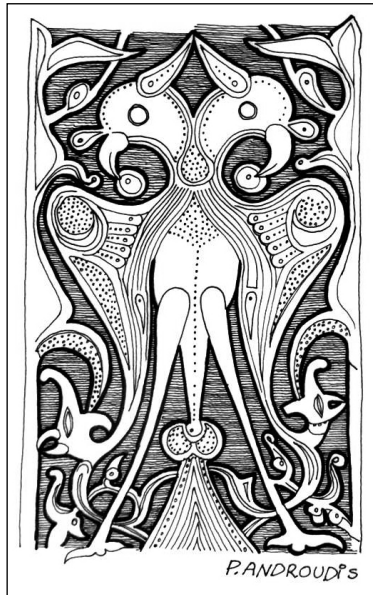


Fig. 4: Mosque of Divriği, Anatolia (Turkey) Western portal, double-headed eagle

(design: P. Androudis)

Сл 4 Џамија Дивриги, Анадолија (Турска). Западни портал, двоглави орао (цртеж П. Андрудис)



Fig. 5 Mosque of Divriği, Anatolia. Eastern portal, double-headed eagle

(design P. Androudis)

Сл. 5 Џамија Дивриги, Анадолија (Турска). Источни портал, двоглави орао (цртеж П. Андрудис)

headed eagle is taking the place of the single-headed eagle. For instance, a fresco painted in the grottos of Kızıl, in Chinese Turkestan illustrates the fight of the double-headed eagle with serpents which holds in its nails (fig. 1). The eagle is represented in frontal position, with its heads on a unique neck and the wings opened⁸. The same motif is painted in another Grotto in Ming Öi, also in Kızıl⁹.

In 13th century the motif of the double-headed eagle with two dragons or dragon heads can be found on a silk fragment from a cloth, once preserved in the shrine of Saint Apollinarius, in the church of Saint Gervatius in Siegburg. This fragment which is now kept in the Kunstgewebemuseum (Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, no.1881.475) (fig.

2), is a woven textile of red and gold-wrapped silk¹⁰. In this luxury piece (di-

1939, reprinted in: Idem, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, 2Hampshire 1987, 15-44. See also S. Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art*, Leiden-Boston 2011, pl, 16, fig. 69a.

⁸ A. Grünwedel, *Alt buddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan, Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuca, QaraSahr und in der Oase Turfan*, Berlin 1912, 54; S.F. Oldenburg, *Russkaya Turkestanskaya ekspedicija 1909-1910*, Berlin 1914; A. Von le Coq, *Bilderatlas zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Mittel-Asiens*, Berlin 1925, fig. 237; Z. de Takács, "L'Art des grandes Migrations en Hongrie et en Extrême-Orient" (suite), *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* 7, fasc.2 (1931), 7, 33, fig. 14; M.-T. Picard-Schmitter, "Scènes d'Apothéose sur des Soieries provenant de Rayi", *Artibus Asiae* 14 (1951), no 4, 306-341; R. Wittkower, *Eagle and Serpent*, 21, notes 55 and 56; P. Androudis, "Origines et symbolique de l'aigle bicéphale des Turcs Seldjoukides et Artuquides de l'Asie Mineure (Anatolie)", *Byzantion* 19 (1999), 312, 333 (fig. 1).

⁹ A. Grünwedel, *Alt buddhistische Kultstätten*, 129; A. Von le Coq, *Bilderatlas*, fig. 236.

¹⁰ Silk and gold, weft-faced compound twill (samite). For this silk fragment see S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, pl. 62, fig. 69b; M. Falcatano, "Textile Fragment with Double-headed Eagle and Flanking Dragon's Heads", in: Canby, S.R.-Beyazit, D.-Rugiadi, M.-Peacock, A.C.S. *Court and Cosmos. The Great Age of the Seljuqs* (Exposition Catalogue, Metropolitan

mensions: 28 x 22, 5 cm), dragon heads project from volutes that emerge from the outer tips of a double-headed eagle (with "ears"), set within medallions in form of triangular shields (escutcheons). The German archaeologist Friedrich Sarre attributed this silk fragment to a 13th century Seljuk workshop. He also supported that this silk probably served as a Seljuk sultan's coronation robe, opinion that was also shared by Katharina Otto-Dorn¹¹. All scholars agree for an attribution of this silk to 13th c.¹²

As a powerful and assertive bird with solar implications, the eagle was an obvious symbol of superiority with divine connotations. The double-headed eagle, a fabulous creature, is attested in Islamic art in various periods. In twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

it was given particular importance by the Seljuk Turks and the Turcoman *atabegs* (princes) of Rum or Anatolia (Asia Minor), as well as the Turcoman Zangid princes of Iraq, who made the double-headed eagle their standard¹³.

It is noteworthy that among the many influences that were introduced in Islamic art by the Seljuk Turks is the decorative repertoire known as "the Eurasian animal style". The animal figures played a key role in Rum Seljuk art: lions, eagles, peacocks, hares and other animals are featured in a complex system of symbolism, along with mythical creatures as double-headed eagles, griffins, harpies, sirens, sphinxes, dragons.

In Seljuk art concepts that originated in the Central Asian shamanism merged with the ancient mythologies of the Middle East¹⁴. These figures carry

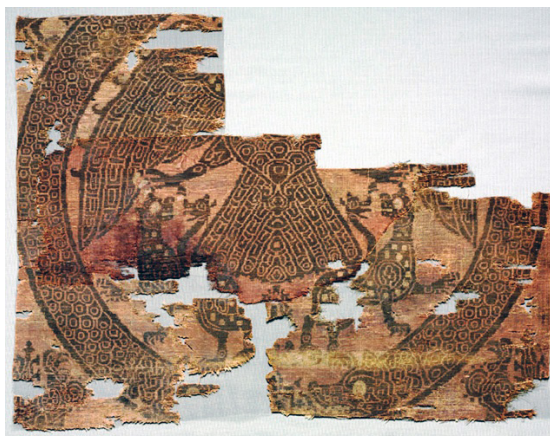


Fig. 6 Fragment of textile with double-headed eagle found in the tomb of St. Amandus (Cleveland Museum of Art)

Сл. 6 Фрагмент тканине са двоглавим орлом пронађени у гробници Св. Амандуса (Музеј уметности, Кливленд)

Museum, N. York), 240 (catalogue no 151), 331.

¹¹ K. Otto-Dorn, "Figural Stone Reliefs on Seljuk Sacred Architecture in Anatolia", *Kunst des Orients* 12 (1978-1979), 118, 119.

¹² L. Von Wilkens, *Mittelalterliche Seidenstoffe: Bestandskatalog XVIII des Kunstgewerbemuseums*, Berlin 1992, 43, cat. no 66.

¹³ A.U. Peker, *The double-headed eagle of the Seljuks. A historical study*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Bogaziçi University, Istanbul 1989; Idem, "The origins of the Seljukid double-headed eagle as a cosmological symbol", in: *Art Turc/Turkish Art: Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Turkish Art (Genève 17-23, 1995)*, Geneva, 559-566; P. Androudis, *Origines et symbolique*, 309-345. See also S. Carboni, "Stone Carving with Double-Headed Eagle", in: *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (Exposition Catalogue, Metropolitan Museum, New York, 23 March-5 July 2004), N. York, 397 (no 243).

¹⁴ G. Nioradze, *Der Schamanismus bei den Sibirischen Völkern*, Stuttgart 1925, 34, 60-74, 84; M.F. Köprülü, *Influence du Chamanisme Turco-Mongol sur les Ordres Mystiques Musulmans*, Istanbul 1929, 5-19.

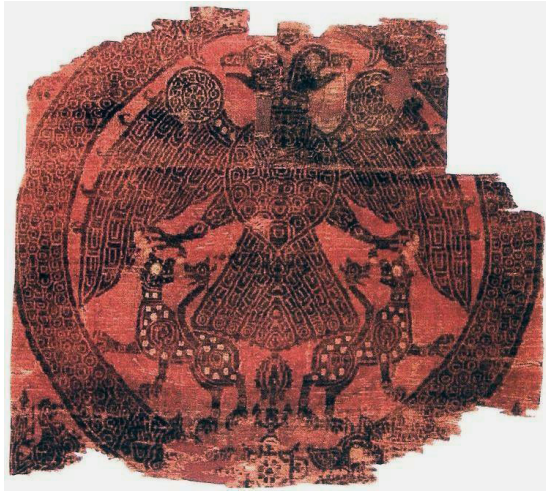


Fig. 7 Fragment of the same textile (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg)

Сл. 7 Фрагмент исте тканине (Абег-Стифунг, Ригисберг)



Fig. 8 Detail of fig. 7, Double-Headed eagle

Сл. 8 Детал на слици 7, Двоглави орао

traces of the shamanistic beliefs of the Turks of Central Asia, which survived despite Islam¹⁵. In Central Asian shamanism, the crowned and winged sirens with tails are protectors of the spirits of the dead and also of the Tree of Life. This important symbol is the connection of the earth and skies and in Shamanistic belief is the “vehicle” that transports the shaman in his spiritual journey to the “Heavens”¹⁶. It is noteworthy that the eagle is not only a totem bird in the Central Asian cultural realm, but also takes its place in one of the oldest Turkic legends, the well-known epic of *Er-Töshtük*, as the black bird¹⁷.

Dragons are a frequent figure in Seljuk art and usually are represented in pairs, with long bodies entwined (Fig. 3)¹⁸.

¹⁵ See J.-P. Roux, “Le bestiaire de l’Islam”, *Archéologia* 117 (Avril 1978), 38-47; Idem, “Mosquées anatoliennes à décor figuratif sculpté”, *Syria* 57, 205-323; Idem, *La Religion des Turcs et des Mongols*, Paris 1984; Idem, “La sculpture figurative de l’Anatolie Musulmane”, *Turcica* 24 (1992), 27-90.

¹⁶ For the theme and symbolism of “Tree of Life” or “axis mundi”, see: J. Chevalier-A. Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles. Mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres*, 16th reprint, Paris 1994, 62-72; M. Chebel, *Dictionnaire des symboles musulmans. Rites, mystique et civilisation*, Paris 1995, 62-63. For the symbolism of Tree of Life in Seljuk context see J.-P. Roux, *Le bestiaire de l’Islam*, 46-47.

¹⁷ J.-P. Roux, *La Religion des Turcs et des Mongols*, 142-144.

¹⁸ See G. Öney, “Dragon figures in Anatolian Seljuk Art”, *Belleten* 33 (1969), 193-216; K. Otto-Dorn, *Figural Stone Reliefs*, 125-136; J.-P. Roux, “Le problème des influences turques sur les arts de l’Islam”, *Turcica* 15 (1983), 81-84; M. Bernus-Taylor, “Les animaux mythiques”, in: *Arabesques et jardins. Collections françaises d’art islamique* (Exposition Catalogue), Paris 1989, 268 and 279 (no 212); J.-P. Roux, *La sculpture figurative*, 78-80; J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs in Anatolien und Mesopotamien. Untersuchungen zur figürlichen Baudekoration der Seldschuken, Artuqiden und Ihrer Nachfolger bis ins 15. Jah-*

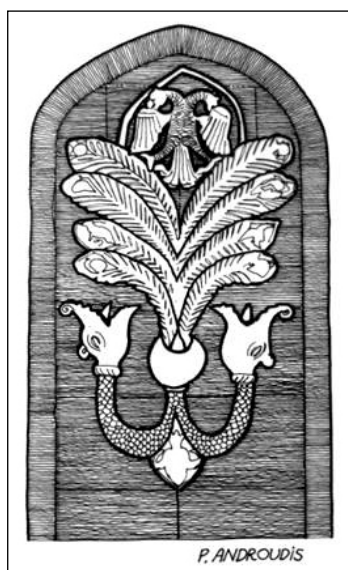


Fig. 9 Çifte Minareli Medrese in Erzurum, Anatolia. Sculpted panel of the façade

with protomes of dragons, “Tree of Life” and double-headed eagle (design P. Androudis)

Сл. 9 Медреса Ћифте Минарели у Ерзуруму, Анадолија. Вајарски панел фасаде са бистама змајева, „Дрво живота” и двоглави орао (цртеж П. Андрудис)

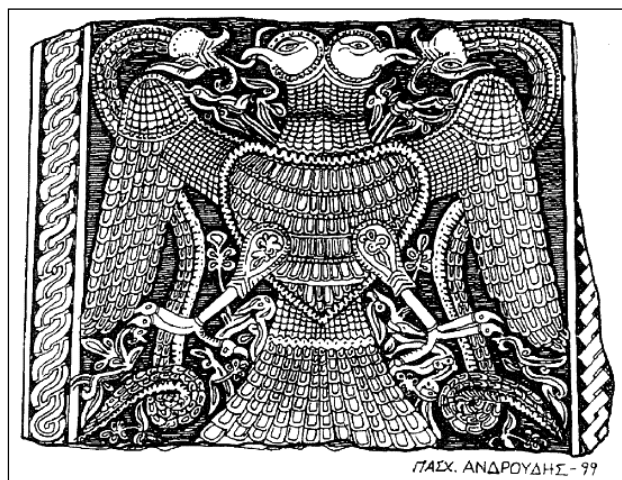


Fig. 10 Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Episkopi, Ano Volos, Thessaly, Greece. Fragments of a second marble slab with double-headed eagle and dragons (design P. Androudis)

Сл. 10 Црква Успења Пресвете Богородице у Епископију, Ано Волос, Тесалија, Грчка. Фрагменти друге мермерне плоче са двоглавим орлом и змајевима (цртеж П. Андрудис).

The dragon’s specific characteristics are the “pretzel”-shaped and knotted bodies with forelegs and sometimes wings. Their heads are ferocious, with open curved mouths, showing teeth and tongue and sometimes with horns. The monster’s tail is sometimes terminated by a second dragon’s head. This is an element that indicates the hybrid nature of the

creature. Occasionally dragons are represented in another, simplest variation of the “classical” type, with snake-like body and without legs.

According to the old shamanist beliefs, the dragon was responsible for the regulation of the movement of the Universe. As a consequence, it was a symbol of abundance and fertility. The dragon was also a planetary symbol and one of the twelve animals representing years in the cycle of the Turkic calendar¹⁹. In the epic of *Er-Töshtük*, the dragon is encountered guarding the Tree of Life²⁰.

rhundert, Tübingen 1996, 28-40, 93-99; P. Androudis, *Origines et symbolique*, 324-325, fig. 7, 8, 10; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*; A. Daneshvari, *Of Serpents and Dragons in Islamic Art: An Iconographical Study* (Bibliotheca Iranica, Islamic Art and Architecture Series 13), Costa Mesa, California 2011.

¹⁹ O. Turan, *On İki Hayvanlı Türk Takvimi*, Istanbul 1941, 93; K. Otto-Dorn, “Darstellungen des Turco-Chinesischen Tierzyklus in der Islamische Kunst”, in: *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens, In Memoriam Ernst Diez*, Istanbul 1963, 131-165; J.-P. Roux, *La Religion*, 144-145; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*.

²⁰ N. Ölçer, N., “Dragon candlestick”, *Turks. A Journey of a thousand years, 600-1600*, Catalogue Exposition, London 2005, 396.



Fig. 11 Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Episkopi, Ano Volos. Marble slab with double-headed eagle and dragons

Сл. 11 Црква Успења Пресвете Богородице у Епископију, Ано Волос. Мермерна плоча са двоглавим орловима и змајевима.

There are also some variations of the composition of dragons and double headed eagle, like the one presenting a sort of “fusion” of these motifs.

Comparable images of the same fusion of the bodies of the bird and dragon can also be found sculpted on either side of the western portal of the Great mosque-hospital (Ulu Camii and Darüşşifahanesi) of Divriği in eastern Turkey (1228-1229). This extraordinary and unique mosque was built by the Turcoman ruler Ahmad Shah and his wife, who were under Seljuk ruler ‘Ala’ al-Din Kay Qubad I (r. 1219-1237) suzerainty²¹. The sculpted decoration of the mosque comprises two double-headed eagles. We know

that Ala’ al-Din Kay Qubad employed the image of the double-headed eagle as a symbol of his royalty²². The double-headed eagle which is carved in the south side of the western portal of the Mosque of Divriği (fig. 4) is represented with heads in profile and body in frontal (“heraldic”) position. The eagle has long ears, spread tail and with dragon-head winged tips²³. The eagle in the eastern gateway is sculpted against a background filled with fine arabesques (fig. 5)²⁴. In these two reliefs, the characteristics of the two eagles are the same, although the sculptors are two different persons²⁵.

²¹ For the mosque of Divriği see O. Grabar- R. Ettinghausen, *The art and architecture of Islam (650-1250)*, Yale University Press 1994, 316, fig. 341-343; P. Schöttler, *Die Rumseldschuken Grunder der Türkei*, Freiburg 1995, fig. 51, 52, 200, 201a, b and 346; D. Kuban, *The Miracle of Divriği*, Istanbul 2001; Idem, *Selçuklu Çağında Anadolu Sanatı*, Istanbul 2008, 125-136; O. Pancaroğlu, “The Mosque-Hospital Complex in Divriği: A History of Relations and Transitions”, *Anadolu ve Çevresinde Ortaçağ 3* (Ankara 2009), 169-198.

²² For instance in tiles that decorate his palace in Kubad Abad, in lake Beyşehir, Anatolia. See in particular R. Arık- O. Arık, *Tiles. Treasures of Anatolian Soil. Tiles of the Seljuk and Beylik Periods*, Istanbul 2008, 290-392.

²³ See K. Otto-Dorn, *L’art de l’Islam*, Paris 1967, 159; J.-P. Roux, *Mosquées anatoliennes*, 312-313 and 314, fig. 8; P. Schöttler, *Die Rumseldschuken*, fig. 346; J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs*, 150-152 and fig. 3.1, 3.3 and 4.1-4.4; P. Androudis, *Origines et symbolique*, 319; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, pl. 63, fig. 70a.

²⁴ K. Otto-Dorn, *L’art de l’Islam*, 159; Idem, *Figural Stone Reliefs*, 120 (fig. 18); J.-P. Roux, *Mosquées anatoliennes*, 312, 315-316 and 314, fig. 9; P. Schöttler, *Die Rumseldschuken*, fig. 346; J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs*, 150-152 and fig. 3.2 and fig. 3.4; P. Androudis, *Origines et symbolique*, 319-320; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, pl. 63, fig. 70b.

²⁵ J.-P. Roux, *Mosquées anatoliennes*, 316.

No doubt that the origin of the motif of the hybrid double-headed eagles of the portals of Divriği is the old mythical conception of the dragon-monster which devours the luminaries (the sun and the moon). This concept in its turn originates in the antagonism between the celestial luminaries and the terrestrial light-devouring creature, the dragon²⁶.

A fragment of a brocaded silk with a double-headed eagle (fig. 6, now preserved in the Cleveland Museum of Art)²⁷ was found in 1606 in the altar of the Benedictine abbey church of St. Peter in Salzburg. This silk and gold reddish textile was

among other precious textiles discovered in the tomb of St. Amandus in the same church. The tomb was rebuilt in the time of Abbot Balderich (1125-1147), so we must assume that the silk wrapped the relics of St. Amandus at that time²⁸. The fragment, dated to the 11th-12th c., presents a double-headed eagle (its heads are missing), which attacks two panthers (or lions) with dragon-head tails enclosed within two half-circles that terminate in dragon-heads. The style and iconography of the textile could point toward an origin to the Islamic East. A second fragment of the same silk, this time with a complete double-headed eagle (fig. 7, 8), is reconstructed and kept in Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung, in Berne²⁹, while another one belongs to the Collection of Rina and Norman Indictor³⁰.

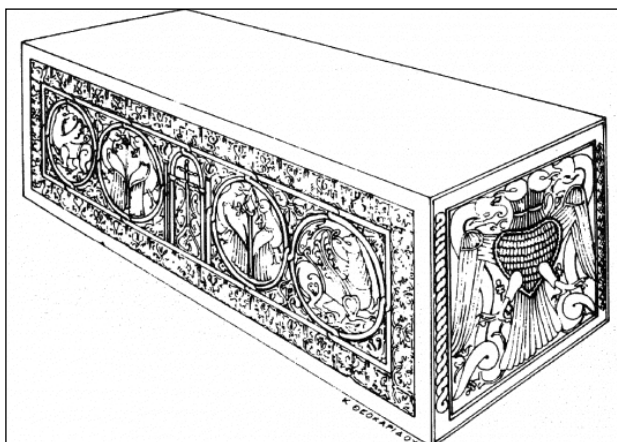


Fig. 12 Hypothetical reconstruction of the sarcophagus of Anna Maliassene (T. Pazaras, design K. Theocharidou)

Сл. 12 Хипотетичка реконструкција саркофага Ане Малијасене (Т. Пазарас, цртеж К. Теокариду).

²⁶ W. Hartner, "The Pseudoplanetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies. A Contribution to the History of Ancient and Medieval Astrology", *Ars Islamica* 5 (1938), 138; K. Otto-Dorn, *Figural Stone Reliefs*, 134.

²⁷ The fragment (compound twill, brocaded, dimensions: 46. 4 x 54. 6 cm) was in the hands of Mrs Paul Mallon (Paris). See P. Androudis, "Double-Headed eagles on early medieval (11th-12th c.) textiles: aspects of their iconography and symbolism", *XIV. Niš and Byzantium*, Niš 3-5 June 2015, Niš 2016, 331, note 111.

²⁸ D.G. Shepherd, "A medieval brocade", *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 37 (1950), 195-196, 199.

²⁹ CH-3132. Dimensions: 46, 3 x 54, 5 cm. See H. Tietze, *Die Denkmäler des Benediktinerstiftes St. Peter in Salzburg*, Wien 1913, 96; P. Ackermann, "A Gold-woven Byzantine Silk of the Tenth Century", *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* X (1936), 87-88; S. Müller-Christensen, "Zwei Seidengewebe als Zeugnisse der Wechselwirkung von Byzanz und Islam", *Artes Minores. Dank an Werner Abegg.*, Bern 1973, 22-25; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, pl. 79. (156).

³⁰ See M. Falcetano, "Textile Fragment with Double-headed Eagle", in: *Court and Cosmos. The Great Age of the Seljuqs*, 239 (catalogue no 150 and fig. 95, with reconstruction of the double-headed eagle motif), 331.



Fig. 13 Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Episkopi, Ano Volos. Detail of the decoration of the slab of Anna Maliassene. Griffin with dragon tail (design P. Androudis).

Сл. 13 Црква Успења Пресвете Богородице у Епископију, Ано Волос. Детаљ декорације са плоче Ане Малијасене. Грифин са змајевим репом, (цртеж П. Андрудис).



Fig. 14 Detail of fig. 13, dragon tail.

Сл. 14 Детаљ на слици: 13, змајев реп.

This type of representation of double-headed eagle together with dragon derives certainly from a religious iconography.

The two fabulous creatures are sculpted together in the same synthesis, on a stone relief panel decorating the main façade of *Çifte Minareli Madrasa* in Erzurum (eastern Turkey). There a pair of dragon “busts” springs from a base of a “tree of life”, which is topped

by a double-headed eagle (fig. 9)³¹. The dragons are rendered in an upright position and their serpent-form bodies have knots.

Later on, in 1312-1313, we find another type of the “fusion” of the double-headed eagle with dragons (the eagle has dragon-headed winged tips), surmounted by a human face in a relief of the *türbe* (mausoleum) of the princess Hüdavent Hatun in Niğde (Cappadocia, Turkey). The princess was daughter of Seljuk sultan Ruknedin Kılıç Arslan IV³². In the ancient Turkic myths and texts the eagles carry on their breast a man which they will “swallow”, in order to give him birth again and make him travel the three cosmic zones³³. As Sarah Kuehn noted: “... in the *Qirghiz cycle of Er Töshtük* ... the hero must make a mystical journey into the underworld. There he finds an elm tree whose trunk reach-

³¹ J.M. Rogers, “The Çifte Minare Medrese at Erzurum and the Gök Medrese at Sivas. A Contribution to the History of the Style in the Seljuk Architecture of 13th century Turkey”, *Anatolian Studies* 15 (1965), 63-85; J.-P. Roux, *Le bestiaire*, 46-47; Idem, *La sculpture figurative*, 79; J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs*, 165-167 and fig. 12.1-12.5; P. Androudis, *Origines et symbolique*, 321-322; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, 63-66, pl. 55, fig. 43.

³² G. Öney, “Die Figurenreliefs an der Hudavent Hatun Türbe in Niğde”, *Belleten* 31, s. 122 (1967), 121-189, no 122; J.-P. Roux, *La sculpture figurative*, 88; J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs*, 179-182 and fig. 25.3-28.2; P. Androudis, *Origines et symbolique*, 329-330; S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, 75, fig. 66.

³³ J.-P. Roux, *Le bestiaire*, 44; Idem, *La Religion*, 81-82.

es through the centre of the earth, the tree's crown reaching to the sky with a dragon coiled around its base. He rescues the young of an eagle by cutting the monstrous creature in half. To show her gratitude the mother eagle swallows Er Töshtük and then disgorges him, transformed and rendered invulnerable, and after that carries him up again to the land of the living..."³⁴.

No doubt that the decoration of the mausoleum derives from the central- Asiatic conceptions of the ornithomorphic soul (having the aspect of a bird) of the deceased. As a result, the human head symbolizes rather the deceased who is carried by the eagle and does not work only as an amulet, as it was suggested in the past³⁵.

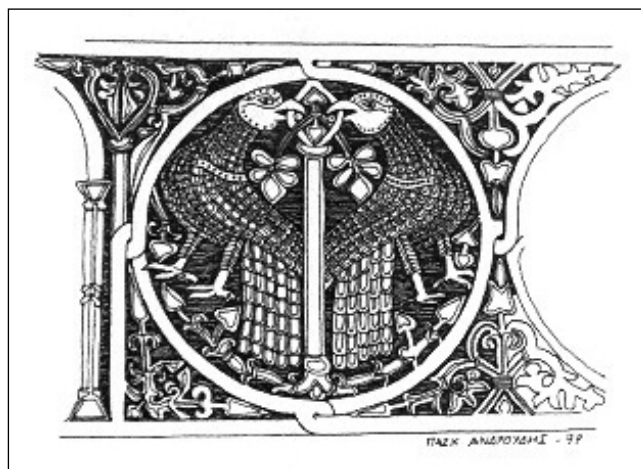


Fig. 15 Detail of the decoration of the same slab with antithetic birds (design P. Androudis).

Сл. 15 Детаљ декорације исте плоче са конфротираним птицама, (цртеж П. Андрудис).

The motif of double-headed eagle and dragons in byzantine art: the unique case study on two slabs from the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Episkopi, Ano Volos (Thessaly)

In Late Byzantine context we find a variation of the same motif, in two marble slabs (fig. 10, 11), which were attributed to the sarcophagus of Anna Maliassene (fig. 11), a member of the families of Komnenoi and niece of the Greek emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261-1282)³⁶. The slabs, now im-

³⁴ S. Kuehn, *The Dragon*, 213.

³⁵ G. Öney, *Die Figurenreliefs*, 148-149, 153.

³⁶ For the sarcophagus see N. Giannopoulos, "Les constructions byzantines de Démétrias", *BCH* 44 (1920), 195-196, fig. 8; G. Millet, "Remarques sur les sculptures byzantines de la région de Démétrias", *BCH* 44 (1920-1921), 210-215; N. Giannopoulos, "Αἱ παρά την Δημητριάδα βυζαντιναὶ μοναὶ", *Επετηρίς της Εταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 1 (1924) 224. See also A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen-âge II (XIe-XIVe siècle)*, Paris 1976, 151-152; T. Pazaras, "Συμπλήρωση της σαρκοφάγου της Ἀννας Μαλιασηνῆς", *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη Στυλιανού Πελεκανίδη*, Thessaloniki 1983, 353-364; Idem, *Ανάγλυφες σαρκοφάγοι και επιτάφιας πλάκες της μέσης και ὕστερης βυζαντινῆς περιόδου στην Ελλάδα*, Athens 1988, 38-40, pl. 30-33; A. Avraméa- D.Feissel, "Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. IV. Inscriptions de Thessalie (à l'exception des Météores)", *Travaux et Mémoires* 10 (1987), 377, pl. VII, 1; P. Androudis, "À propos des motifs d'allure orientale du sarcophage d'A.Maliassenè", *Βυζαντικά* 20 (2000), 267-281; Idem, "Ο ναός της Επισκοπῆς Ἀνω Βόλου και ο εντοιχισμένος γλυπτός του διάκοσμος", *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Εταιρείας* 28 (2007), 85-98; A. Anastassiadou- M. Kontogiannopoulou, "Το επιτύμβιο ἐπίγραμμα



Сл. 16 Црква Успења Пресвете Богородице у Епископију, Ано Волосу. Фрагмент рељефа са змајем и људском руком.

Fig. 16 Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Episkopi, Ano Volos. Fragment of a relief with a dragon and a human hand



Fig. 17: Design of the same fragment (P. Androudis)

Сл. 17 Детаљ истог фрагмента (П. Андрудис).

mured in the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Episkopi, Ano Volos (Thessaly, Greece), are sculpted with a double-headed eagle, whose heads fight against two dragons which present serpent-form bodies, in the Seljuk snake-dragon type. The first (and byzantine) phase of the church is attributed to the second half of 13th century³⁷, but it is not certain that these reliefs (in fact *spolia*) formed once part of its decoration.

To our knowledge these two reliefs are unique in byzantine art. In the dragons the wings and forelegs are eliminated. Their serpent-form bodies have a small knot in the end of their tails. Their upright posture emphasizes their threatening character, as do the ferocious forked-tongued heads with pair of horns that are turned down and attack the eagle's heads. The eagles are biting the tongues of the dragons, probably as a symbol of the victory of life against death.

In these two late 13th century byzantine sculptures, the eagle and dragons are depicted as opposing symbols, the sky and water/earth, "above" and "below". In this sense, this unique and very particular iconography in a byzantine

ενός Παλαιολόγου στη Μακρινίτσα του Πηλίου και η σχέση του με τα ταφικά μνημεία των Μαλιασηνών της Μαγνησίας", *Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Θεσσαλία και τη Στερεά Ελλάδα 3* (2006), *Πρακτικά Επιστημονικής Συνάντησης, Βόλος 16.3.-19.3.2006, τ. Ι: Θεσσαλία*, Volos 2009, 525-537; P. Androudis, "Παρατηρήσεις στον βυζαντινό γλυπτό διάκοσμο των εκκλησιών του δυτικού Πηλίου", *Βυζαντινά* 30 (2010), 303-304, 315 (fig. 8α-γ).

³⁷ For the church and its byzantine sculptures see P. Androudis, *Ο ναός της Επισκοπής Άνω Βόλου*, 85-98.

Fig. 18 Church of Hagios Nikolaos at Portaria, Pelion. Marble slab with bird (eagle) and snakes.

Сл. 18 Црква Св. Николе у Портарији, Пелион. Мермерна плоча са птицом (ором) и змијама.



context, in accordance with the motifs in the other slabs attributed in the sarcophagus, has an eschatological and thus a clear sepulchral character³⁸. The other two slabs are bearing rampant winged griffins within large medallions, as well as endorsed birds, also enclosed in medallions (fig. 12-15), together with Christian symbols of funerary character, as leaved crosses³⁹. The griffins turn their head back over their shoulder while, one of their wings terminates in a dragon head with open mouth (fig. 13, 14).

Of almost identical decoration, with the griffin within a medallion is a byzantine slab of funerary character, now in the Metropolitan Museum of N. York⁴⁰. In this slab which was attributed by Sarah Brooks to “... *Central Greece or the Balkans* ...”⁴¹, the griffin doesn’t have wings which finish in dragon heads and the execution of the relief is totally different from the slabs from Episkopi. In the slab of the Metropolitan Museum the background presents many foliate designs. As for the basket-weave pattern of the frame, it was suggested that is “... *likely inspired by textile designs* ...”⁴². It seems that the griffins in the slabs from Pelion and in the one from New York copied similar prototypes, most probably textiles, which could have differed in details. Moreover, the execution of the griffins from Pelion is more elaborate, elegant and probably closest to the prototype. There is no doubt that the marble slabs from Pelion attest a Greek sculptor of great craftsmanship.

³⁸ P. Androudis, *À propos des motifs d’allure orientale*, 267-281. The griffin is a symbol of the Christianity over the devil.

³⁹ P. Androudis, *À propos des motifs d’allure orientale*, 267-281.

⁴⁰ S. Brooks, “Relief depicting a Griffin”, *Byzantium. Faith and Power*, 112-113 (catalogue no 58).

⁴¹ Ibidem, 113.

⁴² Ibidem, 112.

The details and the rendering of the iconography of the corpses and the heads of the double-headed eagles, as well as the dragon heads and the treatment of the bodies of the church at Episkopi reflect strong “oriental” (Seljuk?) influences, as it was stated by Gabriel Millet⁴³. The main argument in favor of this proposal, which was accepted with reserve by other scholars⁴⁴, is the strong presence of the dragon (with oblong ears as horns, open mouth and a tongue) in most of the reliefs attributed to the sarcophagus⁴⁵, as well as to another fragmentary relief depicting a dragon with dragon tail and a human hand (fig. 16, 17), also found in the interior of the Church of Episkopi. We attributed the latter relief, together with two other fragmentary slabs immured in the church of Episkopi, to the same sculptural monument, probably the throne of a bishop⁴⁶.

It is noteworthy that the type of dragon of the reliefs of Episkopi is a variation of the classical type of the dragon figure with a snake-like body, eliminating the forelegs. In the two slabs with double-headed eagles attributed to the sarcophagus of Anna Maliassene, the wings of dragons are also eliminated. Representation of this type of dragons as snakes (but with dragon, open mouth heads) are found in byzantine art of late 12th c. and early 13th c., especially in ceramics unearthed in the Athenian Agora, Corinth, Constantinople, as well as in the city of Cherson, in Crimea⁴⁷.

As a consequence, the two compositions of double-headed eagles fighting against dragons suggest as possible source of inspiration (or imitation) a precious 13th century textile of oriental (Islamic?) provenance, bearing the same more or less iconography. That means of course that sculptors in Mount Pelion had access to oriental silks. The only possible way of inspiration for these dragons in the byzantine reliefs from Mount Pelion is a silk textile of oriental and more specifically of Seljuk origin. Other Islamic or Andalusian textiles do not bear the iconography of dragons, which is an exclusivity of Seljuk art. It is noteworthy that this iconography influenced the decoration of Armenian manuscripts, which have a considerable high number of dragons of “Seljuk (Central Asian in general, the source could be Mongol as well as D. Kouymjian says) appearance” painted on them⁴⁸.

The sculptor of the two slabs with the double-headed eagle from Episkopi seems to be inspired by a Seljuk silk, but interpreted and appropriated some of its patterns according to his own ideas and intentions. As we already no-

⁴³ G. Millet, *Remarques sur les sculptures*, 210-215.

⁴⁴ A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen-âge*, 152.

⁴⁵ See another proposal for the reconstruction of the sarcophagus of Anna Maliassene in: A. Anastassiadou- M. Kontogiannopoulou, *Το επιτύμβιο επίγραμμα ενός Παλαιολόγου*, 525-537.

⁴⁶ P. Androudis, “Sur les fragments d’une chaire épiscopale byzantine à Episkopi (Ano Volos)”, *Βυζαντικά* 22 (2002), 143-168.

⁴⁷ See E. Dauterman Maguire- H. Maguire, *Other Icons. Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture*, Princeton University Press, N. Jersey and Oxford 2007, 75, 77, 78-82, figs 71-77, who identified some of these dragons as “serpents”.

⁴⁸ See in particular Kuehn 2011, fig. 9, 11, 15, 16, 44, 45, 46, 47, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 58, 61, 62, 71, 72, 73, 79, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 136, 161, 179, 193.

ticed, some of the details of the rendering of the sculpture imitate previous 12th c. byzantine reliefs (e.g. the eagle from a slab from the Old Metropolis of Veroia)⁴⁹. Despite the presence of (these “exotic” for local taste) sculptures of “oriental style” in Mount Pelion, these examples do not permit to trace the lines of an important production. As consequence, the presence of these reliefs in Medieval Thessaly reflects the eclecticism of the artistic culture of the region, open to diverse influences.

In Mount Pelion we recorded another marble slab, the decoration of which is undoubtedly inspired by a precious textile of oriental origin. In this slab, a bird with peacock’s head and an eagle’s body is represented frontally, with two serpents (fig. 18). This marble relief could be attributed, by iconographic and stylistic criteria, to 12th- 13th centuries⁵⁰.

Conclusions

It can be safely suggested that Middle Eastern and Central Asian, more specifically Seljuk textiles played a key role for the transmission of the motif of the two headed eagle and dragons in not only in Byzantine, but also in Western Medieval Art. The motif appears in different forms in monumental sculpture and textiles, especially in 13th c. Seljuk Anatolia.

As for byzantine art, the motif is rather absent. The only example of a double-headed eagle fighting against two dragons is found in the decoration the two slabs from Mount Pelion, which were attributed to the sarcophagus of Anna Maliassene, niece of the Greek Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos. It seems that these sculptures copied a synthesis of a precious oriental, probably a Seljuk textile of 13th c. Thus this synthesis, of Central Asian origin and shamanistic concept, reached the Byzantine world, where it was sculpted for a monument of sepulchral character. It is noteworthy that the synthesis maintained, together with other reliefs of the same style, its funeral character to a new body.

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ПРИМЕР УЛОГЕ ТЕКСТИЛА КАО МЕДИЈУМА У ПРЕНОШЕЊУ ОРНАМЕНАТА
ИЗМЕЂУ АНАДОЛИЈСКИХ СЕЛЏУКА И КАСНЕ ВИЗАНТИЈСКЕ УМЕТНОСТИ
И СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА ДВЕ МЕРМЕРНЕ ПЛОЧЕ ИЗ ЕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙЈΑ, ИЗ ΑΝΟ
ΒΟΛΟСА, СА ДВОГЛАВИМ ΟΡΛΟΒΙΜΑ ΚΟΙ Ι ΣΕ ΒΟΡΕ ΣΑ ΖΜΑΙΕΒΙΜΑ

Циљ ове студије је да прикаже начин преношења орнамената путем текстила као медијума са фокусом на јединствену уметничку репрезентацију византијског дво-главог орла са паром змајева. Овај мотив потиче из митологије Централне Азије који

⁴⁹ P. Androudis, *À propos des motifs d'allure orientale*.

⁵⁰ P. Androudis, “Τα εντοιχισμένα βυζαντινά γλυπτά στο ναό του Αγίου Νικολάου στην Πορταριά Πηλίου”, *Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Θεσσαλία και τη Στερεά Ελλάδα 5* (2015), *Πρακτικά Επιστημονικής Συνάντησης, Βόλος 2015, τ. Ι: Θεσσαλία, Volos 2018* (forthcoming).

је стигао у уметност Анадолијских Селцука и који се огледа посебно у монументалној скулптури, у нарочитој синтези као и у врсти фузије два мотива, што ће рећи двоглавог орла са врховима крила у облику главе змаја. Овај други мотив се може наћи на остатку свилене тканине за коју се сматра да представља Селџучку одору која се користила у обреду крунисања у XIII веку. У уметности Селџука тела змајева се срећу у облику чвора и у најједноставијој варијацији иконографије без предњих ногу и крила. Иста иконографија змаја Селџучког типа са крволочним главама и роговима, отвореним искривљеним уснама из којих вире зуби и језик је приказана у синтези двоглавог орла и змајева на византијским рељефима (крај XIII века) из Епископија, у Ано Волосу, Тесалија (Грчка). Више је него очигледно је да се такав модел синтезе из Епископија може наћи на Оријенту, највероватније на Селџучком текстилу