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### **ARCHITECTURE OF ST. SOPHIA OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN THE MIRROR OF THE BYZANTINE SOURCES**

The most important Byzantine sources on the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople are the famous ekphraseis by Procopius of Caesaria, Paul the Silentiary (6th century), Michael of Thessaloniki (12th century) and the 9th century legendary *Account on the building of the Great Church* included in the *Patria Constantinopolitana*. These texts were translated in full or in part into some modern languages and were used by scholars for the hypothetical reconstructions of those parts of the building that had been changed or lost. Moreover, these sources describing a rather well-preserved monument are precious for understanding how the Byzantines themselves experienced and interpreted the symbolic meaning and aesthetic appeal of the architectural forms. The latter aspect is of great interest. In our paper we would like to share some considerations produced during our work on the full translation into Russian of these sources which we are now preparing.

The texts are very different in their style: the text of Procopius is descriptive, that of Paul is poetic, that of Michael of Thessaloniki is scholarly rhetoric, the *Account on the building of the Great Church* is a folklore narrative. This makes it difficult to compare these texts and to evaluate each of them in the context of the classical and Byzantine tradition of ekphrasis.

One of the most important problems we are facing is the correlation of the descriptions with the preserved and especially not preserved parts of the building. However, the correct understanding of this correlation is essential not only for the theoretical reconstruction of the lost architectural and decorative elements, but also for a fuller comprehension of the artistic conception of the building.

Another important issue is the correct understanding of special technical terms and names of materials and their correlation with surviving details.

Yet another problem is an adequate translation of the descriptions into Russian, which requires finding a balance between the clearness of meaning and literary qualities of style. In this respect it is the poem of Paul the Silentiary that presents the major difficulties: written in sophisticated hexameters, it is hard to comprehend for the modern Russian reader.

In our paper all these aspects will be illustrated by certain examples.

The research has been carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Humanities, project № 14-04-00377.

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### **Монументальная живопись Армении VII столетия в контексте восточнохристианской традиции**

О монументальной живописи раннесредневековой Армении почти не упоминается в искусствоведческой литературе. Это отчасти объясняется тем, что памятники монументальной живописи на территории исторической Армении в большинстве своем утрачены, а в ученой среде укоренилось мнение о том, что монументальная живопись не была традиционной для средневековой армянской культуры. Однако изучение остатков этих ансамблей, а также архивные фотографии и заметки первых исследователей свидетельствуют о том, что в VII столетии монументальная живопись в Армении активно развивалась и достигла своего наивысшего расцвета. Другой важный вывод — это то, что яркие страницы в истории

средневековой монументальной живописи Армении всегда совпадали с периодами активизации контактов с византийским культурным миром.

Согласно исследованиям, около тридцати церквей в центральной Армении, в области Айрарат, где в исследуемый период была сосредоточена светская и духовная власть, были украшены монументальной живописью. Главные храмы страны — Эчмиадзинский и Двинский кафедральные соборы имели мозаики, остальные церкви были украшены фресками, и только в храме Звартноц (храм Св. Григория) мозаика сочеталась с настенной живописью. Сохранившиеся фрагменты монументальной живописи дают основание говорить о существовании как минимум двух художественных и иконографических направлений в раннесредневековой Армении. В одной группе памятников выявляется определенная близость к художественной традиции восточных окраин Византийской империи, а в другой — к столбичным памятникам. Несмотря на то, что фигурные изображения и христологические сцены не сохранились, до нас дошли апсидные композиции, представленные в разных иконографических решениях. Среди них можно выделить такие сцены, как «Вознесение Христа», «Христос, дающий закон», «Этимасия» (Престол уготованный), «Причащение апостолов», а также изображение Богоматери.

Несмотря на большие утраты и фрагментарное состояние раннесредневековых монументальных ансамблей Армении, они представляют большую ценность в контексте восточно-христианского искусства, так как являются неотъемлемой частью этого культурного мира, кроме того, отчасти восполняют наши представления о не дошедших до нас ранневизантийских образцах.

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#### **ARMENIAN MONUMENTAL PAINTING OF THE 7th CENTURY IN THE CONTEXT OF EAST CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

The monumental painting of early medieval Armenia is hardly mentioned in the studies on art history. It can be partly explained by the fact that the monumental painting on the territory of historical Armenia is mostly lost. An opinion has been accepted among the scholars that monumental painting was not typical for medieval Armenia. However, the study of the remains of the monumental complexes, as well as archival photographs and notes of the first researchers show that in the 7th century monumental painting in Armenia had unprecedented development and reached its high peak. Another important conclusion is that the brightest moments in the history of Medieval Armenian monumental painting always corresponded with the periods of active contacts with the Byzantine cultural world.

According to the studies, about thirty churches in Central Armenia, in the historical Ayarat region were decorated with monumental painting. The main churches of the country — the Cathedrals of Echmiadzin and Dvin — had mosaics, while others were decorated with frescoes, and only in the church of Zvartnots (the church of St. Gregory) mosaics were combined with frescoes. The surviving fragments of frescoes give us the ground to assert the existence of two artistic and iconographic trends in early medieval Armenia. One group of monuments reveals a certain affinity with the artistic traditions of the eastern provinces of Byzantine Empire, and the other with the metropolitan monuments. Despite the fact that figural and Christological images are not preserved, the apse compositions reveal a variety of iconographic solutions. We can see the Ascension of Christ, Christ giving the law (Traditio legis), Hetoimasia, Communion of the Apostles, as well as the image of the Virgin. In spite of the great loss and fragmentary state of the monumental painting in Armenia, these ensembles are of great importance for the study of East Christian art, as soon as they are an inseparable part of this culture. Moreover, they partly make up for non-surviving early Byzantine examples.