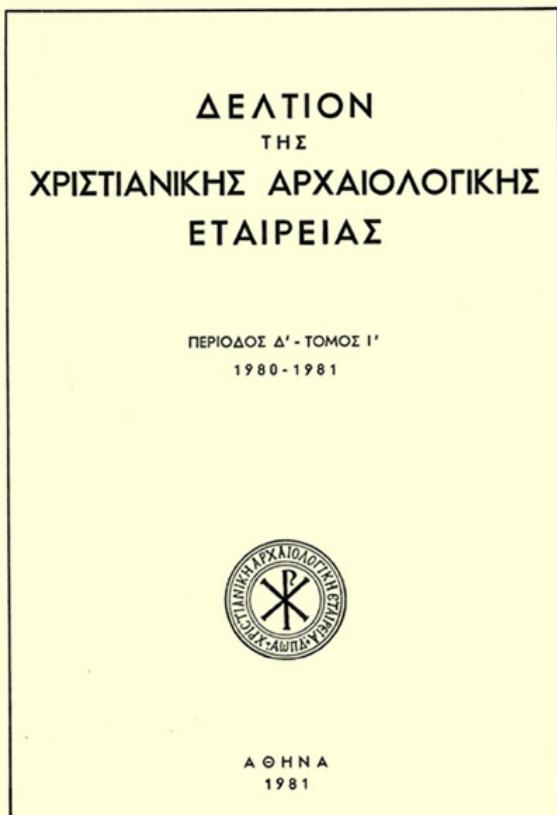


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**The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra.
Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late
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THE MASK MOTIF
IN THE WALL PAINTINGS OF MISTRA
CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF A CLASSICAL FEATURE
IN LATE BYZANTINE PAINTING *

(PL. 83 - 94)

In his study on the style of the mosaics and frescoes of Kariye Djami, Otto Demus made the observation that the artists involved in this project were fascinated by "details of a neoclassical kind, quite often of an antiquarian flavor like the monochrome reliefs decorating architectural forms"¹. The abundance and variety of the ornamental details in question, which characterize only certain monumental decorations, as will be shown, assign a special importance to these features and may assist us in understanding the tastes and ideas of the society which favored them. The imposing group of Late Byzantine decorations at Mistra doubtless constitute a rewarding testing ground for such a study², since they are connected with one of the most striking revivals of the antique heritage. An explanation for this phenomenon may be sought in the colonial position of Mistra, dependent as it was on Constantinople both on the political and cultural levels³.

* The research on this article is part of a larger study dealing with the classical features in the wall paintings of Mistra which was presented at the Birmingham Symposium of 1977 on Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. I would like to record my indebtedness to Professors Kurt Weitzmann and Harry Titus and to Mrs. Laskarina Bouras, who read the text and made helpful remarks.

1. O. Demus, *The Style of the Kariye Djami and Its Place in the Development of Palaeologan Art*, The Kariye Djami, vol. 4, Princeton, 1975, p. 158.

2. For the wall paintings of Mistra see G. Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra*, Paris, 1910. M. Chatzidakis, *Mystras*, Athens, 1981 (Greek edition Athens, 1956). S. Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, Paris, 1970.

3. For the role of Constantinople as preserver of ancient tradition see K. Weitzmann, *Das klassische Erbe in der Kunst Konstantinopels*, Alte und Neue Kunst 3 (1954), 41-59. Translated and reprinted as *The Classical Heritage in the Art of Constantinople* in K. Weitzmann, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, Chicago and London, 1971, 126-175. For the political and cultural history of Mistra see D. A. Zakythinos, *Le Despotat grec de Morée*, vol. 1.

In my contribution in honor of the memory of Andreas Xyngopoulos, I shall discuss only one motif of classical inspiration in the frescoes of Mistra, namely the mask, which is the most popular among the antique details depicted on architectural backgrounds and on furniture or introduced into the geometric and floral decoration that was used to fill secondary architectural surfaces. The examples of masks mentioned here do not exhaust all instances of the appearance of this motif in the churches of Mistra. Such minute details have often been obliterated due to the damaged state of certain areas of the paintings. The object of this paper is to indicate the types and contexts of masks depicted in the frescoes of Mistra, trace them to Antiquity, and also survey this motif throughout the history of Middle and Late Byzantine painting. Thus one of the main questions raised in this study, that is, whether we are dealing with a revival or a survival feature, could be answered. The study of masks in a historic approach and in terms of groups of works belonging to the same geographical and cultural entities may elucidate the cultural implications of this motif. This detail appears to indicate in a rather firm way the taste of the upper strata of Byzantine society for features of a classical character. Moreover, it illustrates, as will be shown, one aspect of Western influence in Byzantine art, especially after the Latin Conquest. The term mask is employed here regardless of the degree of stylization exhibited in each case.

I

The mask motif, the most pagan of all classical features encountered in the wall paintings of Mistra, appears either in animal form, more precisely that of a lion, or as the human mask; in some cases, it is not easy to make the distinction. By far the majority of masks in the churches of Mistra should be assigned to the category of grisaille or monochrome ornament, which also includes busts of figures or full-length figurines (usually nude), as well as non-representational decorative features such as floral motifs, shells, etc.

The frescoes of the Metropolis church, which, at least in part, seem to antedate the remaining monumental decorations in the site and may be placed towards the end of the thirteenth century⁴, contain several ex-

Histoire politique, Paris, 1932. Vol. 2. Vie et institutions, Athens, 1953 (Revised edition Variorum, London, 1975).

4. For the dating of the Metropolis frescoes see the recent article by M. Chatzidakis, *Νεώτερα για τὴν ιστορία καὶ τὴν τέχνη τῆς Μητρόπολης τοῦ Μυστρᾶ*, ΔΧΑΕ

amples of the mask motif. It is mainly used on the armor of military saints including also a depiction of the archangel Michael. More specifically, a large, beardless human face in grisaille, recalling the Gorgoneion type, decorates the horizontal band of the breastplate of St. Theodore Tiro on the north wall of the nave. In addition, lion masks occupy identical positions in the depictions of Michael and St. George, who are symmetrically placed on either side of the entrance on the same wall of the church⁵. A different context involves the inclusion of a lion mask as the central theme in the decoration of a simulated marble plaque forming the dado of the wall in the apse of the bema (Pl. 83a)⁶. The expressive lion's head is well preserved. On either side, the heads and parts of the bodies of two dragons with open mouths are portrayed.

The most ambitious among the early Palaeologan decorations at Mistra, that of the Hodigitria or the Afendiko church of the monastery of the Brontochion, which was completed for the most part between 1311/1312 and 1322, preserves two rare examples of the use of lion masks. One is observed in the Communion of the Apostles in the apse of the bema, directly beneath the depiction of the Virgin between the archangels. A lion mask supports a baldacchino represented in the outer section of each of the two episodes of the scene (Pl. 83b)⁷. Moreover, lion masks are incorporated into an intricate floral band which runs across the axis of the east, south (Pl. 83c) and west barrel vaults in the naos⁸. This ornamental band forms a clear separating element of the two scenic compositions which cover the two halves of each of the barrel vaults. A similar band was undoubtedly used in the corresponding position in the north barrel vault, which does not preserve any paintings. It had, in all probability, the same function in the barrel vaults of the narthex of the church, as indicated by the small fragment which is still extant in the vault including the scene of the Samaritan Woman, the miracle of Cana, the Healing of the Blind and that of Peter's mother-in-law. The floral band in question, which forms a kind of an inhabited scroll, issues in each case from a vase depicted next to the wall. At regular

ser. 4, vol. 9 (1977-1979 [1979]), 143 - 175. The author wants to push the date of the most archaizing group of frescoes in the eastern section of the church somewhat earlier than that accepted so far by him and other scholars.

5. The masks on the armor of saints in the Metropolis can barely be made out in photographs due to the damaged state of these particular paintings.

6. Mille t, Mistra, pl. 87, 3 (drawing).

7. Ibid. pl. 92, 2 (drawing).

8. Ibid. pl. 104, 8 (drawing of the floral band in the east barrel vault).

intervals, the floral network passes through the mouths of the masks, which thus form a coordinating element of the whole design. On the other hand, a depiction of a mask in grisaille within a medallion above an opening on the architectural background of the Healing of Peter's mother-in-law appears often in Byzantine painting. Moreover, the frescoes of the so-called Kyprianos chapel on the south side of the nave of the Afendiko church, datable by a monogram and an inscription to the year 1366, exemplify the most common use of masks in Byzantine art. A fountain, included in a scene representing St. Gregory of Nazianzus as a "source of wisdom", is provided with a lion mask of a "humanized" appearance serving as a water spout from which a stream of water flows (Pl. 83d)⁹.

The Crucifixion scene in the frescoes of St. John (Ai Giannakis), which have been assigned various datings in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, includes a representation of Longinus holding a huge shield¹⁰. This is characterized by a human mask of an especially distorted appearance.

The paintings of the Peribleptos, generally dated to the second half of the fourteenth century and best preserved among the decorations of Mistra, contain a large number of classical motifs in grisaille. Masks are often integrated into the decoration of the armor of portraits of military saints (Pl. 83e)¹¹, of the archangel Michael, and of soldiers in scenes such as the Crucifixion¹². This motif constitutes the principal ornament of breastplates, shields and even helmets. Despite the bad state of preservation of several figures, the masks, usually rendered in grisaille, are recognizable. Their frequent use indicates that they were employed on an even larger scale in the original decoration. In fact, a survey of the figures in military garb at the Peribleptos reveals that the painters of this church had a special predilection for the mask motif. For instance, a lion's head decorates the horizontal band across the chest in the depiction of the archangel Michael on the north wall, close to the entrance. St. Demetrios and St. George, who occupy prominent places on the facades of the pilasters on the north and south walls respectively, also exhibit masks on their armor. St. Demetrios has a large lion's head within a circle on the horizontal band across his chest. Moreover, his circular shield is decorated with a mask in profile, which seems to be

9. Ibid. pl. 103, 2 (drawing).

10. Ibid. pl. 105, 1 (drawing).

11. Chatzidakis, Mystras, fig. 57.

12. Millet, Mistra, pl. 117, 2 (drawing).

a lion's head. St. George, opposite St. Demetrios, displays a lion mask, which decorates a circular motif in the center of the saint's breastplate. Most of the military saints on the north, south and west walls of the nave of the church show masks in the contexts already mentioned. The human mask as decorative motif of shields appears very often in this group of portraits (Pl. 83e). Special comment on the depiction of this detail on the helmets of warrior saints should be made, since this constitutes a rare feature. More precisely, the helmets of a beardless saint on the south wall, close to the depiction of St. George, and of a white-haired saint, identifiable probably with St. Menas (Pl. 83f) in the central conch of the west wall, show a bearded and a shaven, moon-faced mask respectively. In both instances, the helmets hang with strings behind the necks of the saints and show the masks right way up, which does not conform to their apotropaic intention, for they would have appeared upside down, had the helmets been worn. A further context of the mask motif, namely in the decoration of the painted dado on the walls, is worth mentioning. Human and lion masks are the principal ornamentation of several simulated marble plaques on the north, south and west walls of the nave. The bottom of the north wall is decorated with three painted panels, of which only the central one and that to the right bear masks, while the corresponding one to the left is decorated with birds. The central panel displays two human masks of the jovian type on either side of a circular motif in deep red marble (Pl. 84a, b, c). The decoration of the panel, to the right, only partly preserved, shows a lion's head on one side of a lozenge-shaped motif imitating grey-black marble. Therefore, a second lion's head would have been included on the other side. An identical ornamental design characterizes the simulated marble plaque in the middle part of the dado of the south wall of the nave. Here, a lion's head is depicted on either side of a central geometric motif. A variant of the decoration mentioned above covers the western vertical side of the arched opening on the south wall, close to the diaconicon. A human mask of the moon-faced type is depicted on either side of the point of contact of two superimposed lozenges. Since the painted surface on the opposite side is lost, we do not know whether more masks were depicted there.

The latest dated monumental decoration at Mistra from the Byzantine period, that of the Pantanassa church of ca. 1430, also includes an impressive number of masks, especially as monochrome ornaments on the architectural backgrounds and on furniture. Striking examples are provided by the sarcophagi in the scene of the Anastasis in the east

barrel vault above the sanctuary (Pl. 85a). The front of the sarcophagus of the prophet-kings, on the left, exhibits a lion mask of a "humanized" appearance, with a floral motif issuing from its mouth. The two sarcophagi in the foreground, in the right-hand section of the scene (Pl. 85b), reveal several types of masks, among which are a human mask in profile, in the fashion of ancient coins, a round human face of the Gorgoneion type and a lion's head. The lion mask is characterized by a small vegetal motif issuing from its mouth; all the other masks are surrounded by leaves. Masks are often represented on architectural backgrounds as, for instance, in the building included in the depiction of the evangelist Luke in the southwest pendentive of the main cupola (Pl. 85c). A youthful human mask within a medallion, also surrounded by leaves, constitutes the ornamental theme of the pediment of this building while its long wall in the foreground displays a profile mask recalling ancient coins, as in the Anastasis scene. Moreover, a similar mask decorates the background wall in the scene of the Annunciation¹³ in the south barrel vault and in the depiction on one section of the Pentecost on the north wall of the bema. A frontal human mask surrounded by floral elements is also depicted on the wall of the building behind Joseph in the scene of the Presentation in the west barrel vault¹⁴. The most intriguing use of masks in the frescoes of the Pantanassa is noticed in the decoration of the pendentives of the cupola in the gallery above the narthex¹⁵. The program consists of a bust of the Virgin with the Child in the summit, prophets in the drum and medallions of saints in the pendentives. The fact that the saints carry no attributes and the loss of the inscriptions of their names make identification difficult. Nevertheless, the facial types of the three extant portraits which roughly correspond to those of John (Pl. 86a), Mark (Pl. 86b) and Luke (Pl. 86c) may imply that we have here depictions of the four evangelists rather than those of prophets or other categories of saints¹⁶. In any case, each of the medallions, as shown, for instance, by the depiction of Mark (Pl. 86b), if my interpretation is correct, is complemented by three masks. Those on either side of the portraits are human, while the ones at the bottom represent in three cases a lion's head and in one the head of a calf. The latter characterizes

13. Ibid. pl. 139, 1.

14. Ibid. pl. 140, 1.

15. Ibid. pls. 146, 1, 146,2 and 148,3.

16. Millet identifies the figures as those of prophets. Ibid. The same identification is accepted by Dufrenne, Programmes iconographiques, op. cit., pl. 26 (drawing), and Chatzidakis, Μυστράς (Greek edition 1956), pl. 27b.

the portrait which, in my opinion, represents the evangelist Luke (Pl. 86c). The human masks, rendered in profile, exemplify two different types. Those in the eastern pendentives show a distinct type with dishevelled hair and expressionistic features following the typology of the Medusa (Pl. 86c and d). The masks in the western pendentives depict a moon-faced type with short hair (Pl. 86a, b, and 87a). The most outstanding iconographic detail which characterizes both human and animal masks is a substantial vegetal or rinceau element which springs from their mouths in a most vigorous, dynamic way and serves as filler of the span-drels of the pendentives.

II

It may be argued that the types of masks to be seen in the wall paintings of Mistra and the ways in which they were integrated into larger pictorial contexts can be traced back to Antiquity. In particular, the inclusion of lion masks in Greek and Roman architectural decoration may account for numerous examples found in these paintings. The archetype must have been the combination of lion's heads and palmette, acanthus or rinceau elements on the simas in Greek and Roman architecture, as illustrated, for instance, in the fragment from the Tholos in Epidauros (Pl. 87b)¹⁷. In this context, lion masks served as water spouts. Nevertheless, the integration of masks and vegetal motifs as seen in the Afendiko at Mistra should be traced back to later elaborations of this feature, which are noticed not only in architectural decoration, but in other media as well, such as mosaic and fresco. One of the derivatives in question is the so-called inhabited scroll, that is a fantastic plant which, as its scrolls unfold, reveals flowers, fruit, animals and human or animal masks¹⁸. That the ancient inhabited scroll often issues from a vase, as does the floral band at the Afendiko, indicates even more clearly the antique derivation of this ornamental motif in the frescoes at Mistra. A good example of a typical inhabited scroll in antique art is provided by a section of the floor mosaic from a Roman villa in Argos (Pl. 87c)¹⁹.

17. P. Cavvadias, *Fouilles d'Épidaure*, vol. I, Athens 1891, illustration on page 123 and pl. VI.

18. J. M. C. Toynbee and J. B. Ward Perkins, *Peopled Scrolls: a Hellenistic Motif in Imperial Art*, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 18, N. S. vol. V (1950), 1 - 43.

19. G. Åkerström-Hougen, *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer in Argos* (*Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueciae*, ser. in 4o XXIII), Stockholm, 1974, pl. X.

Here we notice not only the two distinct facial types of human mask²⁰, as seen in the Peribleptos church at Mistra, but also what is commonly known as the foliate or leaf mask, that is a human mask the face of which is framed by acanthus leaves or seaweed²¹. A fragment of a further floor mosaic from Tusculum, datable to the third century and at present in the Museo Nazionale in Rome (Pl. 88a)²², is a characteristic example of the integration of a human face with vegetal elements in Roman art. The leaf mask has not been recorded in the paintings of Mistra nor in any other Byzantine work from the post-Iconoclastic period onwards, so far as I know. This Roman imperial creation became widespread in Late Antiquity both in the West and in the East, the most famous examples from Byzantium being the floor mosaic with this motif from the Peristyle court of the Imperial Palace and two capitals, presently at the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul²³. However, the same motif enjoyed tremendous popularity in Western medieval art, especially of the Gothic period. We shall return to this feature when a more specific idiosyncracy, namely the vegetal motif coming from the mouths of some masks is discussed. Regarding the combination of masks and rinceaux in Antiquity, one may point out the highly decorative character assumed by this creation, as shown, for instance, in a sophisticated paraphrase of the inhabited scroll in a fresco from Herculaneum in the Museo Nazionale in Naples (Pl. 88c). The ornamental band containing lion masks in the frescoes of the Afendiko church (Pl. 83c) comes close in spirit to the neo-

20. Ibid. 21.

21. For the foliate masks see M. Wegener, *Blattmasken*, Das siebente Jahrzehnt. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Adolph Goldschmidt, Berlin, 1935, p. 43-50. H. Keller, *Blattmaske*, Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 2, Stuttgart, 1948, col. 867-874. E. von Mercklin, *Antike Figuralkapitelle*, Berlin, 1962, p. 135 - 140, figs. 673 - 693. Åkerström-Hougen, op. cit. p. 67 - 68.

22. M. E. Blaake, *Roman Mosaics of the Third Century After Christ*, Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome XVII (1940), 106, pl. 21, fig. 1.

23. For the foliate mask of the mosaic of the Great Palace see D. Talbot Rice (ed.), *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors. Second Report of the Excavations Carried out in Istanbul on behalf of the Walker Trust (The University of St. Andrews)*, Edinburgh, 1958, pls. C and 50. For the figural capitals see G. Mendel, *Musées impériaux ottomans. Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines*, vol. 2, Constantinople, 1914, p. 546 - 549.

Of special interest is the textual evidence regarding four gilded Medusa masks from the temple of Artemis at Ephesus which stood in the vestibule of the Chalke. Four more masks of the same set were at the "old palace" near the Forum Tauri. See C. Mangó, *The Brazen House*, Copenhagen, 1959, p. 100. Such ancient works may have had provided models for the copying of this motif in various contexts.

classical flavor conveyed by this Roman version which includes rinceaux, candelabra, lion and human masks.

Apart from the integration of human and animal masks in a continuous design involving mainly a vegetal element, a single mask, either human or animal, often appears in antique art. In many instances its derivation from the decoration of ancient simas is indicated by the inclusion of a vegetal motif on either side, as, for instance, in the early third century Antioch mosaic of the Drinking Contest between Dionysos and Heracles in the Princeton Museum (Pl. 88b)²⁴. Human masks became very popular in architectural contexts²⁵, especially because of their association with the cult of Dionysos and the ever increasing impact of the theater.

Mention should also be made of a particular type of human mask, the Gorgoneion or Medusa, archetypally connected with an apotropaic intention²⁶. This symbolism explains the popularity of the motif on Hellenistic and Roman cuirasses, as illustrated, for instance, by the statue from the Exedra of Herodes Atticus in Olympia (Pl. 88d)²⁷, on shields²⁸, and in funerary art, mainly sarcophagi²⁹. That the animal mask represented in ancient art was almost exclusively a lion's head hardly needs explanation, since the symbolic overtones of this feature, which came to embody ideas of bravery and protection, are familiar to students of art³⁰. The apotropaic

24. D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements, II. Plates*, Princeton, 1947, pl. XXX, b.

25. Cf. V. Spinazzola, *Pompei alla luce degli Scavi nuovi di via dell'Abbondanza* (anni 1910-1923), vol. I, Rome, 1953, fig. 554 (the so-called Casa di Livia on the Palatine, Rome). A mask with a floral motif on either side decorates the front of the podium.

26. For the types of the Gorgoneion in ancient art see J. Floren, *Studien zur Typologie des Gorgoneion*, Münster, 1977.

27. G. Treu, *Die Bildwerke von Olympia in Stein und Thon. Olympia. Tafelband III*, Berlin, 1894, pl. LXV, 3. See also C. C. Vermeule, *Hellenistic and Roman Cuirassed Statues*, Berytus 13 (1959), pls. III, 10, IV, 13, V, 16, 17, 18, VII, 24, VIII, 25, 26, IX, 29, 30, X, 28, XI, 34, XII, 36, XIII, 41, 42, 43, XIV, 50, XVI, 49, XVII, 48, 51, XVIII, 55, XIX, 57, 58 (a detail in our Pl. 88d), XX, 60, 62, XXII, 67, XXIII, 71, XXV, 75, 77.

28. See, for example, S. Reinach, *Répertoire de Peintures Grecques et Romaines*, Paris, 1922, pls. 22, 1, 68, 9 and 167, 8.

29. See, for instance, R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome. The Late Empire*, London, 1971, fig. 325.

30. For the use of lions as apotropaic images in ancient art cf. P. S. Ronzevalle, *Notes et études d'archéologie orientale* ser. 3, 11. *Jupiter héliopolitain. Nova et Vetera. Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, XXI, 1 (1937), *passim*. For the ancient and medieval symbolism of lion masks see also M. Tatjć-Djuric, *Jedna gro-*

character of this theme explains its use in architectural decoration of the classical period, especially in relation to water³¹, as well as its appearance in many other examples in ancient art. The contexts into which masks were integrated in Antiquity are clearly reflected in their use in Byzantine art, as indicated by the pictorial evidence of the wall paintings of Mistra. Lion's heads and human masks on the sarcophagi of the Anastasis scene in the Pantanassa church, for instance, recall similar motifs in ancient sarcophagi, as illustrated by the Roman example in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale at Cagliari (Pl. 89a)³². The inclusion of masks as decorative elements of the simulated marble plaques at the bottom of walls in the Metropolis and the Peribleptos churches also goes back to Late antique models³³. The same applies to the use of masks as supporting elements in depictions of buildings such as those seen in the episodes of the Communion of the Apostles at the Afendiko church, which recall the numerous figural capitals in ancient architecture³⁴. Last but not least, the use of lion's heads as water spouts in depictions of fountains, as in the Afendiko, continues a time-honored tradition of this motif, which is amply documented in ancient works³⁵.

It is hardly necessary to insist further upon the antique derivation of the mask motif as represented in the wall paintings of Mistra. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the grisaille elements in Byzantine painting can also be traced back to ancient art and reflect the use of reliefs as decorative elements of walls³⁶. The choice of grisaille ornamentation in Byzantine painting including heads or busts of figures within medallions or free busts and full-length figurines, usually rendered in an illusionistic manner, indicates the antique origin of such themes.

teska iz Ljeviške, *Zograf* 4 (1972), 24 - 26. Cf. G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2, London, 1972, p. 677 - 678 (index).

31. Cf. A. K. Orlandos, *Παραστάσεις κρηνῶν ἐπὶ ἀγγείων*, AE 1916, 96.

32. G. Pesci, *Sarcfagi romani di Sardegna*, Rome, 1957, No. 3, fig. 8.

33. See, for instance, the frescoes of the Dura Synagogue. C. H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report VIII*, 1, New Haven, 1956, pl. VII.

34. Cf. von Mercklin, *Antike Figuralkapitelle*, op. cit.

35. Cf. Orlandos, *Παραστάσεις κρηνῶν ἐπὶ ἀγγείων*, 94 - 107.

36. Cf. Spinazzola, op. cit. figs. 306 and 307 (Case di Fabia): Painted reliefs among which there are some circular ones. Also idem, *Le arti decorative in Pompei e nel Museo Nazionale di Napoli*, Milan-Rome-Venice-Florence, 1928, pl. 120: Chiron and Achilles from Herculaneum.

III

One of the main questions concerning the inclusion of masks in the wall paintings of Mistra is whether we are dealing with a survival or a revival feature. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to make a brief survey of this motif in Byzantine art. Masks were extensively used up to the seventh century, but will not be discussed here, since they form part of the world of Antiquity³⁷. During the Middle and Late Byzantine periods, masks are noticeable in three categories of works: 1) Miniature and icon painting, 2) Monumental painting and 3) Sculpture. It is clear that masks reappear in large numbers and for the first time after the period of Late Antiquity during the reign of the Macedonian dynasty. The aspects and contexts of the feature hardly leave any doubt that it was part of a revival movement of antique forms which justifies the reference to this period as a Renaissance³⁸. Masks are found mainly in miniature painting during this period.

In the most famous illustrated manuscript of the Macedonian Renaissance, the Paris Psalter (Par. gr. 139), the mask motif may be noticed in the following three cases. In the miniature depicting Samuel Anointing David, a mask in profile within a medallion constitutes the crowning element of a rotunda (Pl. 89b, c). A human mask of the Medusa type decorates the right vertical side of the podium on which Samuel stands (Pls. 89c,d)³⁹. Finally, in the miniature illustrating the Prayer of Hezekiah a Medusa head decorates the frontal vertical edge of the footstool in front of the king's bed (Pl. 90a)⁴⁰. In the tenth century lectionary of the State Public Library in Leningrad (gr. 21), a human mask with a floral motif on either side decorates the front of the sarcophagus of Adam

37. See, for instance, the largest of the David plates from Cyprus in the Metropolitan Museum (here lion masks decorate shields). *Age of Spirituality. Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - Princeton, 1979*, No 431 (illustr.).

38. The concept of the Macedonian Renaissance in art was mainly established by the studies of Kurt Weitzmann. See especially K. Weitzmann, *Geistige Grundlagen und Wesen der Makedonischen Renaissance*. Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. Geisteswissenschaften. Heft 107, Cologne-Opladen, 1963. Translated and reprinted as *The Character and Intellectual Origins of the Macedonian Renaissance, Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, op. cit. 176-223.

39. Fol. 3v. H. Buchtahl, *The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter*, London, 1938, pl. III.

40. Fol. 446v. Ibid. pl. XIV.

and Eve in the Anastasis scene (Pl. 90b)⁴¹. One of the most classical works of the Macedonian Renaissance, the New Testament in the British Museum (Add. 28815), dating to the tenth century, also includes a human head within a medallion on the side of the stool on which the evangelist John is seated⁴². A further Macedonian work of the purest Renaissance style, the Acts and Epistles in the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Canon. gr. 110), shows a head with floral elements on either side on the vertical frontal edge of the footstool on which the evangelist Luke rests his feet⁴³. The Menologion of Basil II in the Vatican (Vat. gr. 1613), which is heavily indebted to classical sources, may illustrate better than any other manuscript of the Macedonian Renaissance the taste for decorative minutiae of antique origin. For instance, in the spandrels of the arches of the arcade serving as the architectural setting for the martyrdom of St. Hermione, a somewhat misunderstood lion mask with floral elements on either side indicates that such motifs were meant as decoration of the areas above the capitals of the arcade⁴⁴. In the miniature depicting the martyrdom of Symeon, bishop of Jerusalem, four human masks in profile, depicted in pairs, decorate the crenellations above a colonnade⁴⁵. Moreover, in the miniature depicting St. Hierotheos⁴⁶ two highly schematized lion masks with floral elements in the form of palmettes on either side are represented on top of the architecture, thus recalling classical gargoyles. Finally, St. Theodore Stratilates is represented among columns with capitals in the form of human heads⁴⁷.

Other non-monumental works of art of the Macedonian period, aside

41. Fol. 1v. C. R. Morey, Notes on East Christian Miniatures, *Art Bulletin* XI (1929), fig. 63. A human mask also appears as a decorative element on the front of a sarcophagus depicted in the so-called Bristol Psalter of the British Museum (Add. 40731). Fol. 12. S. Dufrenne, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Âge*, I, Paris, 1966, pl. 48.

42. Fol. 126v. K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des IX. und X. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1935, pl. XXV, 138.

43. Fol. 1v. I. Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturhandschriften*, vol. 1. Oxford Bodleian Library, Stuttgart, 1977, fig. 12.

44. II Menologio di Basilio II (Cod. Vaticano greco 1613) (Codices e Vaticanis Selecti, vol. VIII), II. Plates, Turin, 1907, p. 12.

45. Ibid. p. 46.

46. Ibid. p. 88. Moreover on page 146 a floral motif on a wall seems to indicate a misunderstood mask with two floral elements on either side.

47. Ibid. p. 383. In the late 11th century copy of the Homilies of Gregory at the Greek Patriarchate in Jerusalem (Taphou 14), Fol. 102, masks in pairs (human and lion) decorate capitals of double columns on which stand idols.

from manuscripts, occasionally reveal a taste for masks. Striking examples are provided by one group of ivory caskets which are characterized by frames of rosettes, often including human heads in profile within medallions⁴⁸. Although they recall types found commonly on coins, these heads could be considered as masks in profile, a type also recorded in ancient art (cf. Pl. 89a). Monumental decorations of the Macedonian period do not lend themselves to the study of the mask motif. It is evident that masks and other neoclassical minutiae of the kind described above hardly appear in monumental painting of the Middle Byzantine period on the whole. Masks are noticed only, in so far as I know, in a few representations of fountains, as, for instance, in the fresco depicting the Prayer of Anne in her Garden at St. Sophia in Kiev⁴⁹. This usage, on the contrary, can be amply documented in miniature painting, especially in the decoration of canon tables⁵⁰. In this context lion masks reflect the current function of sculptured lion's heads as water spouts of fountains⁵¹, a custom which continued the ancient use of the same feature. In addition, it should be noted that lion masks were employed as water spouts on the domes of several Byzantine churches. One of the earliest post-Iconoclastic examples seems to be a monument of the Ma-

48. A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X. - XIII. Jahrhunderts*, vol. I, Berlin, 1930, pls. I, 1 - 3, II, 6a-c, III, 6b, XXII, 40b - d, XXIII, 41 and LVII, 98.

49. H. Logvin, *Kiev's Hagia Sophia*, Kiev, 1971, fig. 153. A similar context characterizes the Annunciation scene in the frescoes of Perachorio, Cyprus, of the second half of the 12th century. See A. H. S. Megaw and E. J. W. Hawkins, *The Church of the Holy Apostles at Perachorio, Cyprus, and Its Frescoes*, DOP 16 (1962), 314, fig. 29.

50. See, for instance, Fol. 4v of the gospel book in the National Library in Vienna (Theol. gr. 154) of the late 11th century. P. Bubler and H. Gerstinger, *Die byzantinischen Handschriften*, 2. *Die Handschriften des X. - XVIII. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig, 1938, pl. VI, 1. A more rare but highly decorative use of the lion mask in relation to the depiction of flowing water is noticeable in two miniatures of the Psalter Vat. gr. 752 of ca. 1059. On Fols. 414v and 481 a stream of water flows diagonally across the miniatures from one lion's mouth to another. In the first example it illustrates a river and in the second just water. See E. T. De Wald, *The Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint*, vol. III. Psalms and Odes. Part 2. *Vaticanus gr. 752*, Princeton, 1942, p. 37, 43 and pls. XLVIII and LVII.

51. For some Byzantine references regarding the actual use of lion's heads as water spouts in springs or fountains during the Byzantine period see L. Bouras, *Some Observations on the Grand Lavra Phiale at Mount Athos and Its Bronze Strobilion*, ΔΧΑΕ, ser. 4, vol. 8 (1975 - 1976 [1977]), 90, note 31. Cf. also eadem, *Two Byzantine Puteals with Dragon Representations*, *JÖB* 27 (1978), 324-325, where references to extant puteals with sculptured masks as water spouts is made.

cedonian period, namely the church of the Panaghia at the monastery of Hosios Lukas in Phokis⁵².

During the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries, some new contexts of the mask motif may be noticed, again in the field of miniature painting. A case in point is one group of sophisticated manuscripts of the second half of the eleventh century including such high quality works as the gospel book in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma (Pal. 5). These show lion masks (sometimes combined with human heads), in association with hanging draperies⁵³. Special mention should be made of one category of historiated initials in Middle Byzantine manuscripts which include lion's heads in a usage recalling Western initials. A representative example is provided by the Homilies of James of Kokkinovaphos in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Paris. gr. 1208) (Pl. 90c)⁵⁴. Miniatures of a cosmological content including masks⁵⁵ and pictorial examples of the Crucifixion containing the cosmic symbols⁵⁶ are contexts peripheral to our research and hardly need special comment. By contrast, two identical headpieces including a lion mask, in the two copies of the Homilies of Kokkinovaphos in the Biblioteca Vaticana (Vat. gr. 1162)⁵⁷ and in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Paris. gr. 1208)⁵⁸, are es-

52. *See eadem*, 'Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Παναγίας στὸ μοναστήρι τοῦ Ὄστιου Λουκᾶ', Athens, 1980, p. 37 - 48.

53. Gospel book of Parma. Fol. 11v: Matthew. Fol. 91v: Mark. Fol. 136v: Luke. Fol. 213v: John. Lectionary Vaticanus gr. 1156. Fol. 1v: John. Other examples including masks associated with hanging draperies are the gospel book Coisl. 21 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. H. O mont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale du VIe au XIVe siècle*, Paris, 1929, p. 65, pl. LXXXIII. Also the Theodore Psalter of the British Museum, Fol. 127. S. D er N e r s e s s i a n, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Âge*, II, Londres, Add. 19. 352, Paris, 1970, p. 47, fig. 205. The motif in question is an earlier creation as, moreover, indicated by Carolingian examples. Cf. the gospel book of Soissons in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. W. B r a u n f e l s, *Die Welt der Karolinger und ihre Kunst*, Munich, 1968, pl. XXIX.

54. Unpublished.

55. A case in point are the depictions of the Antipodes in the illustrated copies of Cosmas Indicopleustes.

56. These personifications are standard elements in the iconography of the scene at least until the eleventh century, while in provincial monuments they persist even later.

57. C. S t o r n a j o l o, *Miniature delle Omilie di Giacomo Monaco* (Cod. Vatic. gr. 1162) e dell'evangelario greco Urbinate (Cod. Vatic. Urbin. gr. 2), Rome, 1910, p. 5 - 18, pls. 1 - 82.

58. H. O mont, *Miniatures des Homélies sur la Vierge, du moine Jacques* (Ms.

pecially important for our study. While the dating of the copy in the Vatican to the second quarter of the twelfth century seems very probable, doubts were recently expressed regarding the date of the Paris copy⁵⁹. In the *Vaticanus graecus 1162*, the headpiece which introduces the Homily on the Presentation of the Virgin (Pl. 90d) is reminiscent of the Hellenistic tradition of inhabited scrolls. Unlike the antique examples, foliate scrolls issue from the mouths of the lion masks in these two Comnenian miniatures⁶⁰.

A well-known revival feature is the use of lion's heads holding rings in their mouths as knockers on Byzantine doors⁶¹, a feature which will not preoccupy us, for no reflections of its usage can be traced in the wall paintings of Mistra. On the other hand, it seems appropriate to include in the material discussed in this paper a group of representations which, although not envisaged usually as masks, display similar characteristics. The faces of cherubim and seraphim in Byzantine art, as shown for in-

grec 1208 de Paris), *Bulletin de la Société Française de reproductions de manuscrits à peintures* 11(1927), p. 5 - 24, pls. I - XXX.

59. For these manuscripts see I. Hutter, *Die Homilien des Mönches Jakobos und ihre Illustrationen*. Vat. gr. 1162 - Par. gr. 1208. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis (University of Vienna, 1970). J. C. Anderson, *An Examination of two Twelfth-Century Centers of Byzantine Manuscript Production*. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis (Princeton University, 1975).

60. Fol. 55. *Stornajolo*, pl. 22. The headpiece in the Paris copy is unpublished. The evidence of the foliate headpiece preceding the Birth scene. Fol. 23, of the copy in the Vatican (*Stornajolo*, pl. 8) is interesting for the origin of the feature under discussion. Here eight animal heads of the same species are combined to form a circular motif; floral ornaments issue from the mouths of all of them, thus creating a larger ornamental pattern.

The innovative features pertaining to the group of illustrated manuscripts to which the two copies of the *Kokkinovaphos* belong are illustrated by other examples as well. The mask motif, though in a more classical appearance, characterizes certain miniatures of these works. For instance, the *Seraglio Octateuch* shows in one miniature profile masks in grisaille as ornaments of a wall in the background. Fol. 3v. Th. Ousspansky, *L'Octateuque de la Bibliothèque du Sérail à Constantinople*, Album, Munich, 1907, fig. 3. The same applies to a page in the *Gregory Homilies* of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, gr. 550), Fol. 5, in which four female heads in profile decorate the corners of the frame consisting otherwise of floral elements. G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus*, Princeton, 1969, fig. 401.

61. For this motif see O. Kurz, *Lion-Masks with Rings in the West and in the East*, *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 24 (1973), 22 - 41. For some Byzantine examples see M. English Frazer, *Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise. Byzantine Bronze Doors in Italy*, DOP 27 (1973), figs. 1, 10 - 11, 14, 20, 23.

stance in one example from the Afendiko (Pl. 92a), can be considered as masks since in the first place they belong to bodiless creatures. Moreover, they are characterized by large, glaring eyes and stylized features in general which convey a frozen, otherworldly expression. A comparison of the faces of these angelic orders and the human masks discussed above bears out their close typological relation.

IV

It is easy to show that masks were very popular in Palaeologan art. As with many other innovative features of this period, masks find their real habitat in monumental painting, although they are also found in miniatures and icons. The interrelationship of the various media is shown by the fact that the repertoire of motifs encountered in all three is the same. It reproduces, with very few exceptions, the vocabulary of motifs already observed in miniature painting of the Middle Byzantine period. Regarding monumental decorations, it is possible to show that masks and similar classical minutiae follow a consistent pattern. They are found in works completed either in Constantinople or in areas which maintained close contacts with metropolitan trends. This observation also applies to the neighboring states which received lavish cultural imports from Byzantium. In all instances we are dealing with the highest secular and ecclesiastical patronage. The fact that masks and classical details of this kind are lacking in provincial works assigns to these motifs a special importance in terms of their cultural implications.

The invasion of masks in Late Byzantine painting may be detected only from the last quarter of the thirteenth century onwards and can be safely related to the reestablishment of Constantinople as the capital of the Byzantine state under the Palaeologi. One gospel book belonging to a well known group of illustrated manuscripts for which a dating close to 1300 has been argued in a recent monograph by Hugo Buchthal and Hans Belting⁶² exhibits the mask motif in a context which recalls miniatures of the Macedonian Renaissance. This is the manuscript Garrett 2 of the Princeton Library, where masks with a floral motif on either side decorate the footstools of seated evangelists (Pl. 91a, b)⁶³. The same

62. H. Buchthal and H. Belting, *Patronage in Thirteenth Century Constantinople. An Atelier of Late Byzantine Book Illumination and Calligraphy*, Washington, D. C., 1978.

63. For this manuscript see also K. Weitzmann, *Constantinopolitan Book Illumination in the Period of the Latin Conquest*, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, XXV

applies to the miniature of Mark in the gospel book Pantocratoros cod. 47 on Mount Athos of the year 1301. A profile human mask decorating the pediment of a building⁶⁴ recalls a similar usage of this motif in miniature painting of the Macedonian period (Pl. 89b, c) and anticipates contexts already discussed à propos of the frescoes at Mistra (Pl. 85c).

Decorations in Macedonian and Serbian churches of the end of the thirteenth century also include masks along with various other grisaille ornaments of the type encountered in illuminated manuscripts of the Macedonian period. They are usually depicted on architecture and furniture. A third context is the armor of warrior saints. Both the fresco decorations of St. Clement in Ohrid (1295) and of the Protaton on Mount Athos reveal a strong taste for details which have been commented upon in reference to the wall paintings of Mistra. At St. Clement, masks are used especially as architectural ornaments in grisaille. For instance, a youthful profile head within a medallion, surrounded by floral elements, decorates a side wall of a building included in the Dormition scene⁶⁵. The frescoes of the Protaton reveal a lavish use of masks employed either on the architectural backgrounds, for instance in the Washing of the Feet, or on the armor of military saints such as Theodore Tiro, Demetrios and Merkurios⁶⁶. The masks cited above are usually characterized by a vegetal motif extending on either side, in accordance with the antique and Middle Byzantine traditions. In the frescoes of St. Achilleios at Arilje (ca. 1296), on the other hand, the floral motif issues directly from the mouth of a lion mask which decorates the breast-plate of the archangel Michael depicted in the narthex (Pl. 91c, d)⁶⁷.

Monumental painting, dated or datable to the end of the thirteenth

(1944), 201-214, figs. 4 - 5. Reprinted in Weitzmann, Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination, op. cit. 320 - 322. Of the four extant evangelist portraits only those of Matthew, Fol. 44v. (our Pl. 91a) and John, Fol. 267v. (Buchthal and Belting, op. cit. pl. 78a) show masks on the footstools.

64. Cf. Weitzmann, Constantinopolitan Book Illumination in the Period of the Latin Conquest, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, op. cit., fig. 13. Reprinted in Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination, fig. 319. Buchthal and Belting, Patronage in Thirteenth Century Constantinople, op. cit. pl. 80, c.

65. See V. Djurić, Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien, Munich, 1976, pl. XV. For this and further grisaille motifs in the church see P. Miljković - Pepek, L'œuvre des peintres Michel et Eutych, Skopje, 1967, fig. 80.

66. G. Milliet, Monuments de l'Athos, I, Les Peintures, Paris, 1927, pls. 48. 3 and 49. 1.

67. G. Milliet and A. Frolow, La peinture du Moyen Âge en Yougoslavie, II, Paris, 1957, pl. 87.2.

century, a period during which masks and other details of this kind are introduced in decorations in neighboring areas, is very poorly represented by extant monuments in Constantinople. This lacuna may be partly compensated for by the evidence of miniatures, such as those of the group of manuscripts mentioned above, for which a metropolitan origin can hardly be disputed. The mosaics and frescoes of Kariye Djami, although slightly later in date, provide secure evidence for the metropolitan origin of the feature in question. In the mosaics of this monument, the mask motif appears in a traditional guise, namely as a water spout in the scene of Anne's Prayer in the Garden⁶⁸. As noted above, this use is also encountered in Middle Byzantine wall paintings, but even more in non monumental expressions of art. In the Perecclesion, however, three characteristic examples of the use of the mask already discussed in relation to the frescoes of Mistra can be pointed out. In the fresco of the Descent into Hell a lion mask is depicted on the front of the sarcophagus of Adam (Pl. 92b)⁶⁹. Unlike the depiction of the mask motif in the tenth century miniature of the same scene in the lectionary of Leningrad (Pl. 90b), the one in the fourteenth century fresco is characterized by a vegetal element issuing directly from its mouth. Moreover, the shield of St. Procopios on the south wall of the nave of the Parecclesion exhibits a human mask in profile (Pl. 92c)⁷⁰, as is so often the case in the frescoes at the Peribleptos. The most intriguing use of the mask motif in the chapel concerns two of the ornamental bands painted on the ridges of the cupola beneath the medallion of the Virgin with the Child. One band consists of a series of lion masks each with a vegetal motif issuing from its mouth (Pl. 92d)⁷¹. The other exhibits only one lion mask with the same motif, while the rest of the band reverts to an ornamental floral design. The inclusion of some kind of fruit recalls the inhabited scrolls of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, whereas the daemonic quality of the lion masks, reminiscent of the grotesque appearance of Western gargoyles, conveys an unclassical character.

The fashion of masks and relevant ornaments, mainly in grisaille, asserts itself throughout the fourteenth century. These features are invariably associated with major monuments located in the areas of radiation of Constantinopolitan culture, both inside and outside the frontiers of the Byzantine state. Mistra fully confirms this observation. The

68. P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 2, Princeton, 1966, pl. 94.

69. Ibid. vol. 3, pls. 340 - 342.

70. Ibid. pl. 500.

71. Ibid. pls. 409 - 411, 419 - 420.

same applies to Thessaloniki, the second capital of the Byzantine state and an extremely important cultural center during this period. The most "metropolitan" of all decorations in this city, the mosaics and frescoes of the Holy Apostles, exhibit a substantial number of classical details in grisaille. For instance, in the mosaic depicting the Nativity, a lion mask with a floral motif on either side decorates the front of the marble cradle of Christ, which looks like an antique sarcophagus⁷². The ambitious fresco cycles on Mount Athos, for which a lavish patronage can almost always be substantiated, also include masks and related features. A true picture of these motifs will be given only after the cleaning and publication of the relevant monuments. One example can be observed in the fresco of the Presentation of the Virgin at Chilandari, dating to about 1321, where a lion mask with a floral element on either side decorates one of the buildings⁷³.

Fresco cycles in Serbia, especially those connected with the initiative of Kral Milutin and the highest ecclesiastical hierarchy, exemplify a similar approach. The taste for masks may have been introduced in these churches through the motif books of Thessalonikan painters, mainly Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, who dominated the artistic scene in that area during the first two decades of the fourteenth century. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of a direct access to works executed in Constantinople by some of the painters involved in the Serbian decorations. Of the rich repertoire of masks in these frescoes, only a few examples from a restricted number of monuments can be mentioned here. One of the most rewarding monuments from this point of view is the church of the Virgin Ljeviška at Prizren, datable ca. 1310. Breast-plates of saints and shields of other figures, for instance, a soldier in the Betrayal, are decorated with lion masks⁷⁴. In the frescoes of the Church of the Kral at Studenica (1314), a lion mask with a floral motif issuing from its mouth decorates the pediment of a building in the Birth of the Virgin⁷⁵. Two examples of the use of masks in the wall paintings of St. Niketas at Čučer (ca. 1307 - 1314), the work of Michael and Eutychios,

72. A. X y n g o r o u l o s, 'Η ψηφιδωτή διακόσμησις τοῦ ναοῦ τῶν Ἅγιων Ἀποστόλων Θεσσαλονίκης, Thessaloniki, 1953, pls. 11 and 13.1.

73. M. M i c h a e l i d i s, Νέα στοιχεῖα ζωγραφικοῦ διακόσμου δύο μνημείων τῆς Μακεδονίας, AAA IV (1971), fig. 2 on page 343.

74. See G. B a b i ĉ, Bogorodica Ljeviška, Beograd, 1975, pl. 11. M. T a t i ĉ - D j u r i ĉ, Jedna Groteska iz Ljeviške, op. cit. 24 - 26. The partly preserved scene is here identified with the Judgment of Pilate.

75. G. M i l l e t and A. F r o l o w, La peinture du Moyen Âge en Yougoslavie, III, Paris, 1962, pls. 60.1 and 70.5.

deserve special mention. In the first place, lion masks were used as capitals of the colonnade of the architectural background in the right-hand section of the scene of the Dormition of the Virgin, depicted on the west wall of the church⁷⁶. Beneath this composition and directly above the entrance, a foliate "headpiece" includes a lion mask with foliage issuing from its mouth. The lion's head was misunderstood, since its colors are identical with those used for the flowery petals around it⁷⁷. It may be noted that a similar headpiece with lion masks, characterized by foliage issuing from their mouths and rendered in the same misunderstood way, is found in the gospel book cod. 309 of Dionysiou on Mount Athos, of the year 1395⁷⁸. A further decoration in Serbia, that at Staro Nagoričino (1317 - 1318), also painted by Michael and Eutychios, exhibits a strong taste for masks and related ornaments⁷⁹. The wall paintings of the churches at the Patriarchate of Peć, especially those which can be dated in the mid-fourteenth century, provide many intriguing examples of the use of masks. The most strange of all is a three-faced mask found on a simulated marble plaque of the dado in the south arm of the church of the Holy Apostles (Pl. 93b)⁸⁰. This trikephalos possesses a strong "barbaric" quality and can hardly be related to a classical revival movement.

Apart from monumental painting in Serbian churches, decorations in neighboring countries such as Georgia and Russia, which also received the impact of Byzantine culture, exhibit the same taste for masks and related ornamental motifs. For instance, a portrait of St. Demetrios in the frescoes of the funerary chapel of the Bagratid ruler David Narin at the monastery of Gelati, datable towards the end of the thirteenth century, shows a shaven, moon-faced human mask on the breastplate of the saint (Pl. 93a)⁸¹. In addition, human masks in profile decorated the shields of warrior saints in the frescoes from the church of the Savior at Kovalievo near Novgorod, of the year 1380⁸².

76. Ibid. pl. 45.3.

77. Unpublished.

78. Fol. 2. S. Pelekanidis, P. C. Christou, Ch. Tsoumisis and S. N. Kadas, *The Treasures of Mount Athos, Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol. I, Athens, 1974, fig. 161.

79. Cf. Miljković-Peppek, op. cit. fig. 81.

80. V. Petković, *La peinture serbe au Moyen Âge*, I, Belgrade, 1930, pl. 78b.

81. For these frescoes see a brief note in D. Mouriki, *Reflections of Constantinopolitan Styles in Georgian Monumental Painting*, XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten 1/2, JÖB 31/2(1981), 744.

82. V. Lazarev, *Drevnerusskie mosaiki i freski*, Moscow, 1973, figs. 367 and 369.

A survey of masks in monumental decorations of the Late Byzantine period indicates the wide popularity of this motif, on the one hand, and the standardization of types and contexts into which this feature was integrated, on the other. In Constantinople, Mistra, Thessaloniki, in Serbia and other countries which received cultural influence from Byzantium, masks are homogeneous in types and their contexts are generally the same. Although masks appear in large numbers in the mosaics and frescoes of the Palaeologan period, it is difficult to argue that these media were responsible for the propagation of this and relevant motifs in other branches of Byzantine art. In the late Byzantine period, the various media are more closely related than in earlier periods. A marked difference in thus noticeable from the Macedonian period when masks and related themes can be safely assigned to the realm of miniature painting.

Although the subject matter of Byzantine icons does not lend itself for classical borrowings of the type discussed in this paper, masks occasionally appear in painted icons with scenic compositions including architectural backgrounds and furniture. For instance, a mask decorates the wall behind the table in the fourteenth century icon of the Hospitality of Abraham in the Benaki Museum⁸³. The fashion for masks is more prominent in icons and monumental decorations of the post-Byzantine period, as illustrated particularly in works of the Cretan school which are heavily indebted to Palaeologan models⁸⁴. On the other hand, an excessive use of masks and the grotesque appearance of some of them during this period doubtless indicate Western influence.

In miniature painting of the Late Byzantine period, masks are very much at home. Two works deserve special comment. Firstly, the gospel book cod. 80 of Dionysiou, of the year 1321, is the only example of its type indicating a specific symbolism of the mask motif. More particularly, the headpieces on the opening pages of the gospels of Matthew, Luke and Mark contain masks of a human face, a calf and a lion respectively, thus standing for the corresponding symbols of the evangelists, except for the headpiece of the gospel of John, where a lion mask was introduced instead of an eagle's head for ease of representa-

83. K. Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, K. Miatev, and S. Radojčić, *Icons from South Eastern Europe and Sinai*, London, 1968, p. XXXIV, pls. 78 - 79.

84. See, for instance, M. Chatzidakis, *Ikônes de Saint-Georges des Grecs et de la Collection de l'Institut Hellénique de Venise* (n. d.), pls. IV and 43.

tion⁸⁵. In all four instances, a floral motif issues directly from the mouths of the masks, a feature which gains extensive popularity during this period. This manuscript presents, therefore, a similar approach to that observed in the decoration of the pendentives of the cupola in the west gallery at the Pantanassa church. Secondly, the lectionary cod. 330 of the year 1427, in the monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos, includes many initials with grotesque masks, most of which are characterized by floral elements issuing from their mouths. Of special interest are two three-faced masks (Pl. 93c, d)⁸⁶, which recall the trikephalic mask at Peć (Pl. 93b), as well as many earlier and contemporary Western examples. The Patmos manuscript is doubtless heavily indebted to Western influence.

The fashion for masks during the Late Byzantine period could hardly have left works in sculpture unaffected, as indicated for example by the marble reliefs from Philippias in Epirus, datable to the period of the Despotate⁸⁷. In this work, several masks are carved among a continuous rinceaux pattern, one of which shows foliage issuing from its mouth.

V

A detailed account of masks in the wall paintings of Mistra, in conjunction with a brief survey of the history of this motif in Byzantine art, has shown that the decorations in the capital of the Despotate of Morea and the other ambitious projects of the period exhibit a manifest taste for this motif. The dependence, direct or indirect, of these decorations from Constantinopolitan models indicates that small details such as masks may serve as Morellian features for disclosing patronage and the tastes of those who favored them.

It is beyond any doubt that masks in the wall paintings of Mistra and in other contemporary decorations formed part of a repertoire of classical motifs adopted by a revival movement which is apparent in Late Byzantine painting of a metropolitan or quasi-metropolitan origin. This movement must have borrowed the masks in many of the pictorial examples discussed above from the rich vocabulary of the Mace-

85. Fols. 28 and 179. *The Treasures of Mount Athos. Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol. I, op. cit. figs. 143 and 146.

86. Fols. 104 and 250v. See G. J a c o p i, *Le miniature dei codici di Patmo, Clara Rhodos VI - VII, Parte III* (1932 - 1933), p. 583, figs. 142 and 143.

87. P. V o c o t o p o u l o s, 'Ανασκαφὴ Παντανάσσης Φιλιππιάδος, *AAA VI* (1973), 410 - 411, figs 8, 11 and 12.

donian Renaissance⁸⁸. The frequent use of this motif in contexts which have proven to be very often identical with those observed in the Palaeologan paintings of Mistra adds special support to this conclusion. This remark is in full agreement with the general approach of Byzantine artists towards Classical Antiquity which implied a long chain of transmissions and intermediary stages⁸⁹. The types of masks recorded in this account and their contexts indicate, on the other hand, that Late antique models were well understood by the Palaeologan artists. This approach is related to the fact that the artists of the Macedonian period adhered closely to the art of Late Antiquity.

With the revival character of the mask motif in Byzantine painting established, it is, however, legitimate to investigate whether the apparent popularity of masks in Palaeologan decorations is related to the wide diffusion of this motif in Western art throughout the medieval period. Closer contacts between the West and the East, which had started already from the period of the Crusades, became more intensified as a result of the Latin occupation⁹⁰. The great popularity of masks in Late Byzantine painting would not have been a sufficient indication that this was partly due to Western influence, if it were not for two specific features in the typology of masks in Byzantine art which possess an unclassical character. These are: 1) the feature of the foliage springing

88. There is almost a consensus of opinion as to the reliance of the Palaeologan Renaissance on tenth century models. See especially the many studies by K. Weitzmann. For special bibliography see *idem*, *Constantinopolitan Book Illumination*, p. 334, note 81, of the reprinted article in *Studies in Classical and Manuscript Book Illumination*, op. cit. Cf. also A. Grabar, *The Artistic Climate in Byzantium During the Palaeologan Period*, *The Kariye Djami*, op. cit. p. 14 - 15. Demus, *The Style of the Kariye Djami*, *ibid.* p. 157. Buchthal and Belting, *Patronage in Thirteenth-Century Constantinople*, op. cit. p. 24 - 28 and *passim*.

89. Cf. C. Mangano, *Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder*, DOP 17 (1963), 71 - 74.

90. Artistic relations between the West and the East during the period of the Crusades and the Latin occupation of various parts of the Mediterranean world have been recently the subject of systematic study. See especially: H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Oxford, 1957. K. Weitzmann, *Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai*, *Art Bulletin* XLV (1963), 179 - 203. *Idem*, *Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom*, DOP XX (1966), 49-83. O. Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, New York, 1970, *passim*. J.olda, *Crusader Manuscript Illumination at St. Jean D'Acre: 1275 - 1291*, Princeton, 1976. K. M. Setton (gen. edit.), *A History of the Crusades*, vol. IV. *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1977 (with further bibliography).

from the mouths of some masks, noticeable even in such sophisticated works as the frescoes of the Parecclesion of Kariye Djami and of the Pantanassa at Mistra, and 2) an apparent taste for masks with distorted features which convey a somewhat daemonic character, another factor that again does not speak in favor of classical antecedents for some of the examples reviewed so far. The first category of masks needs further elaboration.

The earliest example of a mask with a vegetal motif issuing from its mouth in Byzantine art is found, so far as I know, in the Homilies of John Chrysostom at the Athens National Library (cod. 211). André Grabar, who published this manuscript, dated it to the tenth century and argued for a Southern Italian origin⁹¹. The basic theme of the decoration of an ornamental headpiece (Pl. 94a), is a cantharos with a vine scroll issuing from it according to a time-honored tradition. What strikes an unusual note is the fact that the vegetal motif does not issue from the cantharos itself, but rather from the mouth of a mask placed upon the vase. The inclusion of Western iconographic elements in this work may provide an indication that the mask with foliage coming directly from its mouth is a Western element. The same may apply to a similar feature in the late twelfth century mosaics of Monreale. On the arch of the apse is depicted a lion mask supporting a vase filled with fruit and grapes. A stem issuing from the mouth of the mask forms a circular frame for the whole⁹². Only one purely Byzantine work dating before the Latin occupation, namely the Homilies of Kokkinovaphos of the first half of the twelfth century, includes the detail of a mask with foliage issuing from its mouth (Pl. 90d). The special types of foliate headpieces and historiated initials in both copies of this work may in fact reflect Western influence.

The mask motif with a vegetal element stemming from its mouth can be documented in Western medieval art at least from the Carolingian period onwards. The most notable Carolingian examples are encountered in the ivories of the throne of St. Peter in the Vatican. In several of its decorative friezes both human and lion masks with leaves

91. A. Grabar, *Miniatures gréco-orientales. II. Un manuscrit des homélie de saint Jean Chrysostome à la Bibliothèque Nationale d'Athènes (Atheniensis 211)*, Seminarium Kondakovianum V (1932), 259-298, pls. XVIII - XXIV. Reprinted in A. Grabar, *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1968, p. 802 - 839, pls. 189 - 194. Idem, *Les manuscrits grecs enluminés de provenance italienne (IX - XI siècles)*, Paris, 1972, p. 25 - 27, figs. 46 - 51, 332.

92. E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of Monreale*, Palermo, 1960, fig. 56.

around their faces are used⁹³. In addition, foliage issues from the mouths of some of the masks (Pl. 94b). As already observed, masks with foliage issuing from their mouths are found in at least one other Carolingian ivory, namely a wing of a diptych in the Musée de Cluny⁹⁴, the frame of which is filled with an inhabited scroll containing this type of mask. While masks in the two Carolingian examples illustrate classicizing themes attributed to a direct knowledge of classical works, probably marble friezes⁹⁵, they also exhibit a feature which only vaguely approximates related examples of the Roman period. In the Carolingian works the foliage springs from the mouths of the masks in a very dynamic way, while in the Roman leaf masks the association of the human face with the vegetal elements assumes a static character, as shown, for instance, in the depiction of Okeanus in the floor mosaic at the Museo Nazionale in Rome (Pl. 88a), where the seaweed merely frames the face. Only in one Roman work, namely a funerary monument from Neumagen near Trier, do leaves seem to grow from inside the mouth of the mask⁹⁶, but even in this case, the association of the human face and the vegetal motif is entirely devoid of movement. The dynamic relationship between the mask and the vegetal motif issuing from its mouth, which now acquires special prominence in the Carolingian works and in numberless other examples of Western art, possesses an unclassical flavor. This feature should in all probability be attributed to the aggressive, anti-naturalistic ingredients of the "Celto-Germanic" heritage. Animals and hybrids with foliage springing from their mouths are extremely popular in Western art, as shown, for instance, by the Carolingian Vivian Bible in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Lat. 1)⁹⁷. Masks with a vegetal element springing from their mouths are also noticeable in some outstanding examples of Ottonian miniature painting.

The dedication pages of Egbert's Psalter at the Museo Archeologico

93. K. Weitzmann, *La Cattedra lignea di S. Pietro in Vaticano. The Iconography of the Carolingian Ivories of the Throne. Memorie. Vol. X. Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia. Serie III, 240 - 241, pls. XIV. 2, XIX and XXXIII.2.*

94. A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der Karolingischen und Sächsischen Kaiser VIII.-XI. Jahrhundert*, vol. I, Berlin, 1914 (reprinted 1969), pl. LXIX, 156. Cf. Weitzmann, *Cattedra*, 241.

95. Ibid.

96. W. von Massow, *Die Grabmäler von Neumagen*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1932, fig. 39, No. 8 d 1.

97. See initials on Fols. 324 and 387. W. Köhler, *Die Karolingischen Miniaturen*, vol. I (Plates), Berlin, 1930, pls. 87d and 87e.

Nazionale of Cividale⁹⁸ and the Codex Egberti in the Stadtbibliothek of Trier⁹⁹, both of ca. 980, are framed by inhabited scrolls. One of the two dedication pages in the manuscript at Cividale depicting Egbert (Pl. 94e) shows that lion and human masks serve as coordinating elements of the design, as in the Hellenistic and Roman examples of the inhabited scrolls. However, in the Ottonian miniatures the scrolls issue directly from the mouths of the masks. A further Ottonian manuscript, the Codex aureus in the Landesbibliothek of Gotha (cod. I, 19, gospel book of Otto III) shows the initial B with an animal mask from the mouth of which issues the floral motif forming the letter B¹⁰⁰. Leaf masks with foliage coming from their mouths so as to form the shape of a capital are used in the gospel book of Henry III at the Escorial¹⁰¹. The feature of foliage issuing from the mouths of masks also appears in insular manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries¹⁰². Nevertheless, the extraordinary popularity of the feature in question can be much more amply documented in architectural decoration of the Romanesque and Gothic periods¹⁰³.

A newly developed interest in the culture of the Celts has made students of Western medieval art more prompt to attribute not only leaf masks with or without foliage issuing from their mouths¹⁰⁴, but also masks in general¹⁰⁵, to the creative genius of the La Tène period. However, it

98. Fols. 16v. and 17. H. V. Sauerland and A. Haseloff, *Der Psalter Erzbischof Egberts von Trier, Codex Gertrudianus*, in Cividale, Trier, 1901, pls. 1 and 2.

99. Fol. 2. H. Schiel (ed.), *Codex Egberti der Stadtbibliothek Trier*, Basel (n.d.). The frame of the miniature depicting Egbert exhibits two lion's heads from the mouths of which foliage comes out.

100. A. Goldschmidt, *German Illumination. Vol II. Ottonian Period*, Florence - New York (n.d.), pl. 49a.

101. Fols. 14, 15 and 15v. A. Boeckler, *Das Goldene Evangelienbuch Heinrichs III*, Berlin, 1933, figs. 25, 27 and 28.

102. Cf. F. Wormald, *The Winchester Psalter*, London, 1973, figs. 96 - 97. Fol. 46 reproduces the same type of the initial B as in the Gospel book of Otto III in Gotha.

103. Cf. R. Sheridan and A. Ross, *Gargoyles and Grotesques. Paganism in the Medieval Church*, Boston, 1975, 15 - 16, 31 - 43 (with illustrations). K. Basdorff, *The Green Man*, Ipswich, 1978.

104. M. Moreau, *La tradition celtique dans l'art roman*, Bordeaux, 1963, p. 136, 139. Sheridan and Ross, op. cit. 31 - 43. For Celtic masks with leaves see P. Jacobsthal, *Early Celtic Art*, Oxford, 1969 (second edition), p. 16 - 18.

105. See, for instance, P. Lambrechts, *L'exaltation de la tête dans la pensée et dans l'art des Celtes* (*Dissertationes Archaeologicae Gandenses*, vol. II), Bruges, 1954.

cannot be disputed that the presence of masks in Western art of the Middle Ages was also due to the influence of the Graeco-Roman heritage¹⁰⁶. The first alternative, however, gains further weight by the fact that leaf masks with or without the feature of foliage coming from their mouths are more at home in the North than in Italy. A characteristic example of the mask motif with a floral band issuing from its mouth in Italian Romanesque painting is the fresco in the crypt of the Anagni cathedral from the first half of the thirteenth century (Pl. 94d)¹⁰⁷.

It is important to stress the fact that masks in the medieval West are much more popular than in the East. Masks in the West reflect to a large degree a survival phenomenon as opposed to the revival character of this feature in Byzantine art. Moreover, masks, especially of a distorted appearance, doubtless reflect the taste for daemonic creatures and grotesques which is a special characteristic of medieval art in the West. In addition, the dynamic relationship of masks and vegetal motifs encountered in the examples given above can hardly be independent of the strong taste for animals devouring foliage that derives from the Celtic tradition dominating early medieval Western art, as shown for instance in many initials of Carolingian manuscripts¹⁰⁸. The fact that, with very few exceptions, masks with vegetal elements springing from their mouths are encountered in Byzantine art from the thirteenth century onwards should therefore be attributed to Western infiltrations as a consequence of the Latin occupation.

The pronouncedly distorted appearance of some masks in the wall paintings of Mistra and in other works from the Late Byzantine period possesses an unclassical flavor and may provide an argument against the revival aspect of these particular examples. Despite the fact that the cult of ugliness was also one of the aspects of the multifaceted artistic experience of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the idealistic approach to the Classical art that provided models to Byzantine artists during revival periods is confirmed by the extant pictorial material. Grotesque masks were encountered several times on the shields of Roman soldiers

106. Cf. J. Adhemar, *Influences antiques dans l'art du moyen âge français*, London, 1939 (Kraus reprint 1968), p. 160.

107. For these frescoes see O. Demus, *Romanesque Mural Painting*, London, 1970, p. 304 - 305.

108. Cf. F. Landsberger, *Der St. Galler Folchart-Psalter. Eine Initialenstudie*, St. Gallen, 1912, pls. I, IV, 1, V, 2, figs. 3a, 3b, 4, 8a, 10a etc. For the whole question see also G. L. Micheli, *L'enluminure du Haut Moyen Âge et les influences irlandaises*, Brussels, 1939.

in the scene of the Crucifixion, a detail which could be considered as an allusion to the vulgarity of those who condemned the Lord. However, the fact that ugly masks are also associated with the armor of warrior saints and even that of the archangel Michael in Late Byzantine art may be interpreted in terms of their apotropaic intention. Since the tradition for a grotesque thematology is deeply rooted in medieval art of the West, the question may arise whether Byzantine masks with distorted features are also related to Western influence. Specific examples of the mask motif in the frescoes of the church of the Holy Apostles at Peć and in the lectionary cod. 330 of Patmos may illustrate this point particularly well. As noted above, a three-faced mask in grisaille decorates a simulated marble plaque of a dado in the Serbian frescoes (Pl. 93b). Moreover, masks of a slightly different type are used in figural initials in the Patmos manuscript of 1427 (Pls. 93c, d). Trikephalic masks form a special category in the repertoire of masks in Western art. Attributed also to Celtic influence¹⁰⁹, this type of mask possesses a “barbaric” quality which conforms to the Western cult of ugliness in mask representation.

Without underestimating the classical revival aspect of masks in Late Byzantine painting, as also implied by the type of patronage involved in the decorations including such motifs, and by the location of the relevant monuments in important cultural centers, a final question may be raised in the context of this study: is it legitimate to argue that the enormous popularity of masks in Western architectural decoration of the Romanesque and Gothic periods was instrumental in the appearance of some pictorial examples of masks in Late Byzantine art? Although sporadic Western infiltrations are detectable prior to the period of the Latin conquest, it is clear that, in the occupied areas, the mask motif asserted itself especially in sculptural decoration of buildings undertaken through Western initiative¹¹⁰.

In addition to direct imports in Greek lands from the West, one may argue that the familiarity of the Byzantines with Western motifs also occurred in areas outside the frontiers of the Byzantine state where the meeting of Western and Eastern cultures was convenient for historic reasons. South Italy may have played such a role¹¹¹. Serbia also, espe-

109. L a m b r e c h t s, op. cit. 83 - 90. The central mask with horns in the strange depiction at Peć recalls Cernunnos, a Celtic deity. Cf. S h e r i d a n and R o s s, op. cit. 44 - 49. Cf. also V. K i r f e l, Die dreiköpfige Gottheit, Bonn, 1948, p. 132-146.

110. A. B o n, La Morée franque, Paris, 1969, p. 565, 594, pls. 28b and 156a.

111. See H. B e l t i n g, Byzantine Art among Greeks and Latins in Southern Italy, DOP 28 (1974), 3 - 29.

cially the area of Raška, which was open to Western influence, as shown in particular in the fields of architecture and sculptural decoration, may have provided favorable ground for the familiarity of Greek artists working in Serbia with Western models. Suffice it to mention only one example, the sculptural decoration of the church of the Virgin at Studenica, which preserves its Byzantine frescoes of the year 1208/1209. The decorative reliefs framing the openings of the church include mask motifs, such as that of a cat on the south portal (Pl. 94c)¹¹². The vegetal stem issuing from its mouth and the type of the mask itself have an unmistakable Western quality. Moreover, the Crusader kingdoms could have also played a role in the process of transmission of Western elements into Byzantine art¹¹³.

VI

One last question which may be asked in reference to depictions of masks in Byzantine art is whether symbolic connotations can be detected at least in some instances. It would be interesting to know if the borrowing of this classical motif satisfied only the antiquarian tastes of the patrons of the projects which included such features or if it also corresponded to an awareness of the symbolic references of the motif.

The assumption that masks and related features of a neoclassical kind are indicative of ambitious patronage gains full confirmation from the identity of the patrons whenever it can be securely established, as in the case of Kariye Djami, the churches of Mistra, certain monuments in Thessaloniki and in the Serbian kingdom. It should not be supposed that small details such as masks belonged to the exclusive repertoire of a group of artists who introduced them into their art as a subdued statement of their tastes. Rather, the inclusion of these antiquarian themes only in the model books used by certain artists again points to the tastes of a specific category of patrons. Such features could only have been borrowed from earlier illustrated manuscripts and further artistic works disclosing humanist tastes, which again were in the possession of a sophisticated elite centered at Constantinople. Therefore, the question is not whether an ordinary Byzantine ever understood, for instance, the Dionysiac significance of some of the masks in the antique models or the later medieval works which had incorporated them. An understand-

112. See V. Korač et al., *Studenica*, Beograd, 1968, p. 29 - 56. Our figure is illustrated on page 49.

113. See *supra*, note 90.

ing of Byzantine mentality would discourage an affirmative answer to this question. The problem is whether the humanist circles in Constantinople and in the other important cultural centers in the Byzantine state and outside its frontiers which promoted this repertoire of classical motifs paid any attention to the symbolic connotations of some at least of the features borrowed from Antiquity.

That the Byzantines understood the ancient symbolism of the mask motif to some degree may be surmised from a consideration of two features, namely the iconographic faithfulness to the antique models and the choice of contexts into which masks were integrated during the medieval period. The survey of the Byzantine pictorial material has shown that a certain type of mask, for instance the Gorgoneion, was sometimes meticulously reproduced, as in two miniatures of the Paris Psalter, while in other cases, it lost its basic features in the process of copying. The latter was often noted in depictions of warrior saints or the archangel Michael. When masks in this context do not depict lion's heads, they show a youthful human face, which only vaguely approximates the iconographic type of the Medusa. On the other hand, the predilection for masks in profile in Byzantine painting needs special comment. In antique art, masks in profile were common (Cf. our Pl. 89a) and could have provided models for Byzantine artists. However, only the frontal and three-quarter views of a face are acceptable in the world of Christian art, a strict profile being employed only for Judas, Satan or Hades and for persons of the lower social strata. It may be asked then whether to a Byzantine a profile view was not synonymous with something pertaining to paganism.

Regarding the contexts in Byzantine painting into which masks were integrated, it may be observed that they reflect *grosso modo* similar uses of the motif in the architectural decoration and in monumental painting of Antiquity. Moreover, it is interesting to note that, regarding some contexts, such as the armor of military figures, for which the extant works of the Macedonian Renaissance provide no evidence, so far as I know, the Palaeologan examples amply document the antique origin of this use¹¹⁴. The frequent appearance of masks on architectural backgrounds in Byzantine painting probably alludes to the apotropaic si-

114. It may be noted, however, that the depiction of masks on the horizontal band of a saint's cuirass, doubtless a misunderstanding of the cingulum of the Hellenistic and Roman cuirass, as shown in some examples discussed so far, is not encountered in ancient art. The gorgoneion is invariably placed on the breastplate of the cuirass in antique examples.

gnificance which masks placed on city walls and other buildings often had in Antiquity. A further challenging case is that of the depiction of masks on sarcophagi, which is documented in painting of the Macedonian and the Palaeologan periods and can hardly be unrelated to the appearance of masks in sarcophagi of Late Antiquity. According to Cyril Mango, the approach to antique sculpture by the Byzantines involved two aspects: a “superstitious re-interpretation” and a “Christian re-interpretation”¹¹⁵. This observation may apply to antique borrowings in general. Thus, a group of Byzantine amulets studied by André Grabar provides an interesting insight into the complex problem under discussion¹¹⁶. Many of these amulets bear depictions of a corrupted version of the Medusa head. The apotropaic intention of this motif seems therefore beyond doubt, in view of the function of the objects involved. However, when one of these items provides the name of the Medusa-like motif, it is Dan, one of the twelve sons of Jacob¹¹⁷, who was identified with the devil in early ecclesiastical literature. The borrowing of the features of a Gorgoneion for Dan may find justification in Genesis 49,17, where he is compared to a serpent¹¹⁸. A similar process based on associations of ideas must have been instrumental for many other re-interpretations of classical themes in Byzantine art. Superstitions regarding magic, mainly apotropaic, qualities of masks probably did not require a deep versing in ancient mythology¹¹⁹. The frequent use of masks in popular art adds further support to this conclusion.

In view of the lack of textual evidence, it is difficult to argue for a specific symbolism of masks in Byzantine art apart from a vaguely apotropaic intention which appears in certain contexts, as, for instance, the armor of Byzantine warrior saints. If, however, a decorative purpose

115. Mango, *Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder*, op. cit. 63.

116. A. Grabar, *Amulettes byzantines du Moyen Âge*, *Mélanges d'Histoire des Religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech*, Paris, 1974, p. 531 - 541, pls. III, 1, IV, 1, V, 2, VI, 2, VII, 2, VIII (Reprinted in *L'Art paléochrétien et l'Art byzantin. Recueil d'études 1967 - 1977*, Variorum Reprint, London, 1979), No. XIIIa.

117. See idem, *L'image de Dan, fils de Jacob sur une amulette médiévale*, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 4 (1975), 113-116 (Reprinted in the above volume of the Variorum No. XIIIb).

118. Ibid. 114.

119. For the role of masks in ancient life see, for instance, W. Wrede, *Der Maskengott*, *Athenische Mitteilungen* LIII (1928), 66 - 95. Pauly Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* XIV, 1930, col. 2070 - 2071, 2105 - 2119. H. Weidhaas Weimar, *Maske und Fassade*, *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* VI (Berlin, 1960), 12. Cf. Tatjč-Djuric, *Jedna Groteska iz Ljeviške*, op. cit. p. 24.

for such minutiae seems quite likely in many instances, there is at least one example of the reviewed pictorial contexts of the mask motif at Mistra where a more specific symbolic connotation may be conjectured. This concerns the decoration of the pendentives of the cupola of the west gallery of the Pantanassa church, where masks with vegetal motifs issuing from their mouths assume a prominence, especially in close proximity to saints who may be identified with the four evangelists, that seems to indicate more than a purely decorative function.

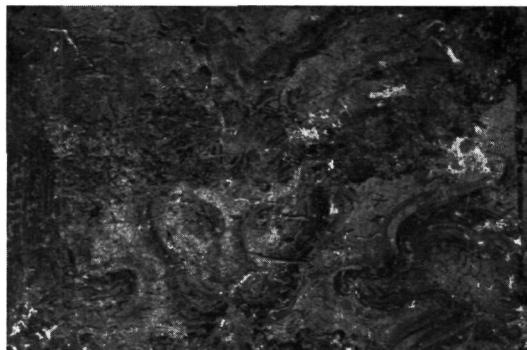
A study of perennial and universal motifs such as masks is extremely complex and can hardly cover all pertinent aspects of their potential meaning¹²⁰. This preliminary approach to the study of masks in Late Byzantine painting, mainly on the evidence of the frescoes at Mistra, has brought out some of the problems arising from the inclusion of this specific motif in Byzantine art. It has brought forward in particular the cultural implications of small details in the pictorial arts, which may shed light on the mentality of those who promoted the popularity of such themes in the artistic projects they sponsored.

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120. For a discussion of the later readings of a time-honored motif see also C. Daphnis, *Symbolic or Decorative? The Inhabited Scroll as a Means of Studying Some Early Byzantine Mentalities*, *Byzantion* 48 (1978), 10 - 34.

PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

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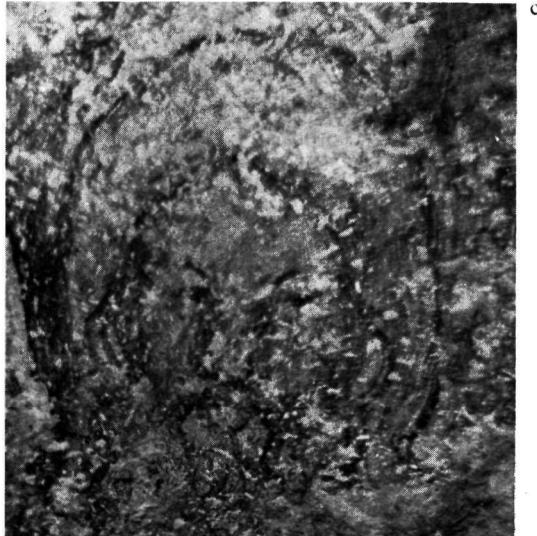
a. Metropolis of Mistra. Painted dado with a lion mask. b. Afendiko of Mistra. Communion of the Apostles. Detail. Baldacchino with a lion mask. c. Afendiko of Mistra. Ornamental band with lion masks. d. Afendiko of Mistra. Chapel of Kyprianos. Gregory of Nazianzus as a «source of wisdom». Detail. Fountain with a lion's head. e. Peribleptos of Mistra. Shield of a military saint with a human mask. f. Peribleptos of Mistra. Helmet of a military saint with a human mask.



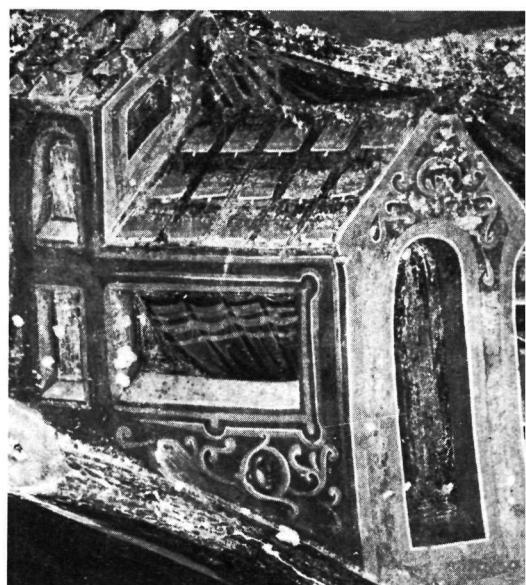
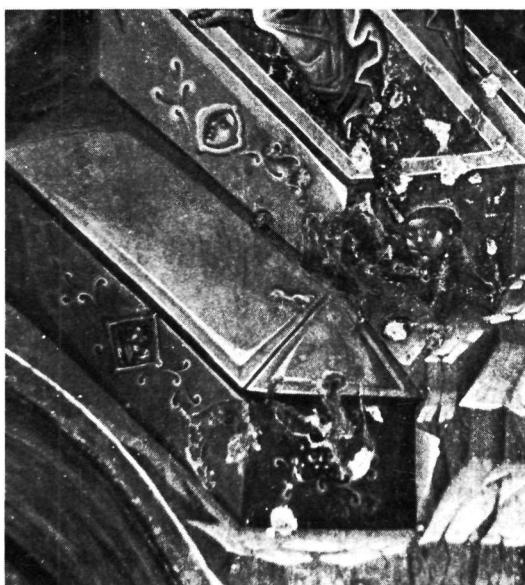
a



a. Peribleptos of Mistra. Painted dado with human masks. b. Peribleptos of Mistra. Detail of Pl. 84a. c. Peribleptos of Mistra. Detail of Pl. 84a.



c



a. Pantanassa of Mistra. Anastasis. b. Pantanassa of Mistra. Detail of Pl. 85a. c. Pantanassa of Mistra. Architectural background in the depiction of St. Luke.



b



d

a. Pantanassa of Mistra. St. John the Evangelist (?) with masks. b. Pantanassa of Mistra. St. Mark(?) with masks. c. Pantanassa of Mistra. St. Luke(?) with masks. d. Pantanassa of Mistra. St. Matthew(?) with masks.



a

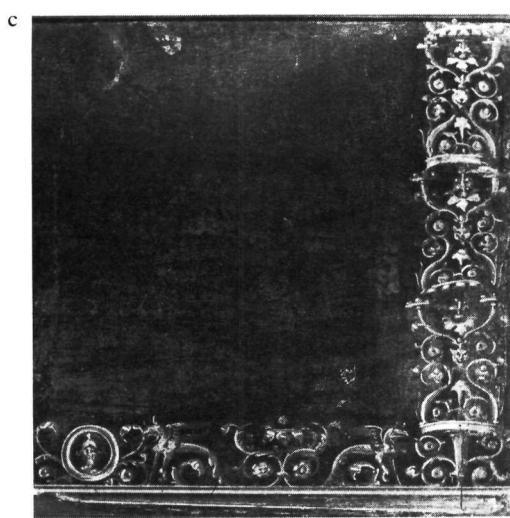


b

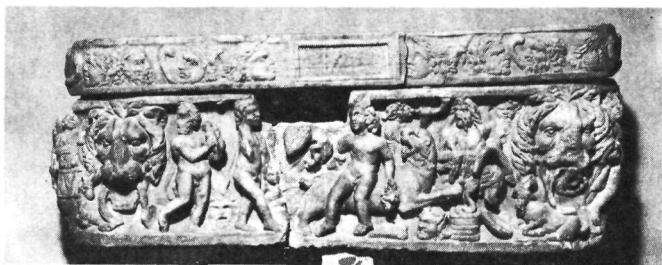


c

a. Pantanassa of Mistra. Human mask. Detail of Pl. 86b. b. Epidauros. Museum. Fragment of the sima of the Tholos. c. Argos. Museum. Inhabited scroll. Detail of a Roman floor mosaic.



a. Rome. Museo Nazionale. Leaf mask. Detail of a Roman floor mosaic. b. Princeton University. The Art Museum. «Drinking Contest». Roman mosaic from Antioch. c. Naples. Museo Nazionale. Inhabited scroll. Detail of a fresco from Herculaneum. d. Olympia. Museum. Gorgoneion. Detail of a Roman cuirass.



a



b



c



d

a. Cagliari. Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Roman sarcophagus. b. The Paris Psalter (Gr. 139). Detail of Pl. 89c. c. The Paris Psalter (Gr. 139). Samuel Anointing David. d. The Paris Psalter (Gr. 139). Detail of Pl. 89.c.



a. The Paris Psalter (Gr. 139). The Prayer of Hezekiah. Detail. b. Leningrad. State Public Library. Lectionary gr. 21. Detail of the Anastasis. c. Paris. Bibliothèque nationale. Homilies of James of Kokkinovaphos (Gr. 1208). Initial with a lion mask. d. Rome. Biblioteca Vaticana. Homilies of James of Kokkinovaphos (Gr. 1162). Headpiece.



a



b



c



d

a. Princeton University Library. Gospel book (Garrett 2). St. Matthew. b. Princeton University Library. Garrett 2. Detail of Pl. 91a. c. Arilje. St. Achilleios. Archangel Michael. d. Arilje. St. Achilleios. Detail of Pl. 91c.



b



d

a. Afendiko of Mistra. Seraph. b. Kariye Djami. Parecclesion. Anastasis. Detail. c. Kariye Djami. Parecclesion. St. Procopios. d. Kariye Djami. Parecclesion. Angel and floral bands.



a



b



c



a. Gelati. Chapel of David Narin. Detail of the breastplate of St. Demetrios. b. Peć. Church of the Apostles. Painted dado with a trikephalic mask. c. Patmos. Monastery of St. John the Theologian. Library. Lectionary (Cod. 330). Initial T with masks. d. Patmos. Monastery of St. John the Theologian. Library. Lectionary (Cod. 330). Initial T with a trikephalic mask.



a



b



c



d



e

a. Athens. National Library. Homilies of St. John Chrysostom (Cod. 211). Headpiece.
 b. Rome. Vatican. St. Peter's Throne. Ivory with a peopled scroll. c. Studenica. Church of the Virgin. Relief on the south portal. d. Anagni. Cathedral. Crypt. Fresco. Detail of a floral band. e. Cividale. Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Egbert's Psalter. Dedication page with Egbert.