



**Tomasz Polański\***

(Kraków, Poland)

**SAINT MERCURIUS' BIER, THE ACHEIROPOIETOS  
OF CAMULIA AND MAURICIOS' FOUNDATION  
OF ARABISSUS.  
EARLY BYZANTINE ARCHAEOLOGY  
OF CAPPADOCIA IN COPTIC AND SYRIAC TEXTS**

**Keywords:** Early Byzantine Archaeology of Cappadocia, Caesarea Mazaca, Camoulia, Arabissos, Coptic Hagiography, Syriac Church Histories

*The Coptic Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint Mercurius the General*, a high ranking Roman officer executed during the reign of Decius or Valerianus in c. AD 250 at Caesarea Mazaca, gives us the circumstances of his martyrdom followed by a series of miracles performed by him.<sup>1</sup> The *Life* contains a number of returning motifs symptomatic of this class of popular literary works: demonic possessions, incurable illnesses, e.g. blindness, black magic practices, hostility to the Christian religion, sometimes love stories concluded with a happy end through the Saint's intervention, and stories about the Saint's icons.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Miracle of St. Mercurius brings a colourful story of a man who wanted to have a son. Kuris (or Kyrios) Hermapollo, a high ranking official, and a hero of the story promised a votive offering to St. Mercurius: 'if the God of St. Mercurius fulfils my petition I will make a bier for the martyr, the bier will be of precious ivory, and will look like the biers of the Roman emperors'.<sup>2</sup>

A large part of the story is missing. St. Mercurius appeared before the archon as a cavalry general (Μ ΠΕΣΜΟΤ Ν ΣΤΡΑΤΥΛΑΤΗΣ) and apparently

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\* Email: tomaszpolanski@yahoo.com.

<sup>1</sup> Budge 1915, the date of the Saint's martyrdom at the beginning of the text: Fol. 1a, Copt.p. 256; English Translation p. 828; Holweck 1924, 706.

<sup>2</sup> Fol. 17a, Budge 1915, 274.

all the wishes of him who prayed to St. Mercurius asking him for assistance were eventually fulfilled. At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> miracle we find a more detailed description of Hermapollon's votive offering founded at St. Mercurius' sanctuary in Caesarea Mazaca.

ΑΥΩ ΟΝ ΖΕΝΠΕΥΚΙΟΝ ΑΥΣΜΗΝΤΟΥ Μ ΠΟΒΕ·  
 ΑΥΨΕΤΨΩΤΟΥ Μ ΠΕΤΑΛΟΝ ΖΙΛΕΦΑ[Ν]ΤΙΝΟΝ· ΑΥΩ  
 ΤΑΜΙΟ Μ ΠΜΑ Ν ΜΚΑΤΚ ΑΥΩϞΤ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΡΟϞ Ν ΘΙΚΩΝ  
 Μ ΠΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC ΖΝ ΖΕΝΝΩΝΕ ΝΑΥΑΝ ΕΝΙΒΕ· ΜΝ ΨΟΜΤ  
 ΝCϞOC ΝΝΟΥΒ· ΜΝ ΨΟΜΤ ΝCΦΡΑΓΙC Ν ΖΑΤ· ΛΟΙΤΟΝ  
 ΑΥΧΟΚϞ ΕΒΟΛ ΚΑΛΟC· ΖΝ ΟΥΝΟΧ ΝΙΤΙΚΗC<sup>ⲓⲃ</sup>

And they also made a bier of pine wood logs and carved ivory plaques, and thus made the bier and fixed to it the Martyr's icon adorned with jewels (sparkling beautifully? beautiful and sparkling?) together with three crosses of gold and three *sphrageis* (seals) of silver. They made the remaining components beautiful and perfected every detail.

Budge's rendering by-passed the difficulties in the interpretation of the 'jewels' described as **ΝΑΥΑΝ ΕΝΙΒΕ**. They are actually given a characteristic feature, probably as very beautiful or sparkling (from **ΝΑΥ** to see?), but I am not sure of the exact meaning (see Crum, **ΩΝΕ**). The Coptic text does not mention 'three crosses of gold and three crosses of silver' **ΜΝ ΨΟΜΤ ΝCϞOC ΝΝΟΥΒ· ΜΝ ΨΟΜΤ ΝCΦΡΑΓΙC Ν ΖΑΤ** as translated by Budge, but 'three crosses of gold and three *sphrageis*': perhaps medallions? Probably **ΝCΦΡΑΓΙC** stand for the equivalent of the Syriac word ܠܐܬܐ translated by Father Nau as *sceaux*, *sphrageis*, seals, the meaning which we find in the description of the church in Qartamin, where they pictured the story of Salvation, an Evangelical narrative presented as a series of small images set on a large vase (cf. Pl. I). We also know of a cross alternating with a rosette decoration on the chancel of Qirqbize, which may probably be taken as an illustration of the obscure word in both the Syriac and Coptic texts (Pl. II).<sup>3</sup> Let us collect together other words and phrases in the above-quoted text, which refer to the fine arts and craftsmanship: **ΖΕΝΠΕΥΚΙΟΝ...Μ ΠΟΒΕ** I understand as 'the bier of pine wood logs', τὰ πεύκινα, pine logs; **ΠΟΒΕ** Teil, Stück, Tafel (Westendorf); broken piece *BMis* 2755 (Crum), bier of **ΖΕΝΠΕΥΚΙ(Ν)ΟΝ ΑΥΣΜΗΝΤΟΥ ΜΠ(ΟΒΕ)** wood-inlay? **ΑΥΨΕΤΨΩΤΟΥ ΠΕΤΑΛΟΝ ΖΙΛΕΦΑ[Ν]ΤΙΝΟΝ** refers to 'carved ivory plaques'. **ΠΜΑ Ν ΜΚΑΤΚ** the bier, literally the place of sleep; **ΘΙΚΩΝ Μ ΠΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC ΖΝ ΖΕΝΝΩΝΕ** the martyr's icon studded with precious stones.

As if running counter all the discussions on images of Christ engaging the Early Church, the *acheiropoietai* showed Christians 'a true face' of Jesus, revealed

<sup>3</sup> Lassus / Tchalenko 1951, Pl. II,2.

[illegible]

And some time afterwards when one day she was in her garden and was pondering upon all those things (scil. she had heard from her teacher), she noticed in a fountain which was in the garden the image of Our Lord Jesus impressed on a linen cloth, which was in the water. And when she took it out she was surprised that

<sup>6</sup> Dobschütz 1899, 41, 17\*\*, 27\*\*; Kitzinger 1954, 97.

it was not wet. And out of esteem she hid it in her head-cover. Next she came to that man who taught her and showed it to him. And they also found in her head-dress another and exactly the same image which was in the water. One icon was sent to Caesarea some time after the Passion of our Lord, while the other was kept in the village of Camulia. And a church was built there out of veneration by Hypatia who was baptized. Sometime later another woman from the village Divudin, which has been already mentioned above, in the district of Amasia, when she learnt about it, she somehow came into possession of one of the imprints of the icon from Camulia stimulated by a religious zeal and transferred it to her own village. They label it in this region '*achiropoet*', that is 'the one not made by human hands'.<sup>7</sup>

We learn from the Syriac text that during Christ's lifetime a woman from Camulia near Caesarea found in a fountain of water in her garden an image of Jesus on a linen cloth. Later she also noticed that the image left yet another imprint on her veil, in which she had wrapped it. The story combines the two main varieties of the *acheiropoietoi*: a celestial image and its copy or imprint.<sup>8</sup> We also read that one of the icons was kept in the Church at Camulia, while the other at Caesarea. There was also a third image preserved at Divudin by Amasia.<sup>9</sup> What did it look like, we would like to know. Unfortunately, we know nothing about it. The *acheiropoietoi* were never described, so far as we know. However, Kitzinger believed that he had deciphered some important information from the concluding section of the Syriac sermon. He followed Hamilton and Brooks' reading: λαῦρατον for ܠܐܘܪܐܬܐ. They interpreted it as 'a wreathed image'. Kitzinger regarded this reading as the most acceptable. He also recalled the authority of C. Moss of the Department of Oriental Manuscripts in the British Museum, who personally consulted manuscript *Add.Ms.17202*. Moss was also inclined to accept this reading.<sup>10</sup> And consequently Kitzinger concluded that the author of the Syriac text had actually 'referred to the image of Christ as a λαῦρατον, which is a technical term for the portrait of the ruler.'<sup>11</sup> In other words the Camulia icon seemed to have been modelled on the imperial portraits.<sup>12</sup> In my opinion either Nöldeke, who read it ܠ-ܐܘܪܬܐ,<sup>13</sup> or Ahrens and Krüger, who read it as ܠ-ܐܘܪܬܐ,<sup>14</sup> were right reading ܬ as 'for/ to/ in glory of', not as one word: ܠ-ܐܘܪܬܐ.

<sup>7</sup> Latin version in Zacharias *HE*, trans. Brooks 1924, 134-135; cf. English trans. Hamilton / Brooks 1899, 320-22.

<sup>8</sup> Kitzinger 1954, 113: 'Acheiropoietoi are of two kinds: either they are images believed to have been made by hands other than those of ordinary mortals or else they are claimed to be mechanical, though miraculous, impressions of the original.'

<sup>9</sup> ܐܕܝܒܘܠܝܡ (divudin), Zacharias *HE*, ed. Brooks 1921, p. 199, l.7; Diyabhudin; Diobulium read by Sieglin, in Dobschütz 1899, 5\*\* n. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Hamilton / Brooks 1899, 321, n. 10; cf. ed. Brooks 1921, p. 200, l.1; Kitzinger 1954, 124, n. 180a.

<sup>11</sup> Kitzinger 1954, 124.

<sup>12</sup> Kitzinger 1954, 124, n. 180a.

<sup>13</sup> Followed by Dobschütz 1899, 7\*\* n. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Kitzinger 1954, 100, n. 51; Ahrens / Krüger 1899, 248, 393.

മുകളിൽ കാണിക്കുന്ന വിവരങ്ങൾ ശ്രദ്ധയോടെ പരിശോധിച്ചിട്ടു കണ്ടതായതിനാൽ താഴെ പറയുന്നവർക്ക് അനുമതി നൽകുന്നു.

ԱՌԾԱԾԻ ԸՆԴ ԺԻՎԻԻՆԻՆ (akhiropoeth dlo 'avidh byidhayo),  
 ἀχειροποίητος, quod non est ab homine factum, not made by the hand of man;  
 ἡ ἀχειροποίητος εἰκών, the likeness of Christ which he sent to Abgar also

called τὸ ἅγιον μανδήλιον (Sophocles 291a). We should write *acheiropoi-eto*i and not, as so frequently and incorrectly seen in different studies: *acheir-poietai*; the term derivates from ἡ ἀχειροποίητος εἰκὼν, consequently pl. ἀχειροποίητοι. ἀχειροποίητα (neutral plural) may also be justified in certain instances.

The Greek text preserved in the corpus of writings by Gregory of Nyssa, actually of a much later date (c. 600-750) speaks of an *acheiropoietos* icon which appeared during the reign of Diocletian, and was later rediscovered under Theodosius I (379-395) and subsequently transferred to Caesarea (Mazaca). The Greek variation of the story speaks of only one Camulia icon, while the earlier Syriac text lists three of them: in Camulia, Caesarea and Divudin near Amasia.<sup>15</sup>

Theophylact Simocattes emphasised that Christ's icon was not the work of a weaver or a painter (*Hist.* II 34-6).<sup>16</sup> Dobschütz aptly commented on the iconography of the *acheiropoietos* of Edessa. His words may also be applied to the Camulia icon: 'Das Bild selbst bleibt im Dunkel des heiligen Mysterion verborgen. Der Typus desselben lässt sich nicht mit Sicherheit nachweisen.'<sup>17</sup> Some scholars believe that Christian iconography has preserved copies of the famous 6<sup>th</sup> century *acheiropoietai*. Visser identified them in the monumental images of Christ Pantocrator in the Cathedrals of Palermo, Cefalu and Monreale (Pl. III). He was convinced that they refer directly to the 'authentic portrait' of Christ from the East.<sup>18</sup> Like some others I am also inclined to believe that the Christ of Camulia was probably copied on an ancient icon of St. John the Baptist pointing to an icon of Christ from Kiev, made according to the principles of the Justinianic classicizing style (Pl. IV),<sup>19</sup> while the icon of Christ from Sergius and Bacchus' icon also in Kiev probably reflects Abgar's mandilion image (Pl. V). It is very likely that we also face the *acheiropoietai* of Camulia and Urfa in two icons reduplicated by anonymous great masters of icon painting in the icons of St. Peter in St. Catherine's of Sinai (Pl. VI) and the impressive late Byzantine Christ from the Trietyakovska Gallery in Moscow, one of the most impressive and ingenious icon paintings I have ever seen (Pl. VII). 'The two most famous *acheiropoietai* of the pre-iconoclastic period', as Kitzinger put it,<sup>20</sup> appeared roughly at the same time in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century in their own sanctuaries in Syria, Phrygia and Cappadocia.<sup>21</sup> The ancient text of the *Doctrina Addaei*, namely the

<sup>15</sup> Dobschütz 1899, 43f.

<sup>16</sup> Dobschütz 1899, 54. The *History* of Theophylact Simocatta dates in the years of Heraclius (610-641), Dobschütz 1899, 127\*\* (Theoph. *Hist.* III 5, ed. de Boor 73: τὸ θεανδρικὸν... εἰκασμα...οὐχ ὑφάντου χειῖρας τεκτῆνάσθαι, ἢ ζωγράφου μηλιάδα ποικίλαι).

<sup>17</sup> Dobschütz 1899, 196.

<sup>18</sup> Visser 1934, 94.

<sup>19</sup> Felicetti-Liebenfels 1956, Taf. 31B, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Kitzinger 1954, 114.

<sup>21</sup> Visser 1934, 73; Kitzinger 1954, 114.

section which contains Christ's correspondence with Abgar Ukkama shows that the beginnings of the cult which played such an important role in early Byzantine Christianity should be traced back to the pre-Nicean church of Edessa/Urhai.

The veneration of the *acheiropoiotos* in the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century was related to widespread expectations of the Last Judgement which were in one way or another related to the historical disaster of the Oriental Christianity looming large on the earthly horizon. In the period of the Germanic and Arab invasions and Persian wars such anxieties were not purely irrational and baseless. To Georgios Pisides the icon of Camulia was a proof of the Incarnation (*Exp. pers.* I, 145f., ed. Bonn). The cadence of the sermon on the Camulia icon by an anonymous Syriac monk, Pseudo-Zacharias, concludes with an apocalyptic vision of the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement.

In the conclusion of his *Church History*, John of Ephesus described a second foundation and the construction of the town of Arabissus by a newly appointed Emperor Mauricios (584-602) (*HE* V, XXII-XXIII). The Emperor made every effort to construct a new local capital and raise it in a truly imperial scale. Arabissus was his native town. He drew skillful and experienced workers from all the provinces of the Empire. His special envoys drafted artisans called ܠܬܝܡܐ (laṭume) λατόμους, a Greek borrowing in Syriac. John of Ephesus explained the term as ܦܫܘܠܐ (psule), stonecutters. Mauricios also sent masons ܒܢܝܝܐ (banoye), carpenters and engineers (ܥܡܠܐܝܐ), if this is the correct reading of ἐργολαβοί, as speculates E.W. Brooks (= architectos).<sup>22</sup> Mauricios also enlisted ironsmiths and a category of craftsmen labelled ܡܚܢܝܩܐ (makhnike), μηχανικοί, constructors, engineers. The Emperor was so eager to enlarge and adorn the town with all the buildings necessary to create an imperial urban centre that he dispatched a legion to guard and assist the builders. The constructors started with the demolition of an old church ܐܕܗܬܐ (adhto) and construction of a new much larger and higher one. Mauricios donated many splendid liturgical utensils made of gold and silver to this church. The imperial donation included golden altar vessels, which the people admired: ܡܢܐ ܡܫܐܒܗܐ ܠܡܕܗܒܗܐ (mone mšavḥe lmadhbḥo). A large *ciborium* (ܡܨܒܝܐ ܕܥܒܪܝܐ), a baldaquin adorned the central aisle. It was modelled on the ciboria of the churches in the imperial capital of Constantinople, as John comments. ܫܪܝܢܐ (šerione) were also sent and installed in the church. Were they ornamental bronze plates, *lorica*? A spacious *xenodochion*, a pilgrims' hotel, which consisted of a number of buildings (ܡܢ ܕܡܢ ܕܡܢ), (bbyenone marmorme) according to John, was also included in the architectural design of the imperial town. Arabissus was located on the crossroads of pilgrimage routes between the sanctuaries of Syria and the Holy Land on one side of the Taurus Mountain range, and the sanctuaries of Cappadocia, such as Caesarea, Camulia and Sebaste on the other side. The Emperor did not forget to build an ܐܡܨܝܢ (amsin),

<sup>22</sup> Ed. Brooks 1964, CSCO 106, SS. 55, 1964, p. 207.

which was of an appropriate size for such an important town. What this was I do not know. Brooks conjectures that John of Ephesus meant an *aerarium*.<sup>23</sup> The architectural plan of New Arabissus also entailed long, and monumental porticoes (ܥܫܬܐ ܡܬܝܗܐ ܡܝܬܝܠ ܡܝܬܝܠ) (*estue methiḥe werawrbe*), spacious basilicas and a palace (ܦܠܬܝܢ) (*palatīn*), which was certainly an imperial residence. The whole town was strongly fortified.

Just two years after the foundation and still while construction was in progress, Arabissus was totally destroyed by an earthquake (585/6) (*HE* V, XXIII). All the newly raised buildings together with the older ones turned within minutes into rubble. The natural disaster was widely believed, including by John of Ephesus himself, to be an ominous sign of Divine anger. Even the Emperor felt, that God's hand was behind the catastrophe, John observed. Although Mauricios was frightened and depressed, nevertheless he decided to restore his hometown in the same shape and scale, just as he had planned to do at the beginning of his undertaking. Incidentally, the earthquake disaster, which devastated many towns in the Roman Orient, came just before John of Ephesus' death. The new construction work must have started in the last months of John's life. His detailed list of skilled craftsmen employed for the construction of Arabissus suggests there was an imperial document behind it, which John probably read himself. This is an intriguing point, because John, who enjoyed Theodora's and Justinian's grace until 565, had gradually lost Iustin II's grace (565-578). Justinian's successor eventually expelled him from Constantinople (571), where John had played an important role as a leader of the city's Monophysite Church. John died in exile in Chalcedon in 586. The Arabissus narrative must have belonged to the last pages of the *Church History* which he wrote, and very likely the very last ones. They seem to testify to his last effort to reconcile with the emperor. The chapter opens with a meaningful apostrophe to ܪܘܚܡܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܝܪܝܩ (roḥem Aloho Mauriq), 'God loving Mauricios.' However, the entire Arabissus chapter sounds ominous. In the narrow sense, its words foreshadow John's imminent death. In the broader sense, they comprise a hidden, intuitive prediction of the forthcoming doom of the entire Roman Orient, which was already looming in the darkness of the future human destinies, while John was still alive. John was born in Amida (Diyarbakir), which was first seized by the Persians (602), soon after John's death, then recovered for a short time by Heraclius (628), only to be captured by Arab invaders (640), and lost forever to the Greek Empire.

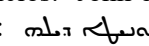
The Arabissus chapter opens with interesting information on Mauricios' throne name and a numismatic commentary on his imperial coinage. References to legends and images on coins are extremely rare in the Graeco-Roman letters.<sup>24</sup> The best-known instance comes from Cassius Dio's *History* (47.25.3).<sup>25</sup> He referred

<sup>23</sup> Brooks trans. 1964, CSCO 106, 1964, p. 207.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. a relevant discussion: Sutherland 1951; Jones 1974; Levick 1982; Crawford 1983.

<sup>25</sup> Crawford 1983, 51, the legend EIDMAR on the reverse, fig. 3.



to Cassius' and Brutus' denarii with two daggers, which symbolized the liberation of the Republic from Julius Caesar's tyranny. John of Ephesus informs us that at first Mauricios assumed the name of his predecessor Tiberius I (578-582), however, later he changed his mind and decided to return to his original birth name: Mauricios. Judging by his coins, it is clear that this is what happened, John adds. All his gold issues, that was produced by the Imperial mints, were signed with the name he received from his parents, 'Mauricios.' John of Ephesus clearly refers to the inscriptions on Mauricios' gold coins:  (bṭavo dmuniṭo dileh dbdahvo).<sup>26</sup>

Mauricios' decision to change the status of his modest hometown into an imperial residence was not a novelty in Roman imperial history. Emperor Philipp the Arab upgraded his small native village, now Shahba, to the rank of a splendid urban centre, Philippopolis (Zos. 1.18.3). The newly founded Philippopolis was richly adorned with many public buildings and private houses. Their impressive floor mosaics, some of them of the highest quality, are rightly admired.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, Shahba is now inaccessible because of the ongoing war in Syria. Galerius also commissioned skilled craftsmen to raise a large and strongly fortified residence for his mother Romula in her native country. The architectural complex of Felix Romuliana comprised three basilicas, baths, the imperial palace, a large temple, and buildings for the military garrison. Its fortification walls and towers are still well-preserved. Two burial tumuli, which contained the ashes of Romula and Galerius,<sup>28</sup> still crown the tops of the mountain range east of the palace (Pl. VIII-IX). The still impressive ruins of the palace, located in the scenic mountain landscape of Eastern Serbia, have been converted into the attractive open-air museum of Felix Romuliana (Pl. X).<sup>29</sup> Naissus/Niš is yet another fitting

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Grierson 1982, 350, Pl. 1,2, Maurice, 6-solidus medallion, 583/602, AV, DNMAV-RICTIBERPPAVG; Grierson 1982, Pl. 2, 24, Maurice, solidus, AV, DNMAVRTIBPPAV; Grierson 1982, Pl. 3, 39, Maurice, solidus, AV, DNMAVRITIBPPAVG; Grierson 1982, Maurice, Pl. 3, 41, tremissis, AV, DNMAVRICTIBPPAVG.

<sup>27</sup> Dunbabin 2006, 166-168, figs. 171-174, pl. 29.

<sup>28</sup> Galerius died in Nicomedia in May 311. His body was not buried in his earlier constructed mausoleum in Thessaloniki, but transferred to Romuliana, burnt on a funeral pyre, his ashes laid to rest at the side of his mother's grave under a second tumulus. Eutropius informs us that Galerius was born near Serdica (Eutr. 9.22.1: *Maximianus Galerius in Dacia haud longe a Serdica natus*). R. Hanslik observes that Galerius was in *seinem Heimatort Romilianum bestattet (Epith. Caes. 40.60: ortus Dacia Ripensi ibique sepultus est; quem locum Romulianum ex vocabulo Romulae matris appellarat)*, Hanslik 1969, 1110. Felix Romuliana is actually located to the north of Niš (Moesia Superior), that is far away from Serdica (Thracia). All of these sources, the anonymous author of the *Epitome*, Eutropius and Hanslik's entry, refer to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century administrative divisions. At that time Serdica belonged to the *Dioecesis Daciae*. One way or another it is risky to say that Romuliana is near Sophia.

<sup>29</sup> The local museum of Zaječar has a small but well-arranged and attractive collection of antiquities from Romuliana, including a top-quality porphyrite portrait of Diocletian.

example of a parental town which was significantly enlarged and developed by Constantine the Great. He was born in Naissus in the house of the Tribune Constantius Chlorus and his wife Helena (27 Feb. c. 280). Naissus was a large garrison town located on the strategic crossroads connecting the main Balkan trade and military routes.<sup>30</sup> The impressive reconstruction of Viminacium in the local archaeological museum can offer an idea of a similar large scale garrison town in the Roman Balkans (Pl. XI-XII).<sup>31</sup> You can easily reach the attractive open-air museum of Viminacium if you travel from Budapest via Niš to Saloniki or Sofia on the way to Turkey and the Levant.

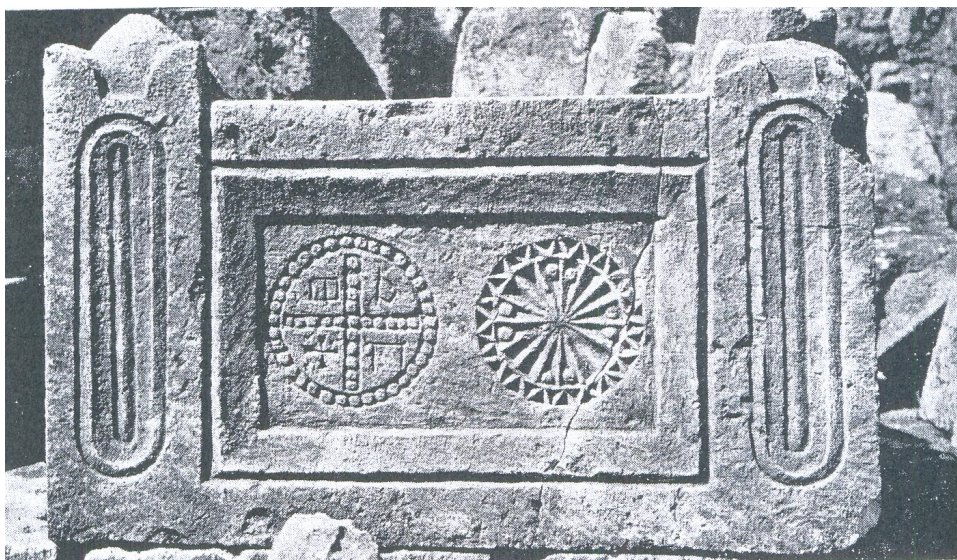
### Plates



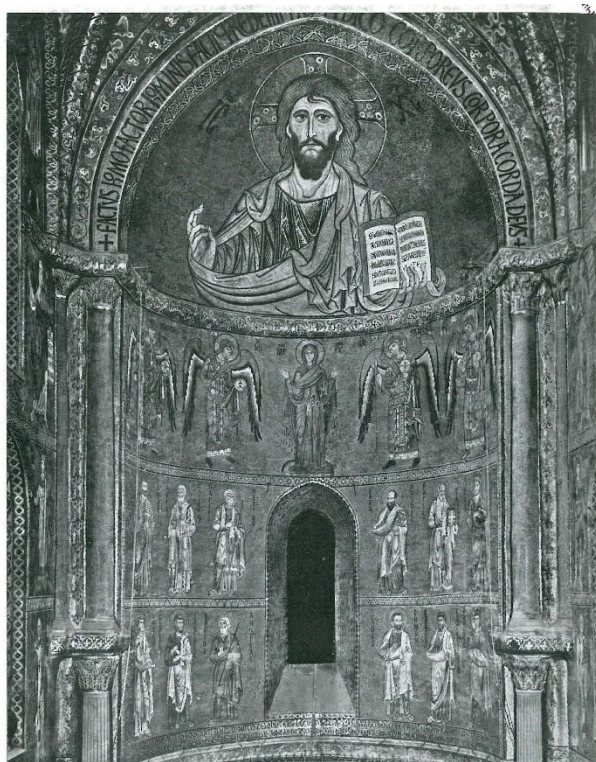
**Pl. I. The Vase of Homs, an ecclesiastical vessel adorned with the sphrageis of Christ and the Apostles, Syria, early 6<sup>th</sup> century, Grabar 1966, il. 367.**

<sup>30</sup> Cf. for further bibliography: Fluss 1935, 1589-1599; Danoff 1969, 1563-1564; Burian / Wirbelauer 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Fitz 1975; Saria 1958. Neither paper has a discussion on the recent archaeological research project which has already uncovered some crucial areas of Viminacium. The discovery of Emperor Hostilianus' grave monument sounds absolutely sensational. Hostilianus was a victim of the widespread epidemic in 251.



Pl. II. A rosette decoration on the chancel in Qirqbize, Lassus 1951, fig. 2.



Pl. III. Christ Pantocrator, Cathedral of Cefalu, Sicily, Demus 1947, fig. 48.

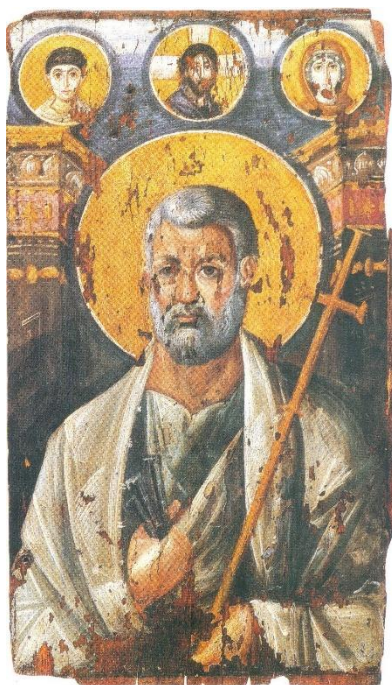




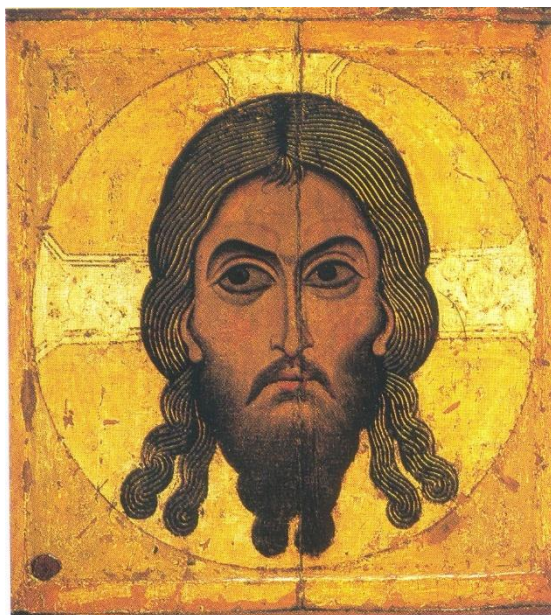
**Pl. IV. John the Baptist with the icon of Christ from Kiev, 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Justinianic classicizing style, Felicetti-Liebenfels 1956, Taf. 31B.**



**Pl. V. St. Sergius and St. Bacchus with the icon of Christ, encaustic, 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century, Kiev, Felicetti-Liebenfels 1956, Taf. 30A.**



Pl. VI. St. Peter, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, 6<sup>th</sup> century, Popova / Smirnova / Cortesi 2003.



Pl. VII. Christ from the Trietyakovska Gallery in Moscow, Late Byzantine icon.  
Private archive of T. Polański.



**Pl. VIII. Tumuli of Emperor Galerius and Queen Mother in Romuliana. Photo T. Polański.**



**Pl. IX. View from the top of the mountain range crowned by the Imperial tumuli of Galerius and Romula. Photo T. Polański.**





**Pl. X. The open-air museum of Felix Romuliana. Photo T. Polański.**



**Pl. XI. Reconstruction of Viminacium. Photo T. Polański.**



Pl. XII. The main temple of Viminacium. Photo T. Polański.

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## Abstract

At the end of the Coptic 8<sup>th</sup> Miracle of Saint Mercurius the General, a martyr executed c. AD 250 in Caesarea Mazaca, we find a description of Kuris Hermapollo's votive offering located at St. Mercurius' sanctuary of Caesarea. It was a bier of pine wood logs adorned with carved ivory plaques and the Martyr's icon fixed to it. In a Syriac historical compilation composed by an anonymous author from Amida (before 568/9) we learn about the Camoulia *acheiropoiotos* icon of Jesus. We read in the text that during Christ's lifetime a woman from Kamoulia near Caesarea found an image of Jesus on a linen cloth in a fountain of water in her garden. The story combines the two main varieties of the *acheiropoiotoi*: a celestial image and its copy or imprint. The two most famous *acheiropoiotoi* of the pre-iconoclastic period appeared roughly at the same time in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century in their own sanctuaries in Syria, Phrygia and Cappadocia. In both Coptic and Syriac texts we find some interesting words and phrases referring to the visual arts.