

Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași  
Facultatea de Istorie • Centrul de Studii Clasice și Creștine

Nr. 19-2/2024

# CLASSICA & CHRISTIANA



EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” DIN IAȘI

***Classica et Christiana***

Revista Centrului de Studii Clasice și Creștine

Fondator: Nelu ZUGRAVU

**19/2, 2024**

***Classica et Christiana***

Periodico del Centro di Studi Classici e Cristiani

Fondatore: Nelu ZUGRAVU

**19/2, 2024**

**ISSN: 1842 – 3043**

**e-ISSN: 2393 – 2961**

## **Comitetul științific / Comitato scientifico**

Moisés ANTIQUEIRA (Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná)  
Sabine ARMANI (Université Paris 13-CRESC – PRES Paris Cité Sorbonne)  
Immacolata AULISA (Università di Bari Aldo Moro)  
Andrea BALBO (Università degli Studi di Torino)  
Antonella BRUZZONE (Università degli Studi di Sassari)  
Livia BUZOIANU (Muzeul Național de Istorie și Arheologie Constanța)  
Marija BUZOV (Institute of Archaeology, Zagreb)  
Dan DANA (C.N.R.S. – ANHIMA, Paris)  
Maria Pilar GONZÁLEZ-CONDE PUENTE (Universidad de Alicante)  
Attila JAKAB (Civitas Europica Centralis, Budapest)  
Fred W. JENKINS (University of Dayton)  
Domenico LASSANDRO (Università di Bari Aldo Moro)  
Carmela LAUDANI (Università della Calabria)  
Patrizia MASCOLI (Università di Bari Aldo Moro)  
Dominic MOREAU (Université de Lille)  
Eduard NEMETH (Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca)  
Sorin NEMETI (Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca)  
Evalda PACI (Centro di Studi di Albanologia, Tirana)  
Vladimir P. PETROVIĆ (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade)  
Luigi PIACENTE (Università di Bari Aldo Moro)  
Sanja PILIPOVIĆ (Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade)  
Mihai POPESCU (C.N.R.S. – ANHIMA, Paris)  
Julijana VISOČNIK (Archdiocesan Archives of Ljubljana)  
Heather WHITE (Classics Research Centre, London)

## **Comitetul de redacție / Comitato di redazione**

Claudia TĂRNĂUCEANU (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași)  
Nelu ZUGRAVU, director al Centrului de Studii Clasice și Creștine  
al Facultății de Istorie a Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași  
(*director responsabil / direttore responsabile*)

### *Correspondența / Corrispondenza:*

Prof. univ. dr. Nelu ZUGRAVU  
Facultatea de Istorie, Centrul de Studii Clasice și Creștine  
Bd. Carol I, nr. 11, 700506 – Iași, România  
Tel. ++40 232 201634 / Fax ++40 232 201156  
e-mail: nelu@uaic.ro

Toate contribuțiile sunt supuse unei duble analize anonime (*double-blind peer review*), efectuate de specialiști români și străini.

All contributions are subject to a double anonymous analysis (*double blind peer review*), carried out by Romanian and foreign specialists.

La redazione sottopone preliminarmente tutti i contributi pervenuti a un procedimento di doppia lettura anonima (*double-blind peer review*) affidato a specialisti romeni e stranieri.

UNIVERSITATEA „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” din IAȘI  
FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE  
CENTRUL DE STUDII CLASICE ȘI CREȘTINE

## *Classica et Christiana*

**19/2**  
**2024**

**Atti del XIII Convegno romeno-italiano *Tradizione e innovazione tra antichità classica e medioevo: forme, strumenti e modelli di comunicazione letteraria e artistica***  
**(Iași, 26-28 settembre 2023)**

**a cura di**

**Nelu ZUGRAVU**

Tehnoredactor: Nelu ZUGRAVU

**ISSN: 1842 – 3043**  
**e-ISSN: 2393 – 2961**

Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași  
700511 - Iași, tel./fax ++ 40 0232 314947

## SUMAR / INDICE / CONTENTS

### SIGLE ȘI ABREVIERI – SIGLE E ABBREVIAZIONI / 361

\*\*\*

### **Atti del XIII Convegno romeno-italiano *Tradizione e innovazione tra antichità classica e medioevo: forme, strumenti e modelli di comunicazione letteraria e artistica***

**(Iași, 26-28 settembre 2023)**

Programma del Convegno / 363

Maria AMBROSETTI, Forme della narrazione drammatica in Ammiano Marcellino [Forms of dramatic narrative in Ammianus Marcellinus] / 369

Florica BOHÎLȚEA-MIHUȚ, Classical authors in Sidonius Apollinaris' letters / 387

Antonella BRUZZONE, Paradosso, metamorfosi, spettacolo. Suggestioni ovidiane nella *Gigantomachia* latina di Claudiano [Paradox, metamorphosis, spectacle. Ovidian suggestions in Claudian's Latin *Gigantomachy*] / 401

Federica CALABRESE, San Barbato di Benevento, "l'apostolo del Sannio", uccisore di vipere d'oro ed estirpatore di alberi sacri [St. Barbato of Benevento, "the Apostle of Sannio", golden snakes' killer and holy trees eradicator] / 431

Emanuel GROȘU, Da *refrigerium* al suo contrario. Alcune sfumature del concetto nelle *visiones animarum* medievali [From *refrigerium* to its opposite. Some nuances of the concept in occidental *visiones animarum*] / 447

Simona NICOLAE, Quand l'amour chrétien revêt le péplos d'Aphrodite (*Anthologia Palatina, liber V*) [When Christian love puts on the peplos of Aphrodite (*Palatine Anthology, Book V*)] / 463

Daniel NIȚĂ-DANIELESCU, The *Prefaces* of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi – role and significance in the age of “national regeneration” and “European sentiment” / 477

Dan RUSCU, The Paternus Plate and its Symbolism / 495

Nelu ZUGRAVU, Continuità lessicali, continuità e discontinuità semantiche e simboliche nelle *Historiae abbreviatae* di Aurelio Vittore [Lexical continuities, semantic and symbolic continuities and discontinuities in the *Historiae abbreviatae* of Aurelius Victor] / 511

\*\*\*

### STUDII – STUDI / 531

Maria Carolina CAMPONE, *Aeternitas imperii*. L’Arco di Costantino, la *mens imperiale* e l’*evocatio* cristiana [Aeternitas imperii. *The Arch of Constantine, the imperial mens and the Cristian evocatio*] / 531

Juan Ramón CARBÓ GARCÍA, The Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Elagabalus and the triad of Emesa: Azizos and Monimos, companions of Sol Invictus Elagabal / 565

Elisa DELLA CALCE, Defending Sulla... to condemn the Catilinarians once again? Some moral and political concepts from Cicero’s *Pro Sulla* / 581

Valentino D’URSO, *Fabula mendax*. Religiosità e concezione del mito nel *Bellum civile* di Lucano [Fabula mendax. *Myth and religiosity in Lucan’s Bellum civile*] / 609

M.<sup>a</sup> Pilar GONZÁLEZ-CONDE PUENTE, La présence épigraphique d’*Elagabalus* en Hispanie [Epigraphic evidences from the reign of *Elagabalus* in Hispania] / 639

Martijn ICKS, The crimes and vices of Elagabalus. Building blocks for a character assassination / 659

Carmela LAUDANI, La tomba di Decio Magio (Sil. 11, 377-384) [The tomb of Decius Magius (Sil. 11, 377-384)] / 677

- Marcello MARIN, Leggere i testi cristiani oggi: ragioni, metodi e finalità [Reading Christian texts today: reasons, methods and purposes] / 693
- Lucrețiu MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, Le dossier épigraphique du règne d'Héliogabale en Mésie Inférieure [The epigraphic file of Heliogabalus' reign in Moesia Inferior] / 707
- Eleonora S. MURONI, Persistenze e suggestioni: *Sol Invictus* nell'età di Costantino [Persistence and suggestions: *Sol Invictus* in the Constantinian age] / 713
- Eduard NEMETH, Dacia during the reign of emperor Elagabalus / 753
- Miguel P. SANCHO GÓMEZ, Los *primani* y la batalla de Estrasburgo (357): algunas consideraciones sobre la infantería pesada tardía y el generalato del César Juliano [The *Primani* and the battle of Strasbourg (357): some considerations on the Late Roman heavy infantry and the generalship of the Caesar Julian] / 757
- Semíramis Corsi SILVA, The emperor and the historian: an analysis of Elagabalus' image considering Cassius Dio's trajectory and point of view / 789
- Francesca SIVO, Donne fragili come brocche. Lezioni di didattica spirituale e sociale nel Medioevo [Fragile women as pitchers. Lessons of spiritual and social didactics in the Middle Ages] / 813





## SIGLE ȘI ABREVIERI / SIGLE E ABBREVIAZIONI\*

ACO	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> , ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin, 1914 sqq.
ANRW	<i>Ausstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> , II, <i>Prinzipat</i> , Berlin-New York.
BOR	<i>Biserica Ortodoxă Română</i> , București.
CCL	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i> , Turnhout, 1953 sqq.
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , Vienna-Leipzig, 1860 sqq.
EAC	A. Di Berardino (ed.), <i>Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity</i> , vols. 1-3, Downers Grove, 2014.
LCI	E. Kirschbaum (ed.), <i>Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie</i> , vols. 1-4, Rome-Freiburg-Basel-Vienna, 1994.
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , I-VIII, Zürich-München-Düsseldorf, 1981-1997.
MMS	<i>Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei</i> , Iași.
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca</i> , Paris.
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina</i> , Paris.
PLRE, I	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , I, A. D. 260-395, by A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, J. Morris, Cambridge, 1981.
RIC	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i> .
RE	<i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll), Stuttgart-München.
RGZM	<i>Römische Militärdiplome und Entlassungsurkunden in der Sammlung des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums</i> , Mainz.
RLBK	K. Wessel (ed.), <i>Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst</i> , Bd. I, Stuttgart, 1966 sqq.
SC	<i>Sources Chrésiennes</i> , Paris-Lyon.
ThLL (ThLL)	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> .

---

\* Cu excepția celor din *L'Année Philologique* și *L'Année Épigraphique* / Escluse quelle segnalate da *L'Année Philologique* e *L'Année Épigraphique*.





**UNISS**  
UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI SASSARI



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI BARI  
ALDO MORO**



**UNIVERSITATEA  
„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”  
din IAȘI**



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
di CATANIA**



**FACULTATEA de  
ISTORIE**



**CSCC**  
CENTRUL DE STUDII CLASICE ȘI CREȘTINE

**XIII CONVEGNO ROMENO-ITALIANO**  
**Tradizione e innovazione tra antichità classica e**  
**medioevo: forme, strumenti e modelli di comunicazione**  
**letteraria e artistica**

**AL XIII-LEA COLOCVIU ROMÂNŌ-ITALIAN**  
**Tradiție și inovație între antichitatea clasică și Evul Mediu:**  
**forme, instrumente și modele de comunicare**  
**literară și artistică**

**Iași, 26-28 settembre / septembrie 2023**  
**Sala H1 (Facoltà di Storia / Facultatea de Istorie)**



**ORGANIZZATORE / ORGANIZATOR:**  
**Nelu ZUGRAVU**

**GRAFICA / GRAFICĂ: Anton GIURGIU**



**UNISS**  
UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI SASSARI



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI BARI  
ALDO MORO**



**UNIVERSITATEA  
„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”  
din IAȘI**



**UNIVERSITÀ  
degli STUDI  
di CATANIA**

**FACULTATEA  
DE ISTORIE**



**CSCC**

**CENTRUL DE STUDII CLASICE ȘI CREȘTINE**

## **XIII CONVEGNO ROMENO-ITALIANO**

***Tradizione e innovazione tra antichità classica e  
medioevo: forme, strumenti e modelli di comunicazione  
letteraria e artistica***

## **AL XIII-LEA COLOCVIU ROMÂNNO-ITALIAN**

***Tradiție și inovație între antichitatea clasică și Evul Mediu:  
forme, instrumente și modele de comunicare  
literară și artistică***

**Iași, 26-28 settembre / septembrie 2023  
Sala H<sub>1</sub> (Facoltà di Storia / Facultatea de Istorie)**

**Organizzatore / Organizator:**

**Nelu ZUGRAVU**

## PROGRAMMA / PROGRAM

**Martedì / Marți, 26 settembre / septembrie 2023**

**8.00-13.00**

Arrivo degli ospiti / Sosirea invitaților

**16.30-19.00**

Moderatore / Moderator:

**Nelu ZUGRAVU**

**16.30-16.45:** Apertura del convegno; saluti istituzionali / Deschiderea colocolviului; salutul organizatorilor

**16.45-17.15:** Relazione inaugurale / Comunicare inaugurală: Mela ALBANA (Università degli Studi di Catania), ***Cultura e potere nell'età di Valentiniano I***

**17.15-17.30:** Discussione / Discuții

**17.30-17.45:** Pausa / Pauză

**17.45-18.30: *Presentazione libri***

Iulian-Gabriel HRUȘCĂ (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași) presenta: M. TULLI CICERONIS *Actionis secundae in C. Verrem: Liber V*, Luigi Piacente recognovit, adnotationes criticas et indices adiecit, Claudia Tărnăuceanu Dacoromanice uertit, notis atque commentariis instruxit, Luigi Piacente et Claudia Tărnăuceanu praefationem composuerunt = M. TULLIUS CICERO, *A doua acțiune împotriva lui Verres: Cartea a V-a*, restabilirea textului latin, apparatus criticus, indici de Luigi Piacente, traducere în limba română, note și comentarii de Claudia Tărnăuceanu, introducere de Luigi Piacente și Claudia Tărnăuceanu, Editura Universității din București, 2023

Luigi PIACENTE (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro) presenta: Federica CALABRESE, *Il sito di Glastonbory. Fonti letterarie e indagini archeologiche sul 'primo' contesto cristiano di Britannia*, Aracne, Roma, 2022

**18.30-19.00:** Discussione / Discuții

**19.30:** Cena / Cina

**Mercoledì / Miercuri, 27 settembre / septembrie 2023**

**9.00-10.15**

Moderatore / Moderator:

**Dan RUSCU**

**9.00-9.30:** Nelu ZUGRAVU (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași), ***Continuità lessicali – continuità e discontinuità semantiche e simboliche nelle Historiae abbreviate di Aurelio Vittore***

**9.30-10.00:** Ecaterina Gabriela LUNG (Universitatea din București), ***Geography and ideology in Late Antiquity***

**10.00-10.15:** Discussione / Discuții

**10.15-10.30:** Pausa caffè / Pauză de cafea

**10.30-12.30**

Moderatore / Moderator:  
**Alessandro LAGIOIA**

**10.30-11.00:** Maria AMBROSETTI (Università degli Studi di Sassari), *Forme della narrazione drammatica in Ammiano Marcellino*

**11.00-11.30:** Antonella BRUZZONE (Università degli Studi di Sassari), *Paradosso, metamorfosi, spettacolo. Suggestioni ovidiane nella Gigantomachia latina di Claudiano*

**11.30-12.00:** Florica BOHÎLȚEA-MIHUȚ (Universitatea din București), *Classical authors in Sidonius Apollinaris' library*

**12.00-12.30:** Discussione / Discuții

**12.30-15.00:** Pausa pranzo / Pauză de prânz

**15.00-17.00**

Moderatore / Moderator:  
**Antonella BRUZZONE**

**15.00-15.30:** Emanuel GROSU (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași), *Da refrigerium al suo contrario. Alcune sfumature del concetto nelle visiones animarum medievali*

**15.30-16.00:** Simona NICOLAE (Universitatea din București/ Institutul de Studii Sud-Est Europene), *L'hellénisme païen des épigrammes chrétiens (Anthologie Palatine)*

**16.00-16.30:** Alessandro LAGIOIA (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro), *“O misera domus Herculea”: un contributo inedito alla fortuna del mito di Ercole nel primo umanesimo*

**16.30-17.00:** Discussione / Discuții

**17.00-17.15:** Pausa / Pauză

**17.15-18.30**

Moderatore / Moderator:  
**Luigi PIACENTE**

**17.15-17.45:** Federica CALABRESE (Ministero della Cultura, Italia), *San Barbato di Benevento. Passaggio dal paganesimo al cristianesimo in terra campana*

**17.45-18.15:** Dan RUSCU (Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca), *La patena del vescovo Paternus di Tomi e il suo simbolismo*

**18.15-18.30:** Discussione / Discuții

**19.00:** Cena / Cina

**Giovedì / Joi, 28 settembre / septembrie 2023**

**8.30-10.30**

Moderatore / Moderator:  
**Simona NICOLAE**

**8.30-9.00:** Claudia TĂRNĂUCEANU, Ana-Maria GÎNSAC (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași), *Innovation et nouveauté dans la traduction biblique du*

**latin au roumain. Les Psaumes de la Bible de Blaj (1760-1761) versus des versions antérieures** [Travail réalisé dans le cadre du projet de recherche roPsalt – CNCS-UEFISCDI, code PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-2939]

**9.00-9.30:** Daniel NIȚĂ-DANIELESCU (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași), ***Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi’s Forewords – their role and importance in the age of “national renewal” and “European sentiment”***

**9.30-10.00:** Ioan-Augustin GURIȚĂ (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași), ***The source(s) of one Romanian 18<sup>th</sup> century version of The history of the fall of Constantinople***

**10.00-10.30:** Discussiune / Discuții

**10.30-11.00:** Nelu ZUGRAVU, ***Conclusioni***





**UNISS**  
UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI SASSARI



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI BARI  
ALDO MORO**



**UNIVERSITATEA  
„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”  
din IAȘI**



**UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
di CATANIA**



**FACULTATEA de  
ISTORIE**



**C.S.C.C.**

CENTRUL DE STUDII CLASICE ȘI CREȘTINE

**XIII CONVEGNO ROMENO-ITALIANO**  
**Tradizione e innovazione tra antichità classica e**  
**medioevo: forme, strumenti e modelli di comunicazione**  
**letteraria e artistica**

**AL XIII-LEA COLOCVIU ROMÂNNO-ITALIAN**  
**Tradiție și inovație între antichitatea clasică și Evul Mediu:**  
**forme, instrumente și modele de comunicare**  
**literară și artistică**

**Iași, 26-28 settembre / septembrie 2023**  
**Sala H1 (Facoltà di Storia / Facultatea de Istorie)**

**ORGANIZZATORE / ORGANIZATOR:**  
**Nelu ZUGRAVU**

**GRAFICA / GRAFICĂ: Anton GIURGIU**

## THE PATERNUS PLATE AND ITS SYMBOLISM\*

Dan RUSCU\*\*  
("Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj)

**Keywords:** *silver paten, Eucharist, Christian symbols, Chrismon, early Byzantine silverware.*

**Abstract: *The Paternus Plate and its Symbolism.*** *The eucharistic disk attributed to bishop Paternus of Tomis is a well-known artifact of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Since its discovery in 1912 it was approached from several perspectives, going from the evolution of the late antique and early Byzantine art to the study of the foreign policy of the Eastern Roman Empire. The present study takes into discussion the symbolic significance of its decoration and reads it in the larger context of the artistic evolution of Byzantium before iconoclasm. Regarded in the context of the silver patens of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the central monogram of Christ on the Paternus plate reveals itself as representing more than just an ornament. For the believer it had a clear symbolic significance: it represented Christ himself offering him the Communion. The central motive was also connected to the border decoration, containing eucharistic symbols familiar to the contemporary viewer from several religious texts and discourses. Regarding such a eucharistic artifact with eusebeia, the 6<sup>th</sup> century believer was introduced into a salvific atmosphere, allowing him a glimpse into eternity.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *patenă, euharistie, simboluri creștine, crismon, argintărie bizantină.*

**Rezumat: *Patena episcopului Paternus și simbolistica ei.*** *Discul atribuit episcopului Paternus din Tomis este un artefact bine cunoscut al artei bizantine a sec. VI. De la descoperirea sa în 1912 a fost abordat din diferite perspective, mergînd de la evoluția artei în antichitatea târzie și în epoca bizantină timpurie, până la studiul politicii externe a Imperiului roman de Răsărit. Studiul de față își propune discutarea semnificației simbolice a decorației acestei piese, citind-o în contextul mai larg al evoluției artei bizantine înainte de iconoclasm. Privită în*

---

\* I would like to express my gratitude to the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, and especially to Ms. Erika A. Popova, for the photograph of Paternus' plate and for the permission for its publication. Also, I would like to kindly thank my friend and colleague Dr. Silvia Mustață from the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj for her helpful advice.

\*\* dan.ruscu@ubbcluj.ro

*ansamblul patenelor de argint din sec. VI, monograma din partea centrală a discului lui Paternus se dezvăluie a fi mai mult decât un simplu ornament. Pentru credincioși, ea avea o semnificație simbolică destul de limpede: îl reprezenta pe însuși Cristos, oferindu-le împărtășania. Motivul central este de asemenea legat de decorația bordurii vasului, compusă din simboluri cu semnificație euharistică familiare privitorului contemporan din numeroase texte și discursuri religioase. Privind un asemenea artefact cu eusebeia, credinciosul din sec. VI putea fi introdus într-o atmosferă salvifică oferindu-i o privire spre eternitate.*

The paten of Paternus is an artifact well known in the archaeological world. It was discovered in 1912 at Malaia Pereșčepina, in Ukraine, in a treasure including pieces from the era of Justinian and from the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Since then it became quite familiar and was included in discussions going from the evolution of early Byzantine art<sup>2</sup> to the phenomenon of using silver plate in Late Antiquity,<sup>3</sup> to the study of the foreign policy of the Eastern Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup>

The present approach intends to discuss the symbolic significance of its decoration and to integrate it in the larger context of the artistic evolution of Byzantium before iconoclasm.

At a first glance, the most conspicuous part of the ornamentation is the incised inscription on the inner edge of the border: EX ANTIQVIS RENOVATVM EST PER PATERNVN REVERENTISS(imum) EPISC(opum) NOSTRVN. AMEN (**ill. 1**). Instantly, the text secured the attribution of the artifact to the bishop Paternus of Tomis, active at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> The dating is confirmed by the control marks of the Imperial offices on the backside, bearing the name of the

<sup>1</sup> L. Matzulewitsch, *Byzantinische Antike. Studien auf Grund der Silbergefäße de Ermitage*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1929, 102-107; A. Banck, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of the USSR*, Leningrad-Moscow, 1966, 342; J. Schrader, *Plate of Paternus*, in K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, New York, 1979, 610-611; J. Werner, *Der Grabfund von Malaja Pereščepina und Kuwrat, Kagan der Bulgaren (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Neue Folge, 91)*, München, 1984, 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> L. Matzulewitsch, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> R. E. Leader-Newby, *Silver and Society in Late Antiquity. Functions of Silver Plate in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, Aldershot, 2004, 90-92.

<sup>4</sup> Al. Madgearu, *The Plate of Paternus from the Malaia Pereščepina Treasure: Booty or Gift?*, *Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines*, 6, 2011, 65-71.

<sup>5</sup> E. Popescu, *Die kirchliche Organisation der Provinz Scythia Minor vom vierten bis ins sechste Jahrhundert*, *JÖByz*, 38, 1988, 84-85.

emperor Anastasius, which were no doubt impressed at the date of the production, or more precisely of the final restoration (**ill. 2**).<sup>6</sup> The Latin inscription was clearly engraved by an artisan more used to writing in Greek.<sup>7</sup> Executed no doubt at the indication of the patron, it reflects the cultural milieu of Scythia Minor in Late Antiquity: The local Church, although canonically dependant of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate and belonging therefore to the Greek-speaking Christianity, actually also used Latin as communication language.<sup>8</sup>

As the inscription states, the artifact was produced from pre-existent elements. The border is decorated with a vine rinceau in which birds such as pigeons and peacocks, and animals such as lambs and deer are intertwined. This frieze is interrupted by round medallions marked with a cross, alternating with oval medallions of semiprecious stones.<sup>9</sup> The last are superimposing the ornament, but the most convincing opinion states that they belong nonetheless to the original form.<sup>10</sup>

The rich border decoration of the paten, with its frieze of vine, birds and animals, distinguishes it from other contemporary pieces of the same category, which are for the most part without ornaments.<sup>11</sup> Here we can guess the influence of older models, following decorative fashions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>12</sup> The various elements could have

---

<sup>6</sup> E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Washington, 1961, 54; M. Mundell Mango, *Continuity of Fourth-Fifth Century Silver Plate in the Sixth-Seventh Centuries in the Eastern Empire*, *AntTard*, 5, 1997, 85

<sup>7</sup> R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 96.

<sup>8</sup> D. Ruscu, *The ecclesiastical network of the regions on the western and northern shores of the Black Sea in late antiquity*, in G. R. Tsetschladze, A. Avram, J. Hargrave (eds.), *The Danubian Lands between the Black, Aegean and Adriatic Seas (7<sup>th</sup> Century BC – 10<sup>th</sup> Century AD). Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities (Belgrade, 17-21 September 2013)*, Oxford, 2015, 193.

<sup>9</sup> L. Matzulewitsch, *op. cit.*, 102-107; V. Elbern, *Der eucharistische Kelch im Frühen Mittelalter*, Berlin, 1964, 134.

<sup>10</sup> B. Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery. Emergence and Social Implications*, Stockholm, 1985, 126; M. Kazanski, J.-P. Sodini, *Byzance et l'art "nomade": Remarques à propos de l'essai de J. Werner sur le dépôt de Malaja Perešćepina (Perešćepino)*, *RA, N.S.*, 1, 1987, 76-77.

<sup>11</sup> R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 82-97.

<sup>12</sup> J. Schrader, *op. cit.*, 611. Illustrative parallels for the decoration style of the border from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century may be considered e. g.: a plate from the Gallo-Roman treasure of Graincourt, *Trésors d'orfèvrerie gallo-romains*, Paris, 1989, nr. 87, p. 138-140; a saucer from the treasure of Thil/Caubiac, *ibidem*, nr. 201, p. 245; a plate from the treasure of Vaise/Lyon, G. Aubin, F. Baratte, J.-P. Lascoux, C. Metz-

been present on the original fragments out of which the paten was finally worked. The decoration was interpreted as symbolizing Paradise<sup>13</sup>, perhaps together with the Eucharist<sup>14</sup> or, more recently and more adequately, as a remembrance of the Eucharist by means of the vine, and of the salvation by means of the lambs and the peacocks.<sup>15</sup>

While these interpretations no doubt capture the essential idea, I think they can still be deepened in order to have a more complete understanding of this artifact. The late antique decoration of spaces and objects may be read either just as an aesthetic ornament, or as containing a certain symbolic significance.<sup>16</sup> The key of interpretation may be given by the association of certain symbols, leading in the same direction, or by connecting the visual language with textual references. Since the artifact discussed here was produced for ceremonial purposes, it can be from the beginning considered to bear a certain symbolic significance. The following demonstration will attempt to link the illustrative to the written discourse present in the Christian culture of the period for a better understanding.

The main element of the border decoration of Paternus' disk is the vine rinceau, which connects all the other components. The first key of interpretation of this symbol in Christian thinking is obviously to be found in the well-known place of the *Gospel of John* 15:1-6, where Christ identifies himself as the true vine. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Clemens of Alexandria expanded the interpretation, seeing the vine as a representation of the Passion, and the Eucharist as its ritual expression: "The vine describes allegorically the Lord, from which, with care and the art of agriculture, the fruit is gathered, according to the word."<sup>17</sup> But the vine also signifies the community of the believers (i. e. the Church) in an intimate connection with Christ. In the words of Cyprian of Carthage: "you, rich clusters from the vineyard of the Lord and bunches

---

ger, *Le trésor de Vaise à Lyon (Rhône)*, Lyon, 1999, 11.15; for the 4<sup>th</sup> century: the Achilles and Meleager plates from the Seuso treasure, Zs. Visy, Zs. Mráv (eds.), *A Seuso-kincs és Pannonia / The Seuso Treasure and Pannonia*, Pécs, 2013, 13-15.

<sup>13</sup> V. Elbern, *op. cit.*, 134; J. Werner, *op. cit.*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> V. Elbern, *op. cit.*, 134.

<sup>15</sup> R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 92.

<sup>16</sup> H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art*, University Park-London 1987, 8-15.

<sup>17</sup> Clem. Al. *Strom.* I, 9, 2 (SC 30, 79); see also Hippol. *Fragm. in Gn.* 49, 11 (PG 10, 590); Orig. *In Gn. Hom.* 17, 7; Zen. Ver., *Tract.* II, 11 (CCL 22, 183-184); A. Thomas, s. v. *Weinstock*, in *LCI*, vol. 4, 491.

with fruit already ripe, trodden by the persecution of the worldly pressure, feel our wine press in the tormenting prison; you pour out blood in the place of wine; brave for enduring suffering, you willingly drink the chalice of martyrdom".<sup>18</sup> The connection between the sacrifice of Christ and those of his followers as a sign of communion with him was also emphasized by Augustine of Hippo in one of his expositions of the Psalms: "So it is with men and women whom God predestined before time began to be conformed to the image of his only-begotten Son, who was in an unparalleled way the mighty grape, pressed out in his passion. [...] and so, any who approach God's service must know that they have come to the wine presses. They will be bruised, trampled and squeezed, not so that they may perish in this world but to ensure that they trickle down into God's storage vats."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps one of the most illustrative visual expressions of all these realities – Christ as a vine representing the origin of the Eucharist, and his connection both with the apostles and with the community of believers – is to be found in the decoration of a chalice from Antioch, from the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, now at the Metropolitan Museum, where the apostles are interlaced in a vine, together with birds and animals.<sup>20</sup>

Framed by the rinceau pattern of the vine there are two pairs of sheep or lambs, another symbol bearing obvious eucharistic significance. As with the vine, the metaphor is to be found already in the books of the New Testament (*Jn* 1:29; 36; *Acts* 8: 32; *1 Pet* 1:19). From there, the patristic literature took it over as the name of Jesus par excellence, as Clement of Alexandria does: "To this child also testifies John, "the greatest prophet among those born of women": "Behold the Lamb of God!" For since the Scripture calls the infants lambs, it called God the Word – who became man for our sakes, and who wished to be like us in all (aspects) – the Lamb of God, he, the Son of God, the child of the Father."<sup>21</sup> In the decorative context of a paten however, the lamb

<sup>18</sup> Cypr., *Ep.* 37, 47-53 (CCL 3B, 179-180; transl. Donna, 95); Zen. Ver., *Tract.* I, 33, 25-27 (CCL 22, 84); F. Bisconti, *Tempi di iconografia paleocristiana*, Città del Vaticano, 2000, 306.

<sup>19</sup> Aug. *Enarr. in Ps.* 83, 1 (CCL 39, 1146; transl. Boulding 185); F. Bisconti, *op. cit.*, 306.

<sup>20</sup> M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, Baltimore, 1986, 183-187, fig. 40.1-40.6; H. Evans, M. Holcomb, R. Hallman, *The Arts of Byzantium, BMM*, 58/4, 2001, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Clem. Al., *Paed.* 1, 5, 24, 4 (p. 154, SC 70); see also Orig., *Com. in Io.* VI, 52-53 (SC 157, 334-338); Gaudentius, *Tract.* II, 14; 17 (CSEL 68, 26-27); s. v. Lamm,

has to be rather interpreted as signifying the sacrifice of Christ, which saves humankind, as in the words of Cyprian of Carthage: "What previously came to pass in the likeness of the slain lamb, is fulfilled in Christ, the truth which followed afterwards. As, there, when Egypt was stricken, the Jewish people could not escape if not by the blood and the sign of the lamb, also, when the world shall begin to be desolate and stricken, alone whoever is found in the blood and the sign of Christ shall escape."<sup>22</sup> As a symbol for the eucharist, the lamb is appropriately placed in a liturgical context by John Chrysostomus: "But the reality is this: we also eat the Passover, (that is) Christ; he [i. e. Paul] says "then our Passover has been sacrificed, (that is) Christ." (1 Cor 7)".<sup>23</sup> Being an integral part of the liturgy, the lamb found its expression in the visual discourse of the 6<sup>th</sup> century most prominently in the decoration of church sanctuaries, like the medallion placed in the centre of the vault of the bema at San Vitale in Ravenna,<sup>24</sup> or on the triumphal arch opening the apse of the church of St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai.<sup>25</sup>

Between the branches of the vine there are no less than four pairs of birds, usually interpreted as doves. Given the entire context of the decoration, articulated by the vine and defined by the monogram of Christ, the dove can be interpreted as a prefiguration of the eschatological banquet.<sup>26</sup> For the period under discussion here, among the best-known examples is the mosaic of the apsidal arch of San Michele in Africisco from Ravenna, today in the Bode Museum in Berlin.<sup>27</sup>

---

in *LCI*, vol. 3, 7; M. Freschkowski, s. v. *Lamm Gottes*, in *RAC*, vol. 22, 871; 874-877; V. Loi, B. Amata, s. v. *Lamb*, in *EAC*, vol. 2, 513-514.

<sup>22</sup> Cypr., *Ad Demetr.* 22 (*CCL* 3A, 48).

<sup>23</sup> Chrys., *In Eph.* 6, 14, *hom.* 23, 2 (*PG* 62, 166); see also: Chrys. *prod. Iud.* 1, 4 (*PG* 49, 379; 388); Eus. *pasc.* 7 (*PG* 24, 701A).

<sup>24</sup> F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. I. *Geschichte und Monumente*, Wiesbaden, 1969, 247; idem, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. II. *Kommentar* 1. Teil, Wiesbaden, 1976, 163-164; J. Dresken-Weiland, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken von Ravenna. Bild und Bedeutung*, Regensburg, 2016, 235.

<sup>25</sup> K. Weitzmann, *The Mosaic in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai*, *PAPhS*, 110, 6, 1966, 392-405.

<sup>26</sup> F. Bisconti, *op. cit.*, 153; J.-P. Hernández, *Nel grembo della Trinità. L'immagine come teologia nel battistero più antico di Occidente (Napoli IV secolo)*, Torino, 2004, 196.

<sup>27</sup> F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna ...*, vol. I, 221-225; C. Jäggi, *Ravenna. Kunst und Kultur einer spätantiken Residenzstadt*, Regensburg, 2016, 283-286.

Since on our artifact the representations of birds are surpassing in number all the other figures, and since two consecutive pairs occur in the scheme of the decoration – in the positions of 2 and 4 o'clock – one cannot resist the temptation of speculating the possibility that the craftsman intended to represent also other birds beside the doves. A parallel with a similar decorative arrangement, that of the dome of the baptistry of S. Giovanni in Fonte at Naples, may help us in the attempt to identify other species of birds which can occur in a Christian liturgical context. In Naples, in the crown at the centre of the dome, a pair of quails can be observed.<sup>28</sup> The quail belongs to the symbolic of salvation, being associated with miracle of the manna during the exodus from Egypt (*Exod* 16:13; *Num* 11:31-34) and mentioned in connection to the Eucharist among others by Ambrose of Milan.<sup>29</sup> The best known figurative representation, beside the one already cited, is to be found in the scene of the miracle of the manna in one of the mosaic panels of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome.<sup>30</sup> However, given the small dimensions of the decoration of Paternus' disk, which makes the identification quite difficult, the presence of quails has to remain at the level of speculation.

The stag, or deer, occurs in the writings of the Church Fathers in connection to the baptism, as a reference to the *Psalms* 42 (41), recited during the baptismal ritual, as mentioned, e. g. by Augustine: "... for the singer says, "As a deer longs for springs of water, so does my soul long for you, O God." Who is it saying that? If we will, it is we ourselves. [...] We could well hear the voice of our catechumens here too, for they are hurrying toward the holy, grace-giving bath. This is why we customarily sing the psalm to arouse in them a longing for the fountain of forgiveness for their sins, like the longing of a deer for the springs of water."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the best-known transposition of this idea into visual language is to be found in the lunette mosaics of the so-

<sup>28</sup> J.-P. Hernández, *op. cit.*, 201-202.

<sup>29</sup> Amb. *Myster.* 8, 44 (*SC* 25, 122); J.-P. Hernández, *op. cit.*, 202; F. Biscanti, *op. cit.*, 267-268.

<sup>30</sup> J.-P. Hernández, *op. cit.*, 352, img. B37; L. Pani Ermini, s. v. *Quails, Miracle of the (iconography)*, in *EAC*, vol. 3, 363.

<sup>31</sup> Aug. *Enarr. in Ps.* 41 (*CCL* 38, 460; transl. Boulding 239); see also Zen. Ver., *Tract. II*, 14 (*CCL* 22, 188); Hier. *In Ps. 41 ad neoph.* (*PL* 40, 1205-1206); J.-P. Hernández, *op. cit.*, 285-288.



called mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna,<sup>32</sup> but the exact place from the Psalm is beautifully illustrated by a mosaic discovered in the baptistery complex from Salona.<sup>33</sup>

The peacock, present in two pairs on the discussed artifact, is an early Christian symbol to be found mostly in funerary ambit, in connexion to eternal life, as we know from mention – curiously the only one – by Augustin in his *City of God*: „For who but God, the Creator of all things, has given to the flesh of the dead peacock (the quality) of not rotting?”<sup>34</sup> The sarcophagus of the bishop Theodoros of Ravenna may be mentioned as one of the best-known examples for the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> However, since eternal life was prepared in the Christian tradition both by baptism and by the Eucharist, the same peacock can also be found in connexion with liturgical celebrations, as on the sanctuary vault at San Vitale, or on the decoration of baptisteries, like those of Naples or Stobi.<sup>36</sup>

We can thus conclude at this point that the decoration of the border of Paternus's plate was not realized for the sole purpose of aesthetics, but has also a symbolic significance that could be recognized by the Christians of the time, since all the symbols were not only visible on decoration of various monuments, but also mentioned in many texts and homilies that circulated in the Christian communities. These

<sup>32</sup> F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. I. *Geschichte und Monumente*, Wiesbaden, 1969, 163; idem, *Ravenna ...*, vol. II, 79-80; J. Dresken-Weiland, *op. cit.*, 40-44.

<sup>33</sup> M. Buzov, *Prikaz jelena na ranokršćanskim mozaicima prema srednjovjekovnoj umjetnosti (Deer on early Christian monuments and medieval art)*, *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, 3, 21, 1991, 72-75; eadem, *The Early Christian Mosaics with Inscription in Croatia*, in M. Šahin (ed.), *11<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics, October 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, Bursa, Turkey, Istanbul, 2011*, 188.

<sup>34</sup> Aug. Civ. 21, 4, 1 (*PL* 41, 712); J.-P. Hernandez, *op. cit.*, 201-202; F. Pieri, s. v. *Peacock*, in *EAC*, vol. 3, 123.

<sup>35</sup> G. Bovini, *Sarcofagi paleocristiani di Ravenna. Tentativo di classificazione cronologica*, Città del Vaticano, 1954, 42-44.

<sup>36</sup> San Vitale: F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna ...*, vol. I, 240-241; J. Dresken-Weiland, *op. cit.*, 235-236. Naples: J.-L. Maier, *Le baptistère de Naples et ses mosaïques. Étude historique et iconographique*, Fribourg, 1964, 55, Pl. XI. Stobi: R. Kolarik, *The Episcopal Basilica at Stobi. The Phases of Mosaic Decoration*, in B. Aleksova, J. Wiseman (eds.), *Studies in the Antiquities at Stobi*, vol. III, Titov Veles, 1981, 64-67; eadem, *The Episcopal Basilica at Stobi: The Baptistery and related Structures*, in *Acta XV Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae, Toledo 2008*, Città del Vaticano, 2013, 944-946.

examples confirm the fact that these communities used a common visual language, which can be encountered both in monumental art and on liturgical objects.

The monogram of Christ with the letters *alpha* and *omega* on the central part of Paternus' disk was mostly interpreted in a generic manner, as a simple indication of its Christian character.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, it is common knowledge that the cross and the Chrismon are in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries symbols par excellence of Christ.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the monogram on Paternus' plate has to be more than a generic ornament. However, in order to fully understand its significance, it is necessary to regard the larger context of the 6<sup>th</sup> century patens and also some later analogies. Several eucharistic *diskoi* survived from the same period as our artifact, mostly in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>39</sup> Their decoration typically consists of an inscription, whereas the central part bears either a symbol or an image. This central decoration is sometimes a cross or a Chrismon, at other times the image of the communion of the Apostles.<sup>40</sup> Literary evidence, like the *Life* of Theodor of Sykeon, as well as the unitary system of Imperial control marks on the back of all surviving silver patens<sup>41</sup> clearly indicate that this specific type of liturgical apparel was produced in the workshops of the

<sup>37</sup> K. Wessel, s. v. *Christusmonogramm*, in *RLBK*, vol. 1, 1049.

<sup>38</sup> K. Wessel, *op. cit.* 1050; R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 88; S. A. Boyd, *Art in the Service of the Liturgy: Byzantine Silver Plate*, in L. Safran (ed.), *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1998, 176; I. Garipzanov, *Graphic Signs of Authority in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 300-900*, Oxford, 2018, 64; 80.

<sup>39</sup> M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, Baltimore, 1986, nr. 4-6, p. 78-86 (Hama treasure); nr. 34-36, p. 159-174 (Stuma and Riha treasures); nr. 60, p. 231 (Beth Misona treasure); nr. 63-64, p. 234-236 (Phela treasure); nr. 74, p. 248 (Marato tes Myrtes treasure); nr. 75, p. 249 (Sarabaon treasure); nr. 81, p. 254 (Gallunianu treasure); Sion treasure: S. A. Boyd, M. Mundell Mango (eds.), *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Washington, 1992, nr. 1-6, p. 19-20, fig. S1-S5; R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 82-97.

<sup>40</sup> The communion of the Apostles occurs on the Stuma and Riha patens: M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium*, nr. 34, p. 159-164; nr. 35, p. 165-170. Two patens from the Sion treasure bear the Christogram: S. A. Boyd, M. Mundell Mango, *op. cit.*, nr. 1-3, p. 19, fig. S1.1; S3.1. All the other artifacts mentioned in the previous note have a cross as central ornament. See also R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 93-96.

<sup>41</sup> *Vit. Theod. Sykeon*. 42 (p. 36-38, ed. Festugière); R. E. Leader-Newby, *op. cit.*, 67-68.

capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, in the context of a centralized state – as well as ecclesiastical – system, which determined a continuity of forms and unity of decoration.<sup>42</sup>

As a consequence, a certain uniformity of the theological-symbolic content of the decoration of liturgical vessels in the 6<sup>th</sup> century can be taken into account. That means that the images present on the central part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century patens, be they symbolic (the cross or the Chrismon), or figurative (the communion of the Apostles), essentially represent a similar content from a symbolic and theological perspective. The variety of these representations can be explained by the evolution of Byzantine religious art in the pre-iconoclastic period. Since in theological milieus, especially those of the high ecclesiastic hierarchy, there was a reticence towards using images in religious context, Christian art oscillated between symbolic and pictorial representations. These hesitations were to be clarified in a first phase through the 82<sup>nd</sup> canon of the Quinisext council.<sup>43</sup> This clarification can be seen in the visual discourse of the 6<sup>th</sup> century by comparing the representation of John the Baptist presenting Christ as a lamb on the throne of Maximianus in Ravenna, and an icon kept at the National Art Museum in Kiev, where he points at the “historical” Christ.<sup>44</sup> The list can be completed with other pairs of images in similar contexts, representing through different elements of visual language the same theological ideas:<sup>45</sup> The presence of Christ in the sacred space is illustrated by a monogram cross on the dome of S. Giovanni in Fonte in Naples and in the actual scene of the Baptism in the Neonian baptistery in Ravenna;<sup>46</sup> the scene of the Transfiguration was illustrated in the shape of a

---

<sup>42</sup> M. Mundell Mango, *Continuity of fourth-fifth century silver plate in the sixth-seventh centuries in the Eastern Empire*, *AntTard*, 5, 1997, 92.

<sup>43</sup> *Concilium Constantinopolitanum a. 691/2 in Trullo habitum*, ed. H. Ohme (ACO II.4), Berlin-Boston, 2013, 54.

<sup>44</sup> R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, Oxford, 2000, 82; for the cathedra of Maximianus: W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, Mainz, 1976, 94-94, pl. 72-74; E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean Art, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Century*, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, 94-96, ill. 172; for the icon in Kiev: K. Corrigan, *The Witness of John the Baptist on an Early Byzantine Icon in Kiev*, *DOP*, 42, 1988, 1-11, fig. 1.

<sup>45</sup> See also P. Brown, *Images as Substitute for Writing*, in E. Chrysos, I. Wood (eds.), *East and West: Modes of Communication*, Leiden, 1999, 15-34.

<sup>46</sup> For Naples: J.-L. Maier, *op. cit.*, 25-27, pl. II-III; for Ravenna: F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna ...*, vol. I, 134-138; J. Dresken-Weiland, *op. cit.*, 74-81.

bejewelled cross surrounded by the apostles represented as sheep in the apse mosaic of S. Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna and in a descriptive historical manner in the church of St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai.<sup>47</sup>

Coming back to the decoration of the sixth century patens, it can therefore be argued that both the symbols and the figurative images represent the same Christ in eucharistic context. As a consequence, in order to better understand the significance of this decorations, the communion of the Apostles as the most didactic image can be used as a departure point. In the artistic context of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, the scene represents not yet the visual depiction of the eucharistic ritual of the Byzantine tradition, but mainly the act of institution of the Eucharist by Christ himself.<sup>48</sup> After the theological definition of the images during the iconoclastic controversy, the scene mainly appears in architectonic decoration, with the apse of S. Sophia in Kiev as one of the earliest examples.<sup>49</sup>

A further explanation is offered by the decoration of the patens in the post-iconoclastic period. A piece produced in Constantinople, today in St. Marks Treasury in Venice, has in the centre the image of the Pantocrator with the inscription ΛΑΒΕΤΕ ΦΑΓΕΤΕ ΤΟΥΤΟ Μ(ΟΥ) ΕΚΤΙ ΤΟ (ΩΜΑ), the same text that accompanies the scene of the Eucharist in contemporary Byzantine architectonic decoration.<sup>50</sup> This type of image offered an immediate visual connection between Christ and the communicant. Given the status of the image in post-iconoclastic theological thinking, when it became a means of communication per se, without the necessity of an accompanying text, for the Christian believer this representation on the centre of a paten was perceived as

---

<sup>47</sup> For S. Apollinare in Classe: J. Dresken-Weiland, *op. cit.*, 257-266. For S. Catherine on Mt. Sinai: G. Forsyth, K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Church and Fortress of Justinian*, Ann Arbor, 1966, 12-13, pl. CIII.

<sup>48</sup> V. Marinis, *A Reconsideration of the Communion of the Apostles in Byzantine Art*, *Studies in Iconography* 42, 2021, 9-12.

<sup>49</sup> O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration. Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, Boston, 1964, 59-60, pl. 44a-b.

<sup>50</sup> M. E. Frazer, cat. Nr. 18, in D. Buckton (ed.), *The Treasury of San Marco*, Milan, 1985, 168-170.

Christ himself, who uttered the written sentence.<sup>51</sup> A similar example is a silver paten from Halberstadt presenting the image of the Crucifixion, and bearing the text: ΛΑΒΕΤΕ ΦΑΓΕΤΕ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΤΟ ΣΩΜΑ ΜΟΥ ΤΟ ΥΠΕΡ ΥΜΩΝ ΚΑΩΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΙΣ ΑΦΕΣΙΝ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΩΝ.<sup>52</sup> Again, in the eyes of a religious person, this was the crucified Christ speaking.

It is thus possible to argue that the image of the communion of the Apostles in the central part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century patens was most probably interpreted as representing Christ himself, communicating through visual language with the communicant. Since in the same period, a certain theological concept could be expressed, as we have seen, both in a symbolic and in a figurative manner, the cross or the Christomon occurring in the centre of the patens must symbolize the same Christ as the figurative decoration representing the Apostles' communion. In the post-iconoclastic period, as the theological contents of the images was established and clarified, the same idea was rendered by the image of Christ – represented this time in the new manner, as Pantocrator, or as the crucified one – accompanied by the consecratory formula of the Eucharist, indicating that it is he himself speaking to the believer.

It can therefore be concluded that the monogram of Christ on the paten of Paternus is not an arbitrary image and represents more than just an ornament.<sup>53</sup> For the believer it had a clear symbolic significance: it represented Christ himself offering him the Communion. During the liturgy, as the believers took the consecrated bread from

---

<sup>51</sup> R. Nelson, *Byzantine Art vs. Western Medieval Art*, in: M. Balard, E. Malamut, J.-M. Spieser, P. Pagès (eds.), *Byzance et le monde extérieur. Contacts, relations, échanges*, Paris, 2005 (*Byzantina Sorbonnensia* 21), 267-270.

<sup>52</sup> R. Hausherr (ed.), *Die Zeit der Staufer. Geschichte – Kunst – Kultur*, vol. I, Stuttgart, 1977, 435-436; S. Boyd, *Art in the service of the liturgy: Byzantine silver plate*, in L. Safran (ed.), *Heaven on Earth. Art and the Church in Byzantium*, University Park, PA, 1998, 180. The piece is dated in the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The text is composed from references from *Mt* 26: 26; 28; *1 Cor* 11:25.

<sup>53</sup> E. Swift, *Decorated Vessels: The Function of Decoration in Late Antiquity*, in L. Lavan, E. Swift, and T. Putzeys (eds.), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use*, Leiden, 2007 (*Late Antique Archaeology* 5), 386; 389-390.

the paten, the central part became gradually visible and therefore revealed God's saving presence.<sup>54</sup>

There is no way of saying who designed the decoration programme of Paternus' plate. Since it was credibly argued that an educated patron could have been involved in the making of an artwork,<sup>55</sup> we may even speculate that it was Paternus himself. Whoever the author was, the decorative programme has a symbolical-theological unity. The central motive, representing Christ, was connected to the border decoration, introducing the believer into a salvific atmosphere, expressed through familiar eucharistic symbols. Regarding such a eucharistic *diskos* with *eusebeia*, the communion with Christ thus may have signified the suffering and the sacrifice (the wine and the lamb), but always together with the salvation, the peace and the eternal life (the dove, the peacock and the deer).

### Editions of the sources used

- Ambroise de Milan, *Traité sur l'Évangile de S. Luc*, ed. G. Tissot, tom. I, Paris, 1956 (SC 45).
- Idem, *Des Sacrements. Des Mystères*, ed. B. Botte, Paris, 1949 (SC 25).
- Aurelii Augustini Enarrationes in Psalmos*, LI-C, Turnhout, 1956 (CCL 39).
- Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98*, ed. M. Boulding, J. E. Rotelle, vol. III/18, New York, 2002.
- Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 33-50*, ed. M. Boulding, J. E. Rotelle, vol. III/16, New York, 2000.
- Clement d'Alexandrie, *Le Pédagogue*, I, ed. H.-I. Marrou, M. Harl, Paris, 1960 (SC 70).
- Clement d'Alexandrie, *Les Stromates*, I, ed. C. Mondésert, M. Caster, Paris, 1951 (SC 30).
- Sancti Cypriani Episcopi *Opera*, III, 1. *Epistularium*, Turnhout, 1994 (CCL 3B).
- Saint Cyprian, *Letters* (1-81), ed. R. B. Donna, Washington, D. C., 1981.

---

<sup>54</sup> H. Hunter-Crawley, *Embodying the Divine: The Sensational Experience of the Sixth-Century Eucharist*, in J. Day (ed.), *Making Senses of the Past. Toward a Sensory Archaeology*, Carbondale, 2013, 165.

<sup>55</sup> J. Maguire, *op. cit.*, 14.

Sancti Cypriani Episcopi *Opera*, II. *Ad Donatum; De mortalitate; Ad Demetrianum, De opere et eleemosynis; De zelo et livore*, Turnhout, 1976 (CCL 3A).

S. Gaudentii *Tractatus*, Leipzig-Vienna, 1936 (CSEL 68).

Origène, *Comentaire sur Saint Jean*, ed. C. Leblanc, tome II, Paris, 1970 (SC 157).

Zenonis Veronensis *Tractatus*, Turnhout, 1971 (CCL 22).

*Vie de Théodore de Sykeôn*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, vol. I-II, Bruxelles, 1970 (*Subsidia Hagiographica* 48).



**Illustration 1:** The disk of Paternus, Constantinople (?), obverse; 498, silver and gold; diameter 61 cm. Inv. No. W-827. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg  
(© The State Hermitage Museum / photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets).





**2.a:** bust of Anastasius;  
DN ANASTA/SIV[S] PP AVG



**2.b:** bust; MH/NNA



**2.c:** monogram of Anastasius or  
Justinian; ΕΕΝΟΦΙΛΟΥ



**2.d:** cross;  
ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΚΟΜΙ/T[AC]

**Illustration 2:** The disk of Paternus, reverse, details: the imperial control marks (identification after E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Washington, 1961, 54) (<https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.%20archaeological%20artifacts/482973>) (with permission).



Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași  
Facultatea de Istorie • Centrul de Studii Clasice și Creștine

Bd. Carol I, Nr. 11, 700506, Iași, România  
Tel.: 040/0232/201634, Fax: 040/0232/201156



ISSN: 1842-3043  
e-ISSN: 2393-2961