THE DECORATION OF CAVE CHURCHES IN CAPPADOCIA UNDER SELÇUK RULE

A Thesis

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by

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The churches of interest to this present study belong to an “exotic” and ambiguous group as they are not only located in the enigmatic province of Cappadocia but also date to the Selçuk period. These churches not only mark the strangeness of a Christian community under Muslim rule, but have also provided historians an outlet for views regarding the Greek community and their acculturation under Turkish rule. These readings have distanced these works from a notional center-embodied in a largely imaginary Nicaea or Constantinople- rendering them “provincial.” In so doing, they have neglected or undervalued the new center, the Selçuk capital of Konya, which re-orient the visual culture of the region towards the traditions of the Selçuk kingdoms to the east. This change complicates and challenges any rigid distinction between Greek and Orthodox, Selçuk and Islamic as categories for the description of the works of art produced in thirteenth-century Cappadocia. It is this dissolution of boundaries that is the subject of this thesis.

The very nature of the carved churches of Cappadocia, referred to as cave churches, have acted to place them into the realm of not only a provincial community but also one of “cave-dwellers.” Indeed the majority of settlements that remain for study
from the medieval period are structures carved into the tufa that covers the landscape in large and varied formations, Luciano Giovannini describes them as:

“settlement(s) in the area of contorted volcanic formations …so overwhelmed by the massive power of nature that they are not built upwards like normal human dwellings but, by a kind of reverse process, won from the very substance of the rock.”

The very nature of the cave churches places them outside the realm of normalcy, making them far more alien in both the structures themselves and the inferences made upon the “troglodytes” who inhabited and worshipped in them.

By providing a full and comprehensive description of four thirteenth-century churches, this study will attempt to provide a new understanding of a Christian community living under Selçuk rule. Through examples of the integration of Turkish style and iconography, as well as continuity with earlier Cappadocian styles and indicators of communication with the Orthodox Christian world, it will be shown that the patrons of these churches were able to reconcile the traditions of their forefathers with those provided by the Turkish tradition. By exploring the levels of acculturation and complexities of Muslim-Christian interaction, the current presuppositions of rigid terms of identity and allegiance will be questioned by the evidence provided in the fresco programs of Karşı Kilise, Canavar Kilise, Ağaçaltı Kilise, and Kırk Dam Altı Kilise.

Any discussion of artistic production in Cappadocia in the thirteenth century must consider the historical development in the region. Textual evidence from Cappadocia in this period is limited to contemporary historians who were based in the relevant capitals of Constantinople, Nicaea, and later Konya. Most notably the twelfth-century Armenian

historian Matthew of Edessa and the thirteenth-century chronicler of the Selçuk Sultanate of Rum Ibn Bibi, provide clues to the nature of the Christian existence in medieval Anatolia and Cappadocia. As the Greek Orthodox community of Cappadocia has been represented as a vestigial body under the influence of the capital city,\(^2\) much of the artistic production is either represented by twentieth-century authors as provincial derivatives or local eccentricities.\(^3\) Further confusion regarding the communities that existed in these lands comes from the precarious physical location of Cappadocia in central Anatolia. Because of the persistent warfare between the Byzantine and Arab and later Selçuk armies from the eighth to the eleventh centuries, this region suffered from yearly raids and perpetual military occupation.

The pressure of annual raids, beginning in the seventh century, led to a reformulation of the military system, which was to have a profound impact on the local population. A shifting pattern of military *themata*,\(^4\) under the power of a *strategos*, or general, defined the topography of Asia Minor.\(^5\) Due to the increasing difficulties in

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\(^2\) For a detailed analysis of the capital’s relationship with the outlying “provincial” regions see Annabel Jane Wharton, *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery, a Comparative Study of Four Provinces.* (University Park: Pennsylvania States University, 1988).

\(^3\) The major sources on Cappadocia regard stylistic issues only in terms that describe the works as “crude”, “simple”, and of general low quality, in the tenth and eleventh centuries this is based on the provincial status of the works and in the thirteenth century the Islamic influence is considered as the main corruptor of artistic style, this will be discussed in further detail below. In general see, Lyn Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 254; Spiro Kostof, *Caves of God: Cappadocia and its Churches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), XIII, 146-7, 190, 230-231; Annabel Jane Wharton, *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery, a Comparative Study of Four Provinces* (University Park: Pennsylvania States University, 1988), 30, 36, 46.

\(^4\) *Themata* were sectors of the Byzantine territory identified by their regional military administration.

recruiting and raising funds to support the payment for soldiers, the themata system alleviated these problems by allocating responsibility for both obtaining and maintaining local troops to the individual themes.\(^6\) Each landholding family, thus, became fiscally responsible for the recruitment and support of soldiers by way of the provision of sons to military service or compensatory payment. This system led to a transfer of both military and administrative power from the metropolitan elites to the regional aristocracy and the development of regional dynasties within the military.\(^7\)

Historian Alexander Kazhdan has argued that this system led to a struggle for power between the capital and the provinces resulting in a centrifugal tendency. The Macedonian emperors of the tenth century attempted to reassert the power of the capital, but the balance of power between the center and periphery shifted with a return of power to the military and rural elites of the provinces in the eleventh century. By this time the rural elites had become both ideologically and psychologically distanced from the Constantinopolitan court.\(^8\) Powerful Anatolian military clans arose during this period as the themata system collapsed and the military structure came under the control of these landowners. This group consistently enlarged their estates, leading not only to a depopulation of the countryside, but also to the decline of a rural army that owed its provision of land grants and allegiances to Constantinople.\(^9\) These landowners formed a consolidated and powerful group of families interconnected by marriage, each waxing

\(^6\) Cappadocia was divided in land between the Anatolikon and Kappadokia themes in the tenth century, John Haldon. *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World.* (London: Brookfield, 1999), 81.

\(^7\) Ibid., 15.


\(^9\) Ibid., 224.
and waning in their influence in the imperial capital. In Anatolia the major clans were the Phokas and Skleros families. As their regional power rose, the emperor in the capital came to rely increasingly on the recruitment of *tagmata*, that is, mercenary guards for the court and consisted of Russian, English, German, Bulgarian, Turkish and Armenian soldiers. Their presence in Constantinople underlined the gap that had opened between the military in the capital and the military in the provinces.

One cultural consequence of these changes was a decentralization of crafts that led to a heightened sense of local traditions. Although luxury goods and expensive processes such as bronze casting and stained glass remained exclusively in Constantinople, the capital lost its monopoly over other crafts. Construction methods, pottery, silk production, glass manufacture, and book production and illumination all came to be produced in increasingly regional methods. In Anatolia local schools of painting and manuscript illumination continued even under Selçuk rule. The nature of cultural production also led to an economic shift, one which favored the periphery in terms of trade and forced the capital to live off of rural profits through taxation.

The more dramatic shift in structure and self-definition for the Byzantines came after the Fourth Crusade and the first fall of Constantinople in 1204. The remnants of imperial power divided into the mini-empires of Trabzon (Trebizond), Iznik (Nicaea),

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11 Ibid., 166.


13 Ibid., 46.
and Epiros. It was the empire centered in Iznik that gradually accumulated its influence and domain in Western Anatolia, Thrace, Macedonia and eventually Constantinople. Historian Michael Angold states that it was this empire that kept Byzantine government and culture alive, maintaining a consistent sense of identity not only for its people but for the dynasty to follow. Nonetheless, this period did not resolve the division of interests that now separated the imperial court from the regional aristocracy, in fact it increased tensions and power struggles between the two groups. The continued decentralization of power would become a source of anxiety for the next dynasty. Landowners had become landlords gaining the privilege of collecting taxes and changing the agricultural obligations of the rural population into dominion over their persons and property. About twenty families emerged as a new proud and exclusive aristocracy. Many of these families had been members of the Middle Byzantine military elite whose privileged position had been temporarily demolished by Andronikos I (1183-5).

The distance between the center and periphery may be illustrated by their respective reactions to the fall of Constantinople. For those in the capital, this was considered a “cosmic cataclysm” which led members of the court to flee to Anatolia and

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14 The Despotate of Epiros bordered the Latin Empire of Constantinople to the west, occupying the Adriatic coast, while the Empire of Nicaea occupied the eastern border occupying the Aegean coast, and the Empire of Trebizond was close to the city on the eastern part of the coastal region of the Black Sea.


16 Ibid., 142.


18 Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein. *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 70.
beyond. The provinces however are said to have “scoffed at the misfortunes of the (se) refugees.” 19 Considering that much of Anatolia had experienced multiple waves of raids since the seventh century and that by the third quarter of the eleventh century was largely under Selçuk control, the provincial reaction to the fall of a now diminished and distant capital may be readily understood. This period also witnessed the conquest of the whole of Cappadocia by the Selçuks. They established their capital at Konya (Ikonion) to the west of Cappadocia as seen in the map in Figure 1. As the thirteenth century progressed, it was this capital that became increasingly important to the inhabitants of Cappadocia.

This turbulent era produced an increasing discourse on notions of cultural identity in Byzantine circles. For example, the deeds of the Laskarides who ruled Nicaea were compared to those of Alexander the Great by contemporary Nicaean scholars. This choice underlined a shift in Byzantine self-understanding that identified them as Hellenes rather than the more traditional perception of themselves as Romans and heirs to the Roman Empire. This new identification or resurgence of Hellenic identity came after centuries of using the term to refer to the pagan past, 20 and was perhaps a result of the desire to distinguish themselves from the Latin and Roman world of the western Europeans who had overthrown their capital and threatened their existence. A second term was also used in this period. The word Graikoi came to be used to define a Greek identity, while avoiding the pagan connotations of the word Helle.


20 Ibid., 29-30.

(Rhomaioi or Romans) remained Rum in Selçuk usage. Notably, this term was adopted by the Turkish rulers who claimed the title for themselves and for all inhabitants of Asia Minor. Rustam Shukurov documents that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the terms Rum and al-Rumi were used indiscriminately in reference to both Turkish Muslims and Greek Christians, and any combination thereof. Shukurov calls this a “cultural-polyglossia” created by the mutual and peaceful coexistence of multiple models of self-identification. Thus the Anatolians could officially co-exist as Rum while maintaining various ethnic and religious affiliations.22

Although much of Anatolia was under Turkish rule by the thirteenth century, it did not lose its importance as an element in Byzantine identity; Theodore II Laskarides (1254-58) referred to Nicaea as a New Athens and proclaimed his military victories to be a gift from “my mother, the Holy Land of Anatolia.”23 How far east into Anatolia Nicaean power stretched cannot be calculated as the territory on the borders of Greek and Turkish lands was populated by nomadic shepherds who held ambivalent allegiances. Dedicatory inscriptions found in Cappadocian churches that refer to Theodore II Laskarides indicate, at least, the possibility of some Nicaean hegemony over the Christian community in this region in the early thirteenth century.24 Two of these inscriptions are still extant in the churches of Karşı Kilise in Gülşehir and the Church of the Forty


23 Ibid., 32.

Both churches use the reign of Theodore Laskarides to indicate the date at which they were constructed, 1212 and 1216-1217 respectively. The length of this allegiance to first Nicaea and then Constantinople following its re-conquest by the Greeks in 1261 is difficult to determine as Christian artistic production from this region displays a variety of dedicatory formulae. For example, the 1226 Tetraevangelium from Kayseri (Caesarea) copied by Ioannes Meliteniotes, who identifies himself as a protonotarios, states that the text was written, “during the glorious reign of the saintly, the most illustrious Sultan Keykubad the son of the Sultan Giyaseddin Keyhüsrev.” Later, in the Church of St George in Belisirma, which dates to the end of the thirteenth century, the dedicatory inscription mentions both the Sultan Mesut in Konya and Andronikos Paleologos as the ruler of the Romans. Thus, allegiance to both Byzantine and Selçuk rulers was inscribed into these works. They suggest that religious affiliation did not necessarily conflict with political identity among the al-Rumi of Anatolia.

This slender evidence reminds us that Anatolia is not well documented in this period. This lack has allowed a variety of conflicting interpretations to emerge from the historian’s imagination. Hence, while some have assumed that Anatolia was barely Byzantine throughout its entire history, Speros Vryonis has asserted that Anatolia was for centuries the “heart” of the Byzantine imperial domain. Vryonis notes a persistent distinction within Cappadocia between its Greek and non-Greek populations who were

25 The various valleys and cities of Cappadocia are illustrates in the map seen in Figure 2.

never fully assimilated. The potential for a fluid identity within this environment was exacerbated by centuries of military raids, the persecution of religious minorities and the relocation of whole populations by the Constantinopolitan authorities. These events in themselves alienated the provinces, to such an extent that it has been claimed that the Armenian and Syrian Monophysite communities welcomed Turkish rule which was seen as relief from the oppression of Orthodox Christianity. Military losses in the tenth and eleventh centuries severely disrupted the population of Asia Minor. Two forced migrations of Armenians into Cappadocia have been documented. The first occurred in the tenth century following the Byzantine losses of Melitene (934), Tarsus (965), and Antioch (969). The second followed the Battle of Malazgirt (Manzikert) in 1071, when many Armenians moved west. As documented by the chronicler Matthew of Edessa, after severe persecutions of the Armenian and Syrian Monophysite communities, the Armenian royal families, which included Adom and Abucahl of Vaspuracan and Kakig of Ani, used the opportunity provided by the Selçuk conquest to seek vengeance upon the local Greek Orthodox population.


29 Ibid., 146.

torture and assassination of the Orthodox metropolitan of Kayseri. Kakig was eventually killed by the local Greek landowners.\textsuperscript{31}

The last Byzantine campaigns to recapture lands lost to the Selçuks were made by Manuel Komnenos in 1158-1161 and then again in 1176. There followed a period of relative peace prior to the first Mongol incursion in 1243, which eventually led to the Selçuk state becoming a vassal of the greater Mongolian empire. During this period an undeterminable but small percentage of the Greek population migrated to Lycandus and Cilicia, which were still under Byzantine rule.\textsuperscript{32} However, most of the Greek population remained under Selçuk rule and in some cases even prospered. Many joined the army and were referred to as \textit{mixovarvaroi}, being members of the new generation of Anatolian being of mixed ethnic parentage. Christians also married into the Turkish court. This, in turn, led many to first or second generation conversion to Islam. As many converts were exempt from taxes and were sometimes rewarded with grants of land, there perhaps existed a pragmatic rather than spiritual reason for the decline of Christianity.\textsuperscript{33} Other indications of Christian assimilation into Selçuk society include the adoption of the Greek notarial system and the employment of Greek notaries, as documented by Ibn Bibi.\textsuperscript{34}

Thus after a long period of war and mutual assimilation, the thirteenth century provided a short but stable period for Cappadocians who once again began to excavate and to decorate new cave churches. This period of increased artistic production corresponds to


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 170.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 176-178.

\textsuperscript{34} Savvides, \textit{Byzantium in the Near East}, 139.
the contemporary Selçuk program of constructing kervansarays, medreses, mosques, and fountains.  

In much of the secondary literature on the Cappadocian art of this period, the Christian condition is described as one marked by adversity and plight. Ann Wharton describes a land in which: “The bitterness of subjugation was not tempered for the inhabitants of Anatolia by any shared ideological framework.”36 This same prejudice is most consistently present in Spiro Kostof’s Caves of God. Although he admits to the continuation of religious freedom, he finds it necessary to qualify this with a lament regarding the assimilation of the population:

> “While the patriarchate in the great city, now called Istanbul, sustained the high tradition of the Orthodox Church with the Ottomans’ blessing, the hinterland, whose spirit had always been *demotic*, barely kept alive as a *mongrelized* Christianity.”37 (emphasis mine)

Any adaptation of Greek culture and new Turkish forms is thus considered degeneration rather than a strategy for survival and integration. Even the translation of the Bible into Turkish is mourned, with no thought that this new version might have served as a medium for mutual understanding and possible conversion. In a similar statement: “For the paths of a soldier and monk were in truth analogous. To fight the Muslim at the empire’s frontiers, was it not the Devil in disguise?”38 Through this dramatic statement, Kostof identifies a struggle with an evil and corrupting force. From

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35 The local city of Aksaray itself was rebuilt and refurbished in 1155 and again in 1171. Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor*, 221.

36 Wharton, *Art of Empire*, 17.


38 Ibid., 30
this position, it follows that Christian artistic production in the Selçuk period is derided and considered negligible because of Turkish influence, represented as a strange hybrid between Armenian, Muslim and Latin forms. Or as Kostof so clearly concludes his work: “the painter’s memory of his able ancestors is a mere crude ghost, as corrupt as his turkicized tongue.”

Although each scholar has provided for greater understanding of Cappadocian art in studies of individual churches and the region as a whole, worldviews regarding the Greek-Turkish or Christian-Islamic divide have been projected upon the hybrid community of thirteenth-century Cappadocia and the art it produced. The impenetrable barrier imagined between Greek and Turkish identity throughout the medieval period is exaggerated by the projection of current ideas and social delineations onto the histories imagined by art historians and are not based on the actual events of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.

Charles M. Brand documents several families integral to the court in Constantinople as having been Turkish converts. One of these was John Axouchos who eventually became the domestikos and controller of the eastern and western armies under John II Comnenus (1118-1143). His son Alexius was the prostrator under Manuel I (1143-1180). Alexius’ reputed decoration of his palace with the military exploits of Selçuk Sultan Kılıç Arslan has made him a controversial figure. Brand claims that description given in Kinnamos was part of a general smear campaign against this figure.

39 Ibid., 231
41 Ibid., 4.
who was allied by marriage to the Comneni.\textsuperscript{42} Kinnamos not only believed in Axouchos’ attachment to his Turkish lineage, but also conveyed rumors of his collusion with the Sultan and defamatory accusations of sorcery.\textsuperscript{43} In contrast rather than a disparagement of character, Lucy Anne Hunt accepts the decoration of the palace as part of the Byzantine courtly taste for Selçuk art.\textsuperscript{44} Hunt argues that throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Christian and Muslim courts had shared artistic tastes and interests. The palace decorations of the mid-twelfth century might also be considered as aspects of the preparations for Sultan Kılıç Arslan II’s visit to the Constantinopolitan court in 1161.\textsuperscript{45} This taste for foreign artistic production led not only to the adoption of Turkish turbans and kaftans, but also to the appearance of Latin breeches and Iberian felt hats in Constantinople.\textsuperscript{46}

This process of social assimilation was evident in the Greek communities living under Selçuk rule. Even in Vryonis’ opus \textit{The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor}, which sets out to prove the effects of the social and political “tragedy” that was Turkish conquest, he reluctantly admits that the Greek community was actively assimilated into the economic life of Selçuk Anatolia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{47} Even under Mongol vassalage this process was maintained as attested to by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 9-10.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 11.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 142-6.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Kazhdan and Wharton Epstein, \textit{Change in Byzantine Culture}, 181.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Vryonis, \textit{Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor}, 235.
\end{itemize}
the Mongol governor Timurtaş’s complaints that the Christian and Muslim communities were indistinguishable. Given this, distinctions remained, notably in the formal tax that Christians paid. Also the transfer of lands from the church to Muslim waqf and other religious institutions, led to shifts in power and to the migration of clergy.⁴⁸ It is notable that the metropolitans and bishops who fled to Constantinople maintained their titles as they awaited and hoped for the re-conquest of their sees.⁴⁹

The effects of these transfers of property on Cappadocian monasteries are difficult to determine although a loss of property and economic hardship can be assumed. And yet, it is clear that the excavation and decoration of churches were continued by this Orthodox community of “mongrelized” Christians. Nicole Thierry whose extensive work on Cappadocia in the last four decades has referred to the fresco cycles of the thirteenth century as products of poor workmanship. These are described as works that were clumsy and crude due to the demise of the local school of artists and the decline if not extinction of craft tradition and relations to the rest of the Orthodox world.⁵⁰ However elements of continued tradition and contact with the Christian world is indicated by the programs in the Karşı Kilise and Canavar Kilise, the latter of which maintains and adds to a monastic chapel begun in the eleventh century. Ağacaltı Kilise provides an example of the chapels which are proclaimed to be of lesser quality, through further analysis, it provides a

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⁴⁹ Ibid., 201-2.

complex program incorporating iconographic and stylistic elements that maintain links to both the Greek Orthodox tradition and new Turkish mythology and style. Maintaining such links along with a continuation of local style and iconography the latest of the churches, St George provides a similar synthesis of local Cappadocian traditions different modes of representation and dedication. There is in all the churches to be discussed a readiness to adapt images of varying sources to local needs. Using the examples of Karşı Kilise in Gülşehir (1212), Canavar Kilise in Soğanlı, Ağaçaltı Kilise in Ihlara, and St George in Belisirma (1283-95), this study will attempt to place the stylistic and iconographic origins of the frescoes into a context of cultural change and diversity thereby forming a better understanding of the community that produced these works (Fig. 2). Visual evidence in the surviving fresco programs will be used as the primary “text” which will help us to understand the community that produced the churches to be considered. By providing in-depth analyses of these churches a better understanding of not only artistic production in this period, but also a better understanding of the culture of Cappadocians in the thirteenth century will be explored.
CHAPTER 2:

KARŞI KILISE –THE CHURCH ACROSS- ST JEAN/JOHN- ARABSUN/GÜLŞEHİR

Karşı Kilise is a two-story church whose upper storey contains an extensive fresco cycle dated by inscription to 1212. One of the distinctive elements of the program in Karşı Kilise is the Last Judgment spanning the greater part of two walls. Most of the frescoes are well-preserved and have been recently restored, removing the graffiti and smoke damage that obscures other Cappadocian churches of the thirteenth century. Located in Gülşehir (Arabsun) forty miles from Nevşehir, this monument provides a well-preserved example of early thirteenth century church decoration in Cappadocia. The attention paid to medical and military saints, the Judgment of Souls, and the liturgy of Baptism places emphasis not only upon salvation but also upon the physical and spiritual protection of worshippers.

The complex consists of two chapels placed in two stories connected by a staircase excavated in the northwest corner. The lower church was cut in an earlier period, which Jolivet-Levy dates along with the façade carvings to the eleventh century. This date derives from the cross-in-square form of the Lower Church. The arms of the cross and the eastern apse are decorated with geometric forms. The arches are accented

by animal forms while the apse contains a cross flanked by flower forms and two horse-shoe niches. These niches are in the same style as the façade carvings.

The upper church consists of a barrel vault with an apse carved into the eastern wall. The sanctuary is flanked by two small arcades in front of each of which is a small dome. The North, South, and West walls contain blind arcades separated by pilasters. The arcades comprise a large and two smaller horseshoe arches which contain painted portraits. The vault, however, is in an irregular shape as it widens towards the east, making the apse wall much wider than the western wall. (Fig. 3)

This church was first documented in Guillame De Jerphanion’s initial survey of Cappadocia in the early twentieth century in which the church is called Qarche Killisse. Jerphanion’s survey provides a descriptive iconographic study and documents inscriptions which were available in the early twentieth century. At that point in time, the Orthodox community was still using the lower church as a chapel dedicated to the Archangels. But since the restoration of the space in the 1990s, a more comprehensive study of Karşılı Kilise has been published by Catherine Jolivet-Levy. This church has become one of the noted cave chapels in the region, remarked upon in several surveys of the region’s artistic production.

The elaborate decorative program includes an augmented cycle of the Passion, a Last Judgment and additional scenes of the Koimesis, the Baptism of Christ, and the Three Hebrews in a Furnace. These scenes and portraits of the saints can be divided into four tiers. The lowest presents saints in frontal or narrative portraits. The second register from the left of the sanctuary to the right of the sanctuary: the Koimesis, the Three Hebrews in a Furnace, an image of Hell, the Weighing of Souls, and an image of Paradise. The register above this shows scenes from the life and Passion of Christ: the Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Baptism, the Deposition, the Myrophores and an Anastasis. This cycle is interrupted on the western wall by an equestrian portrait of Saints George and Theodore in the tympanum. This highest register is at the apex of the arch. This contains a linked chain of medallions containing the busts of prophets (Fig. 4). The apse wall has many more portraits of saints and church fathers. There is also a large area of fresco which has since been lost but was previously identified as a Deesis and a Theotokos in the central niche of the apse. To each side of the sanctuary niche is a representation of the Annunciation, with Gabriel on the north side of the arch and Mary on the south.

2.1 Inscriptions

The most distinctive element of apse wall is the inscription that provides a date for the Upper Church. This is written in the red border framing the apse and has been interpreted as …ου ἑπὶ βασιλέως Θεόδορου Λάσκαρη ἔτους ψ'[κ χ' ἐνδικτιώμος ἓ' μηνή ἀπρηλύο ἣς τός κε (Fig. 5). This can be translated as: “the reign of Theodore
Laskarides 25 April 1212.” This inscription along with those in the Church of the Forty Martyrs in Şahinefendi, link the region of Cappadocia in the second decade of the thirteenth century to the Greek Empire of Nicaea. Jerphanion believed that these inscriptions meant that following Theodore Laskarides’ 1210 victory over the Selçuks that the Nicaean Empire reached as far east as central Anatolia. However in his book on the Nicaean Empire, Michael Angold argues that Nicaean territory remained close to the western coast of Anatolia. Although inscriptions indicate an allegiance to the reign of the Laskarides, this cannot be taken as a statement of direct rule over this region. At this point it is known that much of Anatolia was ruled by the Selçuks, however a definite connection among the Christian communities is indicated here.

2.2 Donor Panels

Further information is provided by the donor panels. The female donor panel is still intact. It shows a mother and her two children accompanied by Saint Theodote (HAGA Φ.Ο…TY). The saint holds a cross in her right hand and prays with the other. She wears a red mantle that matches the red and white of the donor figures. (Fig.6) The image of the mother is accompanied by the text:

Κύριε βοήθει τήν
Δούλην σου
Εἰρήνην.

Lord help your servant Eirene.  

The child on the left is accompanied by the text:

Κύριε βοήθει
τήν δούλιν
σου Καλη'

Lord help your servant Kale.  

While to her right is the inscription:

Κύριε βοήθει τήν
δούλιν σου
Μαρία.

Lord help your servant Maria.  

As reconstructed by Jolivet-Levy, these inscriptions represent a standardized formula and prayer on behalf of each female donor; it is likely that the male donor panel included similar inscriptions for each male donor as well.

Until the restoration of the church, Eirene was thought to be haloed and was therefore assumed by Jerphanion to be related to the imperial family. Cleaning has revealed only a raised coiffure and bare head. Jerphanion’s belief that the donor was related to the Nicaean emperors was given further support by the presence of a portrait of St Tryphon (TPH…..N) at the north end of the nave.  

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
painted directly on the vault between the image of the Deposition and the equestrian double portrait of Saints Theodore and George. As Tryphon was the patron saint of Nicaea, his presence here suggests yet another link between this Cappadocian church and the Nicaean court.

Eirene’s offspring, Maria and Kale, are dressed differently with Kale in white robes and Maria in red robes and a white headscarf, both have their arms crossed upon their chests. While this may be identified as a simple gesture of humility, the pose has also been compared to funerary portraits. The disparity in size and the gesture of protection that Eirene performs as she holds her hands above the figures is the reason why she has been interpreted as their mother. This formula is also repeated in what remains of the male donor panel found under an image of Paradise on the north wall directly to the left of the apse. This painting is severely damaged, and all that remains are some text, the clothing and the feet of the smaller figures and a repeated hand of God blessing them from the upper left and right corners. The lengthy inscription to the right is illegible but that to the left can be partially read (Fig.7):

\[ \text{AGRIXOC H T...} \]
\[ \text{AGIPOC H T...} \]
\[ \text{μου} \]
\[ \text{ΓΣΩ...Ο...} \]
\[ \text{Δ...Δ...} \]

Although not readily visible, Jolivet-Levy has seen a white turban belonging to the larger central donor figure and a fragment to the right of a model of a church. As in

\[ ^{62} \text{Ibid.} \]
the female donor panel, one of the smaller figures (to the left) has a bare head, while the other (to the right) wears a white headscarf. According to Jolivet-Levy these figures are Eirene’s husband and other children.

2.3 Inscriptions

Three other long inscriptions exist: two which relate to donors without portraits and a third which is a biblical quotation. Accompanying the image of Constantine (Ο ΑΓΙΟ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ) and Helena (ΗΑΓΙΑ ΕΛΕΝ) holding the True Cross (Ε...Ε...Ε) between them is: δέησον Μυχαήλην τοῦ Πλακίδα, the prayer of Michael Placidas. (Fig.8) Identifying other donors are the prayer of Michael Placidas and a damaged inscription next to St John (ΗΑΓΙΟ ΗΝΗΣ) to the left of the apse: Κύριε Βοήθει τόν δούλον... : Lord help your servant...(Fig.9)63

A biblical inscription is found to the left of the figures in the Three Hebrews in a Furnace. It can be read:

Οδέ ανγγέλος
Κυρίων Κατεβί νάμα
Περί τόν Αζαρηαν
υς τήν
καμήνων ὁσύ πνεύμα δρόσον."

This is a quote from Daniel 3:49-50: “But the angel of God descended into the furnace near Azarias…”65 This scene of four figures lies on the same register as the Koimesis and

63 As reconstructed by Jolivet Levy, “Images et Espace Cultuel,” 169.

64 Ibid., 173.
directly below the Baptism. The Baptism shows St John Prodromos in the upper left corner in the act of baptizing Christ who stands nude in the river Jordan, here personified by a small nude figure (Fig.10). Also within the river are schematized fish, a snake and a candelabrum. The candle represents the Baptism as the “Feast of Lights” a literal display of the fire of divinity. It is this fire that might connect the Baptism with the Fiery Furnace image. Jolivet-Levy claims that the placement of the scene of the Baptism above the Fiery Furnace reflects the ritual act in which the passage inscribed here was read during the preparation of baptismal candidates.66

2.4 Apse Decoration

The apse contains three niches of varying size, the largest central niche measuring 75cm in height and 45cm in width had a Theotokos painted on its ground, but she is today only visible in vague outlines (Fig.11). Considering its placement and larger size in comparison to the other niches within the apse this niche has been identified as the location of the altar, this identification has also been supported by the painted white cloth seemingly draped over it. This painted cloth complies with the Byzantine tradition of covering the altar in white linen, which is also seen in painted form in St Barbara in Soğanlı.67 The smaller niche to the left of the central one is decorated with a chalice and

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65 As cited in Ibid.

66 Ibid., 173-4. Jolivet-Levy discusses the two scenes as providing a further element of salvation to the program and provides further context for contemporary texts describing Baptism and salvation. The apparent references to Baptism may reflect the performance of the ritual in this church, a theory that was rejected by the original survey as no carved baptismal font is available in the upper-storey chapel. However, the room carved to the north of the chapel below contains two large containers, either of which could have served as a font.

other utensils used in the prothesis rite (Fig.12). The figures on the right side of the apse have been identified as the church fathers John Chrysostom, Nicholas and Gregory of Nyssa above St Amphilochnus of Ikonion in a recessed arch. (Fig.13) The left side has been completely lost. The arch above contains the archangels Michael (ὁ ἀρχάγγέλος [Μιχαήλ]) and Gabriel (ὁ ἀρχάγγελος [Γαβριήλ]) who are both dressed in courtly attire.68

The other saints found in the apse on the eastern wall are all presented in pairs, either next to each other or in a symmetrical arrangement within faux-architectural structures. Below the archangels are pairs of monks in dark blue hoods and grey beards, under Michael are Ephrem the Syrian (ὁ σοφός Ἐφρέμ) to the east and Arsenios (ὁ σοφός Ἀρσενίως) to the west, and under Gabriel are an unidentifiable monk to the east and (ὁ σοφός Σαβατος) to the west Sabas. Ephrem, a fourth century theologian, was especially known for his grim portrayal of judgment, while Arsenios was a hermit and Sabas a local saint and monastic founder of the fifth century.69 On the adjacent wall below the Annunciation is a pair of military saints. Sergios (ὁ σαγγίος Σέργιος) is to the north and Bacchos to the south. They are depicted in military costume with youthful auburn hair and without beards. The small surfaces of wall between the monks and on the east wall facing west are the deacon saints Stephanos and Romanos (ὁ σάββατος Ρωμανός) who are also beardless with auburn hair and are dressed in white robes and carry censers (Fig.14). Another pair includes the St John mentioned above, who is

68 All saint attributions without accompanying inscriptions based on Jolivet Levy “Images et Espace Cultuel”

dressed in elaborate red and gold vestments with a brown omophorion draped over it. St. John is paired with St. Thaleleos (ὁ ἄ... Ὁσαλελεος) who is in similar gold-trimmed red vestments but with a blue cloak and auburn hair and beard who holds a medicinal vessel. (Fig.15) Two other pairings exist in their own recessed arches underneath the domes that flank the apse; these are Kosmas (now destroyed) to the north of the apse and Damianos (ὁ... Δαμηνος) to the south of the apse, and, as a pair facing each other, Panteleemon (ὁ σαγιως Παντελεομον) on the south wall and Kyros (ὁ σαγιος Κιρος) on the north. These saints are all in elaborate clothing and of varying ages. They carry the same golden medicinal container, denoting their role as healers. Although Jolivet Levy attributes the dedication of this church to St. John Anargyros or the Almsgiver, it is more likely that the church is dedicated to both Saints John and Kyros. John and Kyros were traditionally paired martyrs of the Diocletian era, with Kyros the healer and John the soldier.70 This duo of a medical and a warrior saint is congruent with the rest of the saints’ portraits within the church which fall into one of these two categories.

2.5 Saint Portraits

There are also several full-length portrayals of saints in the nave of the church. These are for the most parts military saints, with the exception of the female saints on the west wall with the donors. There are two saints posed in the orant position Paraskeve (…Παρασκεβη) and Kyriake (ἡ σαγια Κυριακη). St. Kyriake wears red and gold robes diamond and floral patterns and the same white headdress as the donors mentioned.

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70 Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, s.v. “Kyros and John.”
above. Next to her, Paraskeve has been almost completely destroyed leaving only the
inscription identifying her, however her presence would be appropriate as St Paraskeve of
Ikonion was not only an Anatolian martyr but a patron of brides and family life.\textsuperscript{71} Thus,
her presence near the female donor panel indicates yet another familial context. The feet
and robes of an unidentifiable saint can be seen on the pillar between Paraskeve’s arch
and that of the donor panel is visible.

2.6 Warrior Saints

The remaining arches contain military saints. The larger arch on the north wall to
the entrance contains an equestrian portrait that is assumed to be George.\textsuperscript{72} This lone
equestrian is a parallel to the image on the tympanum of the west wall of Theodore and
George with identifiable inscriptions, who are represented in the act of slaying dragons
and being crowned by an angel. The equestrian saint on a white horse is accompanied by
what has been identified as an apotropaic\textsuperscript{73} inscription written in a highly abbreviated

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\xi \\
\kappa\phi\epsilon \\
\chi\phi \\
\rho \\
\pi
\end{array}
\]

However, the $\xi$, $\epsilon$ and $\rho$ are written in reverse as can be seen in Figure 16. Thus the
inscription not only displays an extensive abbreviation but also a mirror effect.

\textsuperscript{71} Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, s.v. “Paraskeve of Ikonion.”

\textsuperscript{72} This attribution has been made by both the Jerphanion and Jolivet Levy analyses.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 171.
The saint is dressed in gold armor with a red cloak and rides a white horse striding forward on a field of white flowers painted on the ground with dark blue skies above indicating a very low horizon line. On the tympanum of the west wall is a double equestrian portrait of Saints George and Theodore, in which two dragons are being vanquished by the spear-bearing warriors in a formulaic composition which recalls several eleventh-century Cappadocian examples (Fig.17). The saints ride towards each other, one on a white steed and the other on a brown. As in earlier examples, George is depicted as the younger beardless figure and Theodore, in his Stratelates incarnation, is depicted as a youthful yet bearded general.

These warrior saints are dressed in the same gold armor and red cloak as the portrait in the arch; although with less decorative patterning. The patterning may have been reduced because of the height of the image. The saints are in the act of slaying dragons that are also symmetrically placed with their jaws open and displaying sharp fangs. Above the soldiers is an angel in pink robes with red wings who gestures towards each saint. This has been interpreted as an act of martyrial coronation. These equestrian portraits are both placed in positions of great importance within the program. The single rider at the entrance to the upper church is the first image encountered. The second lies at the apex of the western wall and encompasses the entire width of the nave.

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74 Ibid.

75 Other inscriptions exist between the hooves of the rearing horses and behind the tail of George’s horse but are yet to be deciphered. In the case of St Barbara in Göreme Valley George riding the white. There are two soldier saints called Theodore the first incarnation is Theodore the recruit who has attributes of St George being younger and beardless, his double and later formulation seen here is Theodore Stratelates the General. Christopher Walter. “Theodore, Archetype of the Warrior Saint,” Revue des Etudes Byzantines 57 (1999): pp. 163-210.

The other military saints are Prokopios (ὁ ἅγιος Προκόπιος) and Demetrios (ὁ ἅγιος Δημήτριος) on the south wall and Artemios on the south wall next to the male donor panel. Prokopios is beardless and dark haired and is placed in the central arch of the south wall. He is dressed in gold, red and white and has his sword unsheathed and holds it diagonally across his chest while his other hand clasps his scabbard. On the arch next to him is Demetrios, who is older and bearded. He is dressed in brown, red and gold and holds his brown tunic in one hand and a long thin spear in the same diagonal position as Prokopios. Artemios (Ἄρτεμις) is depicted very differently. He has brown hair and what appear to have been remnants of a beard. His left hand is raised in a gesture of prayer while he holds a now destroyed object with the right hand. This object might be a martyr’s cross. He is dressed in red with a brown cloak that resembles those of the donors and female saints. He is placed in an arch to the left of the destroyed donor panel.

2.7 Annunciation

The vault and quoins of the east wall are covered with a narrative cycle. This begins on the east wall with the Annunciation (Fig. 18). Gabriel (Γαβριήλ) is placed to the left of the arch. He looks across the apse and points to the center of the apse with his right hand. He holds a thin wooden staff in his left hand. Dressed in pink and blue robes he stands on a pink faux marble ground with dark blue sky behind with the same low horizon line as the equestrian portrait. Above his hand is the inscription: Χέρε

Κεχαρητομένη ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ.\(^77\)

\(^77\) Jolivet Levy, “Image et Espace Cultuel á Byzance,” 170.
Mary is seated on the other side of the arch on a gold throne with a red pillow and white cloth draped under her. She holds a spindle in her right hand and long loop of thread raised high on her left hand. Her body is turned towards our right but her neck cranes to look back across the apse at the Archangel. She is dressed in a dark blue tunic and a brown mantle which is highlighted, like her halo, with white detailing that consists of and jagged striations that are similar to the pearls and black outlines that define her throne. To her left framing the arch is the vertical inscription identifying the scene as the Annunciation: ο χερετημος. 78

2.8 Koimesis

On the south wall next to the Mary of the Annunciation is a large Koimesis. This scene has been compared to the eleventh-century churches of Kılıçlar Kuşluk which is located in the Göreme Valley. Mary lies on an elevated bier located in the center of the panel dressed in the same colors as in the Annunciation. Her arms are crossed over her chest. The bier is decorated in white with black outlines. Below is a red compartment with a white floral pattern that contains a golden pitcher and another unidentifiable golden instrument. Above her is Christ, who, dressed in the same colors as his mother, holds the white clad infant that represents Mary’s soul. Above Christ are two angels who hold out their arms, here covered in white cloths, towards the infant. Flanking Christ on the ground are a dark bearded apostle to the left and a white bearded apostle to the right. These are followed in each direction by five apostles to the left and six to the right. The

78 Ibid.
first on the right side, identified as Peter by Jerphanion,⁷⁹ is swinging a censer that can be seen in front of the red panel of the bed. The figures alternate in stylized gestures of grief: either pointing to the Virgin or holding their faces.

2.9 Last Supper and Betrayal

There are two scenes above the Koimesis. To the east is the Last Supper and to the west the Betrayal. The Last Supper is presented in the form of a semicircular table with Christ to the left corner nearest the viewer, holding his hands up and towards the apostles in a gesture that signifies speech (Fig.19). Facing him is a grey-bearded apostle, possibly Peter, while Judas is located next to this figure, he is younger and beardless, and without a halo is represented in the act of dipping a red sphere into the chalice nearest him. The dark red table is set with three chalice-forms the central one being significantly larger and containing a large white fish. All three of these are decorated with pseudo-textual forms.⁸⁰

Next to this scene is the much larger scene of the Betrayal (Fig.20). Christ is in the center and faces the viewer. He is much larger than the rest of the figures and dressed in the same blue tunic and red cloak as in the Last Supper. He blesses with his right hand and holds a long white tubular form, perhaps a scroll, in his left. Judas, a slightly smaller figure embraces him. Around the two figures are the texts:

\[ \chi \acute{r}e \rho \acute{b}i\acute{a} \nu \]


⁸⁰ Lacking the fluid geometric forms of pseudo-Kufic design, it can either be called pseudo-pseudo Kufic, or possibly an attempt to characterize Greek or Hebrew by a painter unfamiliar with those languages.
the large group armed with blades and swords

here to give a kiss, it is he, arrest him.81

To each side are Roman soldiers dressed in armor and garments of various patterns. They wear alternating red and white boots, and wielding spears, axes and daggers. Only the first row of the three or four are visible. The remaining soldiers are indicated by heads and weapons. On the lower left corner, on a much smaller scale is St Peter cutting off the ear of a Roman soldier. These scenes, along with the elaborate Hell scene to be discussed below, are interpreted by Jolivet Levy as representing the themes of sinners and retribution.82

2.10 Deposition

The Passion cycle continues, not with the Crucifixion but with the Deposition (Η ΑΤΟΚΑ ΘΗ...ΘΩ) on the northwest side of the vault next to the portrait of St Tryphon (Fig.21). The image is centered on the cross which has a quatrefoil shape at its center.

82 Ibid., 174.
Holding each arm of the cross are two angels and above the arms are two orbs: the sun (Ὁ ΗΛΙΟ) to the left and the moon (Ἥ ΚΕΛλΝΚ) to the right. Christ’s body fluidly leans towards the left with his head draped on his right shoulder and his right hand held by Mary who holds his hand up to her face. Christ’s body is supported by Joseph of Arimethea who has been highly damaged but whose inscription ΙΟϹΙΦ remains visible to the left of the figure. To the right of the cross are two young figures, one of whom is on the lower ground but has been destroyed except for the halo and left corner of his head, the other is identified by an indecipherable inscription. This second figure leans toward the cross with his arms open.

2.11 The Myrophores and the Anastasis

Directly following, although notably without the red frame that borders the majority of the narrative images, are the Myrophores and the Anastasis. The Myrophores shows three women grouped together. Two are visible in the front and a third is only visible through her halo and a triangle of her red mantle, seen behind the haloes of the women in the foreground. These first two wear gold tunics, with the figure to the left wearing a brown mantle and the figure to the right a red one. Their gestures are also identical but inverted, with each holding one hand to her face and the other to her abdomen. The hands that they hold to their faces are parallel to each other providing symmetry to the figures. To the right is an angel who points to the empty tomb (Fig.22). He is dressed in white and seated on a red mound. To the right of the angel is the inscription ἦδε ὁ τόπος ὡποὺ ἐθήκαν αὐτόν : here is the place where he is laid. And below the tomb is written: κὲ ἵ φιλάσοντες ἀπενεκρόθησαν, the guards were as if
dead. The tomb itself is a long rectangle with pointed ends and is labeled O ΤΑΦΟΣ.

The ends of the tomb are layered in black and white chevrons of various thicknesses. The interior of the tomb is a golden color and contains two knots of cloth, the upper one of which is white while the lower is red. On a much smaller scale than the rest of the scene are two figures that have their eyes closed and their legs crossed. They bear spears and shields and wear golden armor of a square-shaped texture which differs from the soldiers seen in the Betrayal scene. The sleeping soldiers’ most distinguishing feature is the pointed white hats that they wear.

Immediately following this scene is the Anastasis. Christ stands at the center of the panel and holds a cross in his left hand; with his right hand he pulls the figure of Adam upwards. Adam stands on a gold colored platform, most likely his tomb. The figure of Eve is below them. Both Adam and Eve face the viewer while also gesturing towards Christ. Below Christ’s feet is the image of vanquished Hades. He is a nude male with curly grey hair and a moustache. All of his limbs are chained with small spikes that are attached to the red border below the image. The extra-human qualities of the figure are only seen in the brown spike that protrudes from the fangs of his bared teeth. Golden forms, representing the shattered gates are to each side of the figure. To the right corner of the image and on a smaller scale are David and Solomon who emerge from a long orange tomb. Identical portraits of them are found in the medallion strip on the rib of the vault. Jolivet-Levy compares the rigidity and frontality of this Anastasis to Syrian miniatures at Bajam, which date to 1259.

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83 Ibid., 176.

84 Jolivet Levy. Etudes Cappadociennes, 194.
2.12 Medallions of prophets

Along the rib of the vault is a chain of linked medallions that alternate between white and gold and contain the busts of the prophets. From east to west there are: David, Solomon, Elijah, Enoch, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Manasses. The first two are reminders of Christ’s Davidic lineage and the second draw us to the apocalyptic theme found as dominating the program. These legends of the end of days can be linked to the set of images that is the most prominent of all, which is the Weighing of Souls together with images of Hell and Paradise set to each side. This strip takes up entire registers central to the west and the north walls.

2.13 Last Judgment Cycle

Marcello Angheben has classified Byzantine Judgment scenes into two major categories, that of the Last Judgment and that of the Judgment of Souls immediately after death; the different relative destinations in each case being Paradise, or what he refers to as “Heaven-in-waiting,” according to this analysis the cycle in Karşı Kilise is that of “heaven-in-waiting” or immediate judgment. His analysis is mainly focused on the Tetraevangelium of the Stoudios monastery, dating to the second half of the eleventh century (Paris MS Gr. 74), and the early twelfth-century Last Judgment mosaic in the Sta Maria Assunta in Torcello. These images allow us to define certain expectations for this iconography in the Middle Byzantine era. The image centers upon Christ as Judge within a Deesis and above a Hetimasia. The Hetimasia is normally flanked by angels and a

kneeling Adam and Eve. To the left of the vacant throne is the Resurrection of the Dead, to the right would be Hell. In each image Hell is presided over by Hades who rides a monster in the act of devouring a torso. Also riding this monster is an infant. Paradise is represented by a door guarded by several cherubim and St Peter. Beyond the doors, the garden of Paradise normally contains the Good Thief, an Enthroned Virgin, and souls within the Bosom of Abraham. The last and most consistent element among the different depictions of the Last Judgment is the Weighing of Souls presided over by an angel and disrupted by demons. In both content and composition these scenes remain consistent in their depictions of these well-established formulae.86

In Karşı Kilise, the Weighing of Souls depicts three angels, a demon, and the souls of the deceased (Fig.23). The central angel, who is larger than the others in the composition, holds a palm leaf in one hand and a golden scale that contains souls in the form of clusters of disembodied heads in the other. This angel is dressed in white and red robes and wears a wedge-shaped diadem with a white halo; the scale he holds is tipped to the left by the interference of the demon to the right. This naked demon seen in profile has an entirely white body with dark striations indicating hair which is contrasted by dark red hair and red wings. He holds a white cord with his left hand and reaches out to the cluster of souls on the right pan of the scale. There are two more clusters of souls above the scales waiting to be weighed. The souls of the just will be received by the two angels to the left of the composition who hold out their arms, which are covered in white linen cloths. These angels are dressed like the larger one, but have orange and light blue haloes.

The activity of the weighing scene together with the absence of a Deesis has led Angheben to label this image as an example of an immediate judgment rather than a Last Judgment.\textsuperscript{87}

To the right of this scene on the north wall and covering the entire width of the wall is an image of this Heaven-in-Waiting (Fig.24). The westernmost corner has been destroyed, but there is still a remnant of a highly decorated rectangle that may be presumed to be the Gates of Paradise. Given this, the missing portion is probably not the Resurrection of the Dead as Jerphanion had proposed,\textsuperscript{88} but is rather the elect before the Gates of Paradise. The entire wall is set on a light orange ground which contrasts greatly with the rest of the church, which uses a darker blue ground. This lighter tone can be read as a reference to the Garden of Paradise, which was affiliated with the Garden of Eden in the sermons of Ephrem the Syrian.\textsuperscript{89} The orange is highlighted by purple grapes and vines which are in the same purple and shaded with white accents; these not only display references to light but also differentiate the paradisical garden from the rest of the fresco program. The westernmost figure is a nude male who holds his left hand to his abdomen and a cross in his right, he is the Good Thief; labeled \textit{O TTAPAA..COE}. To his right is the Virgin Mary, who holds a flower in one hand and prays with the other. She wears the same colors with white detailing that was seen in the Annunciation. The final figures are the Three patriarchs with the souls of the just at their knees. They are labeled \textit{IAKOB}, \textit{ICAAK}, and \textit{ABPAAM}. Jakob is dressed in white, Isaak in brown and Abraham in red;

\begin{footnotes}
\item[87] Angheben, “Les jugements derniers,” 129.
\item[88] Jerphanion, \textit{Une nouvelle provence} Vol II, 15.
\end{footnotes}
otherwise they are identical in their curled white hair and their beards that divide into three distinct parts. This iconography is based on Matthew 8:11, “And say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

Unlike the ordered horizontal structure of Paradise, the Hell scene is chaotic (Fig. 25). To the far left is an angel dressed as in the Weighing of Souls (Fig. 23), who pushes the souls of the damned with his spear, he is labeled: ὁ ἀγγέλος ἐξορίνος (the angel who banishes).90 Hell is separated from this angel by a white line which the spear penetrates, piercing the neck of a group of bishops identified by their robes and white vestments. The condemned clergy are represented in three rows. Another set of three priests are above them, but instead of being herded by the angel they are being pulled by their beards by a demon who is identical to the nude figure in the Weighing of Souls. They are labeled: Δεῦτε ὑ τίλη μου ἵς πίσαν (Come my souls into the pitch).91 Above these is a figure in profile who is harnessed at the neck by a long rope that is pulled by Hades, he is identified as Judas (ὁ Ἡσυχίος). The focus on clergy alone is believed by Nicole Thierry to be a political comment directed at the priests who had abandoned the region after the Selçuk conquest.92 Another theory regarding the exclusive punishment of priests is presented by Jolivet-Levy93 as being a comment upon the betrayal by the Latins, who had only a decade before the decoration of this church overthrown the emperor of Constantinople in 1204. The suggestion is qualified by the fact that no specific indication

91 Ibid.
92 Thierry, La Cappadoce, 213.
of the priests being foreign is provided, thus Thierry’s theory of abandonment remains more likely.

There are three clusters of souls, but unlike those in other scenes, these are green rather than the healthy pink colors of those in the Bosom of Abraham. The first cluster is to the right of the harnessed man and surrounded by a ball of fire that is labeled: τὸ πιπτὸς τοῦ σωμάτων, the most inextinguishable fire. In the lower right corner is a group that is surrounded by snakes and having their ears, cheeks and brows bitten, in a scene identified as ὁ σκόλις ὁ ἀκημένης, the worm that does not die. The third cluster is located in the upper right corner. These souls have pink faces and are surrounded by white, possibly indicating frost or a net. The dominant figure of the composition is Satan astride a scaled chimera, with long sharp claws and a lion’s head that is in the act of devouring a torso, ὁ βιθυνιακός δράκος, the dragon of the deep. Jerphanion believed this to be the Beast vanquished by the King of Kings as described by St. John (Revelations 19:20).94 The figure of Satan is larger than any figure on the entire wall and pulls reins made of snakes and the rope attached to the chimera. Seated below him on a much smaller scale is a youthful image of Judas, the second image of Judas in this scene. The iconography found in these scenes leads Angheben to state that the Karşı Kilise Judgment scenes are faithful to the classic formula established in the eleventh century.95

94 Jerphanion, Une nouvelle provence Vol. II, 14.

95 Angheben, “Les jugements derniers,” 124. It is similar to the Last Judgment in Canavar Kilise where a larger and more differentiated space is taken up by Paradise and the just, than Hell and the damned. The Hell scene however remains the focal point, especially regarding the Satan figure dominating the Eastern Wall with its size and contrast of color in which his alabaster skin emerges from the dark blue background.
2.14 Conclusions with a Note on Style

The choice of saints indicates a careful selection of doctors and warriors, who define a sanctuary that protects the community and maintains a Greek Orthodox heritage, even after being abandoned by the clergy as a consequence of Selçuk rule. These saints are correlated with the gestures of protection seen in the donor images as well as the apotropaic inscription accompanying the equestrian portrait on the northern wall. The allegiance shown to the Laskarides in the inscription and the placement of the patron saint of Nicaea, Tryphon, upon the nave can be explained as signs of a solidarity with the Greeks of Western Anatolia, whether or not the Cappadocians were governed by them. Further evidence of such an allegiance is implied by the use of Greek iconography together with the local attention given to military saints; these are however mitigated by an obvious stylistic influence drawn from Selçuk figurative art.

As seen in the Last Judgment program, as well as the Christological and Mariological scenes, the iconographic roots can be traced to local Cappadocian and external Middle Byzantine sources. The Koimesis scene repeats an eleventh-century version in Kılıçlar Kuşluk, and all details of the Last Judgment, or rather Immediate Judgment are consistent with the Greek tradition. Thus the content remains readily traceable, while the form requires further explanation.

In the context of local artistic production, not only in Cappadocia but Anatolia as a whole, there was a new wave of both Christian and Muslim patrons. In terms of figurative art there are four major illustrated texts two of which are the illustrated romance of Varka ve Gülşah from Konya dated to 1253 and the Kitab Daqa’iq al-
*Haqa’iq* by Nasreddin al Sivasi from Kayseri dated to 1272. Although these works are several decades later than Karşí Kilise, they are extant examples that reveal both stylistic and symbolic affinity with Karşí Kilise. Most clearly seen in the figure of the angel of the Myrophores (Fig.22), Selçuk painting incorporated figures with round bulbous faces that protrude in profile from thin necks. These faces had distinct thinly-set almond-shaped eyes and small puckered lips, which can also be seen in the angel from the *Kitab Daqa’iq al-Haqa’iq* (Fig. 26). Thus a stylistic parallel is indicated.

This link to Selçuk art within a traditional Orthodox program can also be seen in the birds painted above the two figures of the Annunciation to each side of the apse (Fig.27). Unusual in both form and the prominent placement at the peak of the apse, these birds have yet to be considered in the current literature. A white bird is framed above the archangel Gabriel with one foot elevated as if in motion towards the center of the apse, analogous to this is a brown bird above the Virgin Mary. The brown bird has a plump body, lacks a tail and has a wide beak, while the white bird has a long tail, a slender body and long thin beak. The brown bird according to animal symbolism as seen in *Varka ve Gülşah* is most likely a duck. Ducks were symbols of purity, spirituality, and religious devotion as reflected in the poetry of Rumi, written several decades after the production of this church: “Thou in thy body, art an animal, and in thy spirit thou art of the angels, so that you mayst walk on the earth and also in the sky.”

Ducks were also seen as animals of sorrow and lament; this pious and sad animal in Turkish tradition

96 There is also a musical treatise the Kitab al-Aghani and the Ceasarea Tetraevangelium both illuminated in the thirteenth century.

seems an appropriate parallel to the figure of the Theotokos. While the bird associated with Gabriel, the messenger from God is most likely a white falcon. These rare birds were seen primarily as a symbol of kingship and also of victory and the king’s domain. This symbol is not as readily explained as the first, and would be more easily explained away as the dove of the Holy Spirit; however, the style and the fact that the bird is seen walking rather than in flight suggests of an affinity with the symbolism of royalty and of triumph in contemporary Turkish romance and may thus represent the incarnation as a form of victory.

The stylistic and symbolic incorporation of Selçuk art is seen in many of the churches of Cappadocia, although this has been little examined in current literature, and has not been considered in terms of local production or specific influences. We will return to this, when we consider the animal symbolism and stylistic choices found in Ağdaçaltı Kilise. Although these external influences are apparent, they do not encroach upon the remaining iconographic content of the church. As such we can say that these new elements were used without betraying a strict adherence to established Byzantine formulae in the overall program. This presence, nonetheless, reveals that even as Greek Orthodox identity was maintained in Cappadocia, it could betray elements of cross-cultural formulation. This will also be seen in the visual evidence in Ağdaçaltı Kilise and in the textual evidence in Kirk Dam Altı Kilise.

98 Ibid., 78.
 CHAPTER 3: CANAVAR KILISE (MONSTER CHURCH) - SOĞANLI VALLEY

Canavar Kilise is one of many Cappadocian examples of churches attached to larger complexes as well as other chapels. In this case the thirteenth-century funerary chapel is attached to a larger eleventh-century chapel. Although the program is difficult to read today, Jerphanion’s documentation identifies many of the images and inscriptions that are no longer extant. The defining characteristics of the space are the use of iconographies unknown to Cappadocia and relatively rare elsewhere: Joshua Staying the Sun and Moon and the incorporation of the Ancient of Days into the Last Judgment program.

The floor plan of the church and its adjacent rooms has yet to be fully mapped. What can be seen is that Canavar Kilise or the Monster Church is a double-aisled barrel-vaulted church on a North-South axis. (Fig. 28) The western vault ends in a sanctuary-apse at the north side; this may have been the case with the eastern vault as well, since multiple sanctuaries are far more common in the Cappadocian region than single sanctuaries.\(^\text{99}\) Canavar Kilise is carved into an individual conical formation, but is part of a larger complex of several rooms, which include a refectory-type space with excavated

\(^{99}\) Teteriatnikov, *The Liturgical Planning*, 42-45, 78. A description of the development of sanctuaries in double aisled churches is provided, p. 42-45 as well as the tracing the tradition of multiple sanctuaries to the Christian East, summarized on p. 78.
tufa benches and table. Thus, it has for the most part been referred to as Canavar Monastery in prior literature. Canavar Kilise is much damaged and missing an entire apse to the north of the eastern nave. Smoke and graffiti limit the legibility of the decoration.

When first documented by Jerphanion, the collapsed sanctuary of the larger nave appears to have been used as the entrance. The present entrance is found beneath the Last Judgment program. The aisles are separated by an arcade of only one column. The western vault and apse are preserved intact with two arcosolia, forming burial chambers, towards the far left wall. Since Jerphanion’s description little has been published about Canavar Kilise.

There are two different iconographic themes within the two parts of the church with the eastern nave having an Infancy cycle of the Life of Christ, and the western being entirely dedicated to Last Judgment imagery. Stylistic differences are difficult to detect due to the highly damaged state of the Infancy cycle. This can only be seen in darkened contours. That there are different dates in play is suggested by the multiple layers of plaster and chipped segments indicating several periods of consecutive decoration. The damaged eastern vault once had donor images and decorations that have been dated to the eleventh century through their connections with Karabaş Kilise (1060-1061). The western nave has been dated to the thirteenth century on stylistic and iconographic

100 Jerphanion, Une nouvelle province, 361.
102 The donor image described by Jerphanion, which is no longer available, is related in costume and style to the donors of Karabaş Kilise as members of the Skepides family, thus the female donor Evdokia is considered a member of the Skepides family by Jerphanion, and thus helps him date this layer of decoration to 1060. Ibid., 363.
These indicate some connection to Karşılı Kilise in both the inscriptions and the images used in the Paradise and the Hell scenes.

3.1 Detached Remnants of Hell scene

The northern end of the eastern vault has collapsed with the few remnants remain which currently stored inside the western sanctuary. Two of the pieces display nude figures. One of these fragments shows small nude figures cowering above a fiery line. (Fig.29) Framed in red below them is a small remnant of a scene with a blue background of which two letters remain CK (and possibly \( \varsigma \)). The second fragment of a single nude is a lower torso of another larger figure with a body that holds the palm of its hand forward but angled towards its waist in front of a red background on yet another piece of the destroyed wall. (Fig.30) Given the consistency in both structure and form regarding Byzantine Last Judgments,\(^{104}\) as shown by Marcello Angheben, it can be presumed that this large figure can be linked to a similar figure in the top left corner of the grid representing Hell in the eleventh-century mosaic of Sta Maria Assunta in Torcello. (Fig.31) As the pieces are approximately 40cm in length and width this indicates a rather large Hell scene with a uniform red background as part of the larger Last Judgment program in the western nave.

\(^{103}\) Jerphanion dates the remainder of the decoration, especially the Last Judgment to the period of Ottoman domination, being the fourteenth century or later. Ibid., 368.

\(^{104}\) Angheben, “Les Jugements derniers,” 105-134.
3.2 Joshua Staying the Sun and Moon

The third and last detached piece is the lower torso of what can be assumed to be a warrior saint whose sword and armor are visible; it was probably a larger full-length standing portrait. (Fig.32) He clasps his cloak from behind and thus only one finger is visible, this gives what remains of the figure an element of plasticity. This is most likely the figure described by Jerphanion as the warrior with breastplate and helmet who raises his hand in a gesture of speech or prayer and who stood in the “primary nave” next to a full-length angel wearing an ornate dalmatic and cloak and who also carried a sword over his right shoulder. These figures were located in the far right corner of the right wall, a section that is currently covered in rubble.

Jerphanion identifies this warrior as possibly being Joshua staying the Sun and Moon (Joshua, 10:12), as orbs of white and red were seen above him. No other image in Jerphanion’s original description of this church fits this image. As the remaining part shows a shield and also a hand at the waist it can be compared to a much earlier and far more dynamic image of Joshua arresting the sun and moon in the mid-tenth century Joshua Roll. (Fig. 33) An equestrian scene may be tentatively connected with the Joshua image. On the now lost tympanum there was a depiction a large horse striding towards a cityscape with two smaller horsemen on a much smaller scale in the foreground riding in opposing directions. This scene has yet to be identified, but if connected with the Joshua scene it may have been related to one of his military campaigns. As the miracle occurred during the Israelite battles with the Amorites it is likely that this may have been the

105 Ibid.
campaign whose narrative encompassed the larger image of Joshua.\textsuperscript{106} The horsemen may also represent the several images in the Byzantine Octateuchs which depict the dispatch of spies to the Kingdom of Ai (Joshua 7:2), as this would involve an image of riders marching towards a cityscape. This image of Joshua Staying the Sun and Moon, if identified correctly by Jerphanion, can be seen in correlation with the many images of warrior saints in Cappadocia. In this case, we find a warrior king within a narrative of divine intervention on behalf of the monarch. However, it also connects to the later image of the Ancient of Days in the western nave through an illustration in a later Octateuch dated to the second half of the thirteenth century associated with Smyrna.\textsuperscript{107} Another local image of Joshua and an angel, however without the connotations regarding celestial bodies, is located in The Pigeon House in Çavuşin. Lyn Rodley identified that particular group as relating to imperial portraits in the niche immediately below, thus not only displaying military but also imperial themes within the persona of Joshua.\textsuperscript{108} Both of these images, which are not visible elsewhere in Cappadocia can be seen in the now lost Smyrna Octateuch although no direct connection can be established. The monastic community may have had a copy of a similar illustrated Octateuch within their collection which may have been used as a model for the later, thirteenth-century additions to the church.


3.3 Infancy Cycle

The rest of the nave is highly damaged by smoke and graffiti and has accrued more damage since Jerphanion’s expedition. These were documented as having been covered with an Infancy cycle including a Nativity with details of an angel appearing to the shepherds on the right side of the vault. On the left was the Presentation in the Temple, seen only in silhouettes even in the early twentieth century. But the inscription upon the prophetess’ scroll was deciphered by Jerphanion as: TOYΤω ΤΟΒΠΕ ΦΟC ΟΥΠΑ NON ΒΑΣΙΑЄCТ, This child is the ruler of the heavens.\textsuperscript{109}

3.4 Equestrian Saint

The southern wall has a large scale equestrian saint seen in the act of killing serpent shown in part on to the left corner.\textsuperscript{110} (Fig. 34) The act of striking is evident by the saint’s right arm, which is raised in a ninety-degree angle as in the act of plunging a spear forwards. This is the same posture and pose seen in the equestrian portraits of George and Theodore on the tympanum of the western wall of Karşî Kilise. Remnants of a beast below the horse show three layers of color, with yellow at the center enveloped in white which is entirely framed by red. Texture has been added to the much thicker white layer to indicate scales by uniform blue dots that give a tentacle effect to the undulating lines. (Fig.35) The most likely candidate for this figure, as suggested by Jerphanion, is St George.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{109} Jerphanion, \textit{Une nouvelle provence} Vol II, 362.

\textsuperscript{110} This figure of a monster being slain is the source of the local name of the church.

\textsuperscript{111} Jerphanion, \textit{Une nouvelle provence} Vol II, 364.
3.5 Saint Portraits

On the short stretch of wall next to the soldier are two female saints and a third unidentifiable saint. To the far right is a female saint in dark robes covered with hair. Another female in red robes with a gold border and more elaborate coiffeur can be distinguished. She is possibly an imperial saint or an image of St Catherine, who was described by Jerphanion as wearing a crown and *thorakion* in a donor panel that is now lost.\(^{112}\) The unidentifiable figure has only a head and hand remaining, apparently having once been in an orant pose with hands raised. (Figs. 36) This image indicates that the funerary chapel or western nave was excavated at a later date, as this excavation cuts off the lower half and part of the arms of this saint.

On the column facing the warrior saint is a monastic saint whose arms are raised with palms facing forward in a gesture of prayer. There is a distinguishable textual symbol for άγιος to his right and to his left ΑΡΓΕΝΙΣΣ written vertically. This is St Arsenios, a fifth-century monastic saint who left his position as a pupil in Constantinople to lead the life of a hermit in Egypt. He is depicted in his customary brown robes and long white beard (Fig.37).\(^{113}\)

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\(^{112}\) Ibid., 363 described is a female donor with an elaborate headdress with pseudo-Kufic decoration but without a halo, that prays to St Catherine and is labeled Evdokia, believed to be the same as nun Evdokia Skepides also portrayed as a donor’s daughter in Karabağ Kilise 300 meters away by Jerphanion.

\(^{113}\) *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. “Arsenios the Great”
3.6 Funerary chapel

The funerary chapel which is called the “secondary nave” by Jerphanion, is far better preserved. There is a reduced Deesis in the apse consisting of three busts: Christ, the Virgin, and St John Prodromos. Below this, Jerphanion recorded an abridged form of the Divine Liturgy with Christ and four other figures, but lacking an angel and architectural background. Both the Deesis and Divine Liturgy are now entirely lost.114 The major additions to this nave are the burial *arcosolia*. The northern one of these has a single grave the southern one has two. Each has highly damaged narrative scenes on the walls within the *arcosolia* and behind the tombs. A step leads up to the elevated sanctuary and the burial chamber containing a single grave. The sanctuary is barely above ground level, while the burial niche walls are approximately 50 cm above the ground. The wall partitions separating the nave from the burial niches are painted in a faux-marble effect. The single grave has a scene of the Anastasis, and the double grave has three full-length portraits of saints. Two of these were identified by Jerphanion as St Zosimos and St Mary the Egyptian who address one another. This speech gesture may be a simplified depiction of Mary receiving the Eucharist from the monk Zosimos. This is a common theme in portraits of both saints, one example being the twelfth-century Panagia Amasgou in Cyprus.115 Two other figures, one in a yellow tunic and red cloak and


another with only a loincloth, are accompanied by the words that identify St Mary the Egyptian: \( \text{VOCHD MAPV(\(\alpha\))} \), with an orant saint in the background.\(^{116}\)

### 3.7 Last Judgment

The rest of this nave is dominated by various elements of the Last Judgment covering the entire vault, southern wall and parts of the narthex. The largest part of the vault is decorated with what Marcell Restle identified as the Communion of the Apostles. This attribution is doubtful due to the lack an altar or any indication of holy sacraments.\(^{117}\) The identification may have been a confusion brought on by the damage to the apse which Restle may have presumes to be Christ offering sacraments. It is more likely following Jerphanion earlier description, to be part of the Last Judgment program. The whole of the western side of the vault is covered by rows of male saints, of varying ages in a brown, beige and blue palette. The front row consists of apostles seated on golden thrones with elaborate ornamentation of pearls and golden squares on their footstools (Figs.38) each holds a codex with his name. These are:

\[ \text{[ΠԢΣΠΟΣ应急预案]-Petros} \]
\[ \text{ΠΑΛΟΛΕ- Paulos} \]
\[ \text{[ΛΟ stylesheet]- Lukas} \]
\[ \text{MAPKOC-Markos} \]
\[ \text{IOANVC- Ioannes} \]

\(^{116}\) Ibid, 366-7.

Behind the apostles are five more rows of saints. The faces of those in the second row remain distinguishable; the remaining rows the figures are only indicated by haloes or lancets, thus portraying the heavenly militia behind the apostles. In the apex is a medallion containing the bust of Christ with the traits of the Ancient of Days and accompanied by the inscription:

| İÇ | XÇ |

οΠΑΛΕΟC ΤΩΝ ΗΜΕΡΩΝ

Ancient of Days

This particular type of Christ indicates through his white beard and elderly demeanor his unity with God the Father as described in Daniel 7:9. The iconography of this figure otherwise retains the gestures and cruciform halo of the Pantokrator image.119 Several explanations for the prophecy had been provided in patristic writings. Cyril of Jerusalem had equated the Ancient of Days with both God the Father and Christ, a

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representation of their coexistence during the Last Judgment.\footnote{120}{Gretchen Kreahling McKay, “The Eastern Christian Exegetical Tradition of Daniel’s Vision of the Ancient of Days,” \textit{Journal of Early Christian Studies}, 7:1 (1999): 139-161, 146.} But John Chrysostom identified the Ancient of Days’ attributes as those of the divine judge, who was both eternal and wise as shown through the attributes of age.\footnote{121}{Ibid., 150.} But it was also the Ancient of Days who preceded all, showing that God existed before time, as described by Germanus the eighth-century Patriarch of Constantinople. According to him, one can identify the various aspects of the divine in iconography as the Ancient of Days, representing eternity, Christ Emmanuel, representing the incarnation, and finally to the crucified Christ, representing \footnote{122}{Ibid., 155.} in adult form.\footnote{123}{Manolis Chatzidakis, ed. \textit{Kastoria: Mosaics and Wall Paintings} (Athens: Melissa Publishing House, 1985), 18.} In the Smyrna Octateuch, the image acts as a frontispiece to Genesis. The Ancient of Days stands within the circle of the sun and holds an orb containing the four phases of the moon. This image of eternity represents creation, rather than the end of time, as found in Canavar Kilise. \footnote{120}{Gretchen Kreahling McKay, “The Eastern Christian Exegetical Tradition of Daniel’s Vision of the Ancient of Days,” \textit{Journal of Early Christian Studies}, 7:1 (1999): 139-161, 146.} In the thirteenth-century additions to the church of St Stephen in Kastoria, a medallion similar to that in Canavar in both its image and inscription is part of just such a progression of images. \footnote{122}{Ibid., 155.} This church has also been compared to Güllü Dere in the later Last Judgment additions, thus indicating possible communication between the Cappadocia and Kastoria or similar influences used in the painting of these churches. \footnote{123}{Manolis Chatzidakis, ed. \textit{Kastoria: Mosaics and Wall Paintings} (Athens: Melissa Publishing House, 1985), 18.} In comparing the three depictions of the Ancient of Days, one can suggest Canavar Kilise’s emphasis on an eternal deity, but who indicates Trinitarian sentiment by labeling the image as Christ. In contrast, aspects of Christ and the incarnation are all present in the set of medallions in Kastoria represent
the incarnation and redemption through the Christ Emmanuel and Pantokrator images, and, the Smyrna manuscript places the eternal deity before time as a frontispiece to Creation. In the context of the Last Judgment portrayed here, the aged deity acts as the judge who is missing in the Karşılı Kilise Last Judgment program.

The entire vault is covered by Paradise and includes representations of the apostles and holy militia and the three patriarchs, who are located on the opposite side of the vault. Abraham (abıbaam), Isaac (Hcaak), and Jacob (hakob) are described by Jerphanion as seated among the flowers of Paradise, with the souls of the just on their knees represented in form of infants. Next to them was an enthroned Virgin in an orant pose flanked by angels and palms and an image of the Good Thief dressed only in a loincloth and accompanied by the vertical inscription: oACTVCTouΠΑΡΑΔVCou interpreted as o λ’ησης του παραδυσου. These three elements of Paradise represented among the flowers of Paradise are congruent with those of Karşılı Kilise.

An angel sounding the trumpet and the Ressurection of the Dead, accompanied by the words: AITELΟC O CAΛΠΙΤΩΝ, appears on the lower part of the wall. Elsewhere, one finds a red door, the door to Hell, in which the body of a nude figure surrounded by a serpent. This may be large figure may be the remnant of the large nude mentioned earlier (Fig.30). Other punishments of sinners are accompanied by the texts:

OCAMAP
ATITON
AN
Sinner
ΕΦΤ
Those who love to masturbate will be punished for all eternity.

Interpreted as the first including the word: ἀμαρτινλοϊ. The second is interpreted as identical to the legend noted by Jerhanion in Karši Kilise: Δέος[εφωφι,λοιμ]ου εις [ευνιονχ] [στι].

The narthex of the primary nave was documented as having blocks of additional Last Judgment scenes. In one of these demons were pulling the beards of a group of monks, such as can also be found in the Hell scene in Karši Kilise. These sinners, as identified in the first inscription may be a warning for the viewer who may have read the second inscription. In both thirteenth-century Hell scenes there are elements that depict the punishment of monks and clergy. In this, Canavar Kilise is consistent with the image depicting sinners of all types, whether they are clergy, laymen, or even royalty.

3.8 Conclusions

There are several indicators of function and patronage provided by the thirteenth-century funerary chapel in Canavar Kilise. The monastic context is reiterated throughout both the physical location of the chapel, among a large group of rooms indicating a monastery, and the content of the fresco decoration. The image of Zosimos and Mary the

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125 Ibid., 367.
Egyptian along with the portrait of Arsenios and the lack of donor images affiliated with the *arcosolia* tombs all indicate a monastic site.

Nicole Thierry has commented that the Last Judgment scene on the vaults of Canavar Kilise was a work without originality and of medium quality, being a mere copy of existing formulae found in St George at Ortaköy and Karşı Kilise.\textsuperscript{126} Thierry fails to account for the fact that this entire chapel is covered in images of the Last Judgment. Furthermore, Alev Türker has noted that this is the only appearance of Christ as the Ancient of Days in Cappadocia.\textsuperscript{127} Considering the unique iconography found in both the eleventh-century excavation and the later thirteenth-century addition, a local variant of the Byzantine Octateuch tradition, one containing the Ancient of Days and Joshua iconography, is a likely source for the Canavar Kilise program. This indicates the availability of monastic texts and illustrated bibles in the region, which could have served as sources for the decoration of Canavar Kilise.

The analysis of the western nave of Canavar Kilise indicates that the Christian population of Soğanlı Dere maintained steady worship in this church from the eleventh century on, providing funds to renew its decoration. This patronage even extended to the thirteenth-century excavation of the second nave, indicating the importance of both the church and, possibly, the monastery as a whole. Other indications for the commission and use of Canavar Kilise are indicated by the fascination with the iconography of the Last Judgment, here dominated not by scenes of Hell or the Weighing of Souls, but images of


\textsuperscript{127} Alev Türker, “A Unique Iconographic Type of Christ in Cappadocia: Christ, The Ancient of Days,” (Paper Presented at the 32nd Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, St Louis, Missouri, Nov 10-12, 2006).
Apostles and the Garden of Paradise. Thus salvation and eternal peace and an eternal deity are emphasized in the thirteenth century additions to Canavar Kilise. Although the program has lost several segments since the early twentieth century, it is unlikely that the Hell scene could have dominated either that of Paradise or the representation of the apostles and heavenly militia who overpower the entire vault.

The church shows willingness to experiment with theological formulae as well as openness to the incorporation of images little known in Cappadocia. Thus the need for innovative art is seen in the content with an adherence to Byzantine style, while Karşı Kilise, and as we shall see Ağacaltı Kilise, display the same need in stylistic developments. Canavar Kilise provides evidence of the persistence of a Byzantine style and a continuing monastic presence in the region.
CHAPTER 4:
AĞAÇALTı KILISE- IHLARA VALLEY

In contrast to Canavar Kilise’s approach, another church incorporates both stylistic and iconographic developments, Ağaçaltı Kilise or the Church under the Tree. This church located in the Ihlara valley, has been considered an anomaly in both its form and iconographic program in current literature. The stylistic choice shows a preference for geometric abstraction in both the aniconic decoration and the narrative imagery. These choices have brought forth several theories regarding the influences that shaped the date of the style and content within the church. I will argue that the church in terms of both the Orthodox tradition and in relation to its geographical location this church, which was dedicated to the “Holy Theotokos Queen of the Angels,” offers iconographic and formal choices that indicate an emphasis upon spiritual and bodily ascension giving specific importance to angelic forms.

First published in great detail by the Thierrys in 1963 in their opus on the churches in the vicinity of Hasan Daği,128 its dating and architectural form has been briefly discussed by Spiro Kostof and Jacqueline Lafontaine- Dosogne in their later more

general discussions of Cappadocia. In all, the 1963 study remains the major and most current work on the space. Study of the church had been affected by the rising level of the Melendiz River. This made initial access to and identification of the location and analysis difficult. Since the Thierry investigation much of the initial soil deposits have been cleared, although there still remains a great deal to be cleared.

The site presents a cruciform church with a central cupola, its arms have a uniform width of 2 m but are not of equal length, the north and south arms are 2 m, while the east and west arms are 3.8 m, with a funerary room as an appendage to the northern arm. Natalia Teteriatnikov classifies burial spaces in Cappadocia into three types: *arcosolia*, annexed funerary chambers, and carved indentations within the floor of the porch and narthex. Small *arcosolia* were the most popular type in this later period. Ağaçaltı Kilise, however, presents the rarer type of an annexed funerary chamber a space excavated as an addition to the architectural form of the church. These are usually barrel-vaulted spaces, such as we find here (Fig. 41).

The now-destroyed sanctuary is presumed to have been on the eastern arm of the space that is currently used as the entrance. There are two staircases, one on the south wall of the west arm which descends towards the north, another in the north wall which descends towards the east. It is difficult to know which of the two served as the original entrance into the chapel. The dome is carried by a drum of two registers with

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131 Today both of these remain obstructed by the soil and gravel Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres*, 73.
faux-supports in the shape of squinches. The lower register embraces the four bays. Each side of this is divided by three pilasters, twelve in all. The upper register is roughly octagonal in shape and transitions into the circle of the dome. Architectural historian Spiro Kostof states that this form cannot predate the mid-ninth century but would more likely belong to the tenth or later.\textsuperscript{132}

The fresco decoration of the church includes an Infancy cycle of Christ with the Annunciation, Visitation, and Arrival of the Magi on the south arm. Later scenes of the Koimesis, Baptism and Flight into Egypt are painted on the walls of the north arm. The west arm which faces the now unavailable sanctuary includes Daniel in the Lions Den and a set of medallions depicting griffins, which are elaborately framed by blocks of aniconic decoration. The central space of the dome is decorated in the same style and has similar decorative accents within a program that presents Christ above with portraits of bishops and prophets below. All images are depicted in light pastel hues with an overwhelming emphasis on light blue and a yellow-gold color.

4.1 Annunciation

The south arm presents from left to right: the Annunciation, Nativity, and Adoration of the Magi. In the Annunciation panel, the Virgin stands to the left in a frontal pose with her hands held in a frontal gesture of prayer while the angel reaches towards her with his right hand in a gesture of greeting. (Fig.42) The Virgin is dressed in a red mantle and has a golden halo outlined in black. The angel is highly stylized with robes

\textsuperscript{132} Kostof, \textit{Caves of God}, 112.
that consist of parallel lines of blue, yellow, red and black with wings depicted in the same manner. Gabriel’s wings and robes can only be differentiated from his cloak by the verticality of his wings and angle of his robe. The angel’s wings include a base which is stylized in the form of blue crescents upon an orange ground.

4.2 Visitation and Nativity

The scene in the center of the southern arm depicts a conflation of the Visitation to the left and the Nativity to the right (Fig. 43). Mary retains the same red-brown mantle in each scene. In the Visitation she embraces Elizabeth, who wears a blue mantle. Unfortunately, much of this scene has been lost due to water damage, which eliminated the entire bottom half of the scene. The Nativity is found in the right half of the wall. Joseph is seated with his chin propped on his fist facing the cave represented by an arc of three wavy lines; he acts as a transitional figure between the two scenes. The cave is given a red ground rather than the yellow background used in the rest of the panel. The infant Christ is in a cradle found above the Virgin. A grey disc, identified as the star, is at the crown of the cave. A donkey looks down upon the child from the left and yet remains within the space of the cave.

4.3 Adoration of the Magi

To the right of this scene, on the right side of the arm are the three Magi. They are labeled in the large black letters as: Gaspar (ἘΓΑΣΠΑΡ), Balthazar (ΒΑΛΤΑΣΑΡ) and Melchior (ΜΕΛΧΙΩΝ). (Fig. 44) Depicted in identical form, each Magi wears a pointed hat, a short tunic of muted turquoise, and beige leggings with crossed hatch lines
indicating laces. These leggings have been considered to be a local variation of *anaxyrides* (leggings).\(^{133}\) They all have small pointed beards, with Melchior and Balthazar having light brown beards and Gaspar having a darker black beard. Each holds a grey disc with gold lines, Gaspar’s is outlined in black. These discs are undoubtedly symbolic of their offerings. Their distinctive pointed hats have been compared to Phrygian caps or Persian headdresses.\(^{134}\) It is notable that such hats are also seen on the Roman soldiers in the *Myrophores* scene of Karşı Kilise and on the souls in the Weighing of the Souls scene in nearby Yılanlı Kilise.

### 4.4 Flight into Egypt

In the north arm, facing these scenes, are three additional narratives scenes. From left to right they are the Koimesis, Baptism and Flight into Egypt. These ought to be read in the reverse order to those of the south arm. The Flight into Egypt displays an unnamed figure, which may be identified as James, the youngest son of Joseph, marching at the front toward the center of the church.\(^{135}\) Mary, shown frontally on the same long-necked white animal seen in the Nativity, presumably a donkey, is followed by Joseph holding a staff (Fig. 45). The costumes of Mary and Joseph help to maintain a narrative continuity with the scenes in the southern arm. The holy couple wears the same red and beige clothing which they wore in earlier scenes. The partially destroyed figure of James wears a white tunic drawn in turquoise and holds a small parcel attached to a stick against his

\(^{133}\) Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres*, 82.

\(^{134}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 77.
shoulder. James wears the same type of white tunic, and has the same red hair, as the
angels depicted upon the cupola. In fact, since the cupola angels are wingless, the red-
haired figure in the Flight into Egypt may also be an angel guiding the Holy Family.
Considering the dedication the presence of an angel with Mary is possible.

4.5 Baptism of Christ

On the tympanum of this arm is what can be deciphered as a Baptism scene
(Fig.46). A bearded haloed figure in a blue cloak can be seen with what seems to be
lighter blue-grey lines at his feet. These lines most likely represent the river Jordan. An
area of beige flesh tone in the water is probably the only remaining part of Christ. There
is a barely visible, but indecipherable inscription to the right above St John Prodromos’
head. In the upper left corner, however, the grey dove of the Holy Spirit is still visible,
shaped as an arrow and in the same grey color as St John’s robes.

4.6 Koimesis

To the left of this scene is a type of Koimesis which is unusually split into two
narrative parts. (Fig.47) In the upper left corner stands an angel in turquoise with gold
wings holding a staff. To his right stands Christ with a cruciform halo and wearing red
holding a brown bundle which is damaged but can be identified as the soul of the Virgin.
Slightly below and to the right of this group, Christ is represented yet again, in the same
costume seated upon the chest of a figure clad in white, reaching his hands to her face.
The recumbent figure, Mary, lies on a bier represented by a golden table with four legs
accented with black and blue markings. Next to her is another figure identified as St John
holding an unusual instrument, a baton with two protruding antennae that end in what resemble either flowers or tassels. This may tentatively be identified as the palm given to John by Peter. The only addition seen today is the remnants of a nimbus under the bier to the left, possibly another apostle, or the scene of an angel cutting off the hands of Jephonias as seen in both the eleventh-century church Yılanlı Kilise and the thirteenth-century Kırk Dam Altı Kilise.

In addition to the visual evidence, the scene may be identified through the inscription: Η ΚΟΙΜΗΣΗ ΣΥΡΙΑΚΟΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ (V) ΜΗΝΗ ΑΥΓΟΥΣ (Tω): “the Koimesis of the Holy Theotokos in the month of August.” The presence of a Koimesis scene dates the church after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in the ninth century, before which monumental depictions of the Koimesis are not known. The inscription is notable for adding a mention of the feast of the Koimesis which is celebrated on the fifteenth of August. This inscription hints at a possible liturgical life for this image.

The Thierrys have asserted that this format for the Koimesis is previously unknown in Cappadocia and Byzantium as a whole. The division of the scene into two parts, as well as the absence of a group of mourning apostles, has even led to Restle’s misidentification of the image as the Raising of Lazarus. It can be argued that this has introduced a second element to Christ’s attendance at his mother’s death. In the lower part of the image, Christ’s hands reach to her face. This gesture may have a ritualistic

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136 Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres 79.
137 See below.
138 Kostof, Caves of God, 203.
139 Ibid., 79.
140 Restle, Byzantine Wall Painting, 487.
explanation. James Kyriakakis, in his work on Byzantine care for the dead, revealed that special care was given by the deceased’s closest relatives to closing the mouth and eyes of the deceased.\(^{141}\) The closing of the eyes, known as \textit{kalyptein}, and closing of the mouth known as \textit{sygkleiein}, took place at the same time immediately following death in order to provide an appearance of sleep whilst protecting the body from demonic possession. The body of the deceased was seen as vulnerable to evil spirits after its last breath and thus was attended to by relations.\(^{142}\) Thus the dual image of the Koimesis may be interpreted as the scene immediately following the Virgin’s death in which her son and thereby the deceased’s nearest relation tends to the needs and protection of her body along with the traditional gesture of caring for her soul. Thus the image may show Christ, her son, performing the duties of caring for her corporeal nature as well as her soul, which is depicted separately, held in Christ’s arms, in the second segment.

4.7 Daniel in the Lion’s Den

Another image common to Byzantine church decoration, but aberrant in its presentation here in Ağcaçaltı Kilise, is Daniel in the Lions Den. Located in the west arm, which presumably faced the sanctuary, it is presented in an arm that is otherwise entirely covered in ornamental patterns. Daniel faces the viewer with his hands raised in prayer. He wears a grey-green robe and a red-brown tunic. (Fig.48) On both sides of the prophet are two highly stylized lions painted in a yellow tone and highlighted with green and red


\(^{142}\) Ibid., 39.
strokes, their tails are in the form of an arc that reaches the torso, thereby forming a semi-circle.

The Thierrys compared these lions broadly to Muslim sculpture prevalent in the High Middle Ages. Two later Selçuk monuments present more specific comparisons. The first is Çifte Minareli Medrese in Sivas (Sebaste) constructed between 1210 and 1270. This includes in its façade relief a scene of two lions marching towards each other. Above them are a palm and an eagle rather than the Daniel and cross found at Ağacaltı Kilise. (Fig.49) Both sets of lions have heads seen in profile with two ears also in profile, and moderately open jaws. Their feet are represented in the form of bulges with one leg elevated facing the center as if they were marching towards the center. Most prominently they also have tails that arc towards their torsos creating a semi-circle. This same pattern is repeated in the Yakutiye Medrese of 1310, which indicates a widespread visual familiarity with the motif in the region. The lion is present in many forms in Selçuk art, including coins, mosques, forts, pottery, and all manner of visual material. The lion in Turkish Shamanism and in the Dede Korkut stories represents the mother figure that carried the deceased into the heavens after death. The lioness was seen especially in Anatolian headstones found throughout the Selçuk period. Its presence here cites the traditional Christian salvation image of Daniel, but presents this with formal reference to the Selçuk salvation image. Above the scene is a checker pattern

143 Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres*, 82.


with muted turquoise circles in each box. An inscription is also found on the arch of the arm: H ΠΑΝΤΑΝΑΚΑ ΤΟΝ ΑΚΩΜΑΤΩΝ... This may be read as implying that the church could have been dedicated to the Mother of God as the Queen of the Bodiless (Angels). \(^\text{146}\)

### 4.8 Griffin Medallions

To the right of this scene and embedded in the decorative patterns is a set of three griffins each enclosed in floral medallions (Fig.50). On a red ground are three green medallions with mythical animals depicted in the act of marching to the left. Between the medallions is green foliage painted in broad green strokes with white and red detailing providing for depth. The medallions themselves are bordered in what has been described as cross-sections of chalices painted in green and yellow. \(^\text{147}\) These animals themselves have a distended open beak with sharp fangs, its right claws shows that it is in the act of consuming what may be a smaller animal or a stalk of grain. The objects being ingested are simply long and green with striations which may be legs or plant forms. The bodies of the animals consist of a thick neck which produces equally large and thick wings with only marginal indications of hind legs. Nicole Thierry initially linked these chimeras to Sassanid bestiaries, but without any iconographic comparison. In a later text, Thierry published a specific example from Al Oda in Isauria which contains the identical animal and medallions of tulip shaped garlands (Fig.51). \(^\text{148}\) This church has been dated to the

\(^\text{146}\) J. Lafontaine-Doosogne, “Nouvelles Notes Cappadociennes,” 160.

\(^\text{147}\) Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres*, 85.

\(^\text{148}\) Thierry, *La Cappadoce*, 140-142.
Iconoclastic period and also contains several geometric patterns especially braids similar to Ağaçaltı. Both of these churches and the decorative motifs found within them have been linked to Islamic art. In the case of Al Oda this tie has been interpreted as marking an affinity between Christian and Islamic Iconoclasm.149 The dating of Al Oda, has not been questioned since its publication in 1957. In the years following, however, aniconic decoration has been reconsidered, especially as a means for dating churches. Rather than presenting a direct connection to the Iconoclast era, Wharton Epstein argued that other factors may have led to such a choice, such as a lack of funds or qualified painters. Since then several churches have been reconsidered and placed in the later medieval period.150

Two possible origins for these animals are the Islamic senmurv and the Byzantine griffin. In Sassanian tradition the senmurv was a distributor of seeds who, in the course of its Islamic use, became both a benevolent and malevolent figure. The most contemporary to Ağaçaltı Kilise is the eleventh-century simurgh, a large bird who cared for an abandoned prince.151 Visually, however, the Byzantine griffin with its tapering neck and beak-like mouth is a more likely source. These figures were often represented in both decorative elements and in the narrative of the Ascension of Alexander, while being associated with the heavenly ascent in Byzantine literature.152 Slobodan Curcic connects


the sepulchral use of griffins in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Byzantium to Christian resurrection and salvation. This interpretation is also appropriate here, given the funerary function of this chapel.

4.9 Apocalyptic Dome and Drum

An Apocalyptic vision of the Godhead dominates the space defined by the dome (Fig.52). Christ is placed at the center of the dome, surrounded by a mandorla of irregular shape; the mandorla is a dark color with red orbs whose projecting striations of white lines with white dots at each end indicate stars. This scene is also accented by the darker hue of five ovals that radiate from the Christ figure. The figure himself makes a gesture of speech with his right hand and holds a golden codex with his left. He is surrounded by angels of two types, those on four corners, who are larger and hold up the mandorla, and those between the larger figures and who are clustered into groups, five to the northeast and southwest, and four to the northwest and southeast. All of the angels wear white-turquoise robes. They have with vibrant red hair and golden haloes, their wings distinguished from their robes only by the effect of texture in the higher concentration of blue. The archangels are labeled as Michael (ΜΗΧΑΗΑ) to the left, Gabriel (ΓΑΒ ΡΙΗΑ) below and Raphael (ΡΑ_ΑΗ__) to the right of Christ. The schematic representation of Christ’s face, described by the Thierrys as “brutale” to a degree unknown in Byzantium, is in keeping with the focus on ornamentality within the church. His nose is represented by a simple vertical black line with two inverted isosceles triangles for

153 Ibid., 600.

154 Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres, 80.
cheeks, two almonds for eyes, and inverted crescents for eyebrows. Such geometric forms are seen in the faces of the figures painted in the *Kitab Daqaʿiq al-Haqaʿiq* of 1272 painted in nearby Kayseri (Caesarea) (Fig.26). Although little has been published regarding this manuscript since the first cataloging of Islamic painting in the early twentieth century, its stylistic affinity with painting in Cappadocian churches is undeniable. This is perhaps not surprising considering its production in Kayseri (Caesarea) the main city of the region.

Below the dome are two registers: of portrait busts of prophets in the upper register and full length frontal images of apostles and bishops in the lower register. In the upper register are Habakkuk (AMBAKOVNM), David (ΔΑ…), Solomon (CωΑΛΟΜΟΝ), Ezekiel (ΙΕ…KHΛ), Jeremiah (ΙΕΡΕΜΙΑ), Isaiah (ΙΗΣΑΙΑ), Daniel (ΔΑΝΗΗΛ), and Jonah (ΙωΝΑ). David, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Jonah have white or grey beards and hair, while Solomon, Habakkuk and Daniel have red hair. Daniel is the only prophet that is represented without a beard. On the lower register are sixteen full-length figures in groups of two. They are posed frontally and placed between pillars decorated with braids. The apostles are represented in groups of four to the east, south, and north, wearing cloaks and tunics. Within each pair the figure to the right carries a book and the figure to the left carries a scroll. The only names still visible are on the south pillar, James (ΙΑΚ…), John (ΙωΑΝΝΗΗ) and Paul (ΠΑΥΛΟ). The bishop saints to the west are the

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155 His pointed beard and inverted crescent of a moustache are said to be a characteristic detail of Arab painting. Ibid.

most damaged. They wear blue robes and purple chasubles bordered by a large white band.

The formula of dome imagery here in Ağacaltı Kilise is also singular in the region, where Ascension domes dominate. The lack of the emotional apostles here indicates that this should not be read as an Ascension. The scene has also been interpreted as the Triumph of the Church, with the central Christ surrounded by both the prophets, who served as his predecessors, and the apostles, who continued his mission. While it may be possible to link this image to the iconography of the Church Triumphant through the presence of the assembled prophets and apostles, it might be better to read this as a more overtly apocalyptic image and to identify this as an image of the God seated upon the throne of glory (Matthew 25:31: When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory).

4.10 Geometric Decorations

Overwhelming the remainder of the space is the geometric and floral ornament that covers the largest part of the painted surfaces including the pillars and squinches of the vault and the entire west arm surrounding the scene of Daniel in the Lions Den. These ornaments are based on three motifs: braids, rhombuses, and floral pattern based on a heart shape. (Figs. 53, 54, 55) The braids are of three kinds: a simple twist of two sides, the same twist with larger opening containing geometric flower shapes, and a complex multi-level braid as seen in Figure 53. The rhombus and square shapes indicate an

157 Ibid., 81-2.
attempt at three-dimensionality as the main shape, most often in gold, is outlined in
darker colors of ochre or dark blue as seen in the drum in Figure 54. The more organic
patterns using the heart shape that the Thierry analysis refers to as an inverted ace of
spades,158 are based on simple point symmetry. These shapes, which often juxtapose light
and dark colors add depth, and have for this reason, been compared to Selçuk rock
carvings by Lafontaine-Dosogne.159

In considering prominent aniconic imagery in medieval art, Leslie Brubaker has
stated that such decoration “frame and punctuate” the viewer’s experience.160 In
considering the geometric patterns as a framework for the decoration of this church, the
vivacity of the braids and organic forms surrounding Daniel and the griffin medallions
act as an emphasis on this western arm that is alive with the vibrant colors and varied
patterns, juxtaposed with calm and structural simplicity of the narrative arms which have
single color backgrounds. This emphasis also acts as a gateway to the geometricized
depictions of the figures, linking both the content of the aniconic decoration and the
visual vernacular used to depict drapery, wings, and indeed even Christ’s face in the
dome.

158 Ibid., 84-5.
160 Leslie Brubaker, “Anionic Decoration in the Christian World (6th-11th Century):East and
West,” Christianita d’Occidente e cristianità d’Oriente (secoli 6.-11.), 24-30 aprile 2003 (Spoleto
: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo, 2004), 577.
4.11 Chronology

Aspects of the style, iconography and color palette found in this church remain unique in both the Cappadocian region and Byzantine art. The Thierrys use of post-Sassanid Muslim art and textile work to define both the animal imagery and ornamental designs remains vague yet unchallenged in current literature. In its first publication, Ağacaltı Kilise was tentatively dated to the seventh through eighth centuries; this was later revised to the tenth or eleventh century. However, these attributions lack definitive evidence. The first claim was based on the idea that all spaces that present a preference for aniconic imagery were of Iconoclast origin, a thesis that has been challenged by Wharton and others. The church may instead be considered as having been produced under Selçuk influence, and possibly even under Selçuk rule. In fact, considering the overwhelming dominance of decorative motifs within the church, the animal imagery seen in the lioness and griffin, and the facial features that resemble those found in the late thirteenth-century Selçuk manuscript from nearby Kayseri, Ağacaltı can be dated to the later thirteenth century.

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161 Lafontaine Dosogne, “Nouvelles notes cappadociennes,” 160-1; Kostof, Caves of God, 112; and most recently in Thierry, La Cappadoce., 140-142.


164 Wharton Epstein, “The ‘Iconoclast’ Churches.”

165 Of all churches documented thus far, none have been connected to the twelfth century, considered a period of artistic silence in the region.
4.12 Conclusions

Rather than considering this to be an inept work, as the Thierrys have, when they described it as *brutale*, the plan and execution of the fresco program in Ağacaltı Kilise may rather be considered an experimental attempt to incorporate the new artistic trends found among the changing population of Seljuk Anatolia. In both form and color palette the church remains unique within Cappadocia, with the links to Selçuk art of the period being undeniable, especially in light of the locally produced manuscript of 1272. A funerary chapel by design, the attention paid to the Koimesis indicates a specific space for the care of the body as well as the soul of the deceased. A point that is perhaps reiterated when we find a liturgical reference within the inscription found in the Koimesis image. The unusual iconography seen in the narrative images of the Koimesis and Daniel in the Lion’s Den, as well as the apocalyptic Christ in the dome all reflect a readiness to alter traditional iconography.

These iconographic innovations are supplemented by new artistic methods and forms that were brought into Cappadocia by the Selçuks. This absorption of new forms is seen in the lions approximating Selçuk tradition, as well as the three-dimensionality that recalls rock-carvings common to Islamic decoration. This may also be an example of Turkish artists working for Christian patrons thus adding their own stylistic input. Considering the documented taste for Turkish artistic production at the Byzantine court, and the exchange of artists between the courts, the possibility of Turkish artists working under a Christian commission must be considered a possibility.\(^{166}\)

\(^{166}\) See introduction above.
The theme of the bodiless angels, as indicated in the dedicatory inscription, as seen through the angelic figures of the dome, their constant presence in the Annunciation, the Koimesis, the dove of the Trinity, and the figure of James with angelic attributes, the Islamic-style decoration and the geometricized faces lacking plasticity may simply be an effective means of relaying bodiless ascension. Rather than artistic inability, the dedication and correlation of bestial myths indicate an element of consistency and intentional stylistic choice. It is also unlikely that two animals mythically connected to spiritual ascension, the lioness and the griffin, would be located in such close proximity in Ağaçaltı Kilise without significance. The division of the Koimesis into a two-part scene also indicates such an emphasis on the moment of division between the corporeal body and the immortal soul. Thus, it is more likely that the church is of a later date and that it utilizes a wider range of local Anatolian influences as seen in comparisons to Byzantine and Selçuk imagery that would have been readily available in this region throughout the centuries. As both Çifte Minareli Medrese and the Kitab Daqa’iq al-Haqiq date to the later part of the thirteenth century, Ağaçaltı Kilise can also be considered as dating to that period as well. Ağaçaltı Kilise’s use of geometricized faces and new forms its and emphasis upon aniconic imagery indicates a space that reflects a hybrid culture incorporating both Greek and Turkish visual understanding and symbols.
CHAPTER 5:

KIRK DAM ALTI KILISE – CHURCH UNDER 40 ROOFS- ST GEORGE- BELISIRMA

The last church to be considered is aberrant not in what is represented or how it is represented, but rather for the unusual combination of images within an unevenly carved space. The dates suggested by the dedicatory inscription found in Kirk Dam Alti Kilise, known as St George of Belisirma, makes it the latest datable medieval church in Cappadocia. It is a funerary chapel with a unique and irregular architecture that contains a wealth of warrior saint imagery, all of which represent St George himself. The remainder of the decoration includes full length portraits of other saints and unevenly distributed narrative scenes. The images within this space that have been most frequently discussed are the full-length donor portraits which visually and textually provide an introduction to the wealthy Christians associated with the Selçuk court at Konya.

As with all the churches in the Ihlara Valley, this church is carved directly into the cliff-face. Without the limitation of an individual cone, the excavators were not restricted in the amount of tufa available to carve into, and thus decisions regarding the elevation and shape of the churches must be considered intentional. The space can be roughly described as being an uneven hexagon with curved sides and with a rounded apse that once projected to the east, adjacent to the entry rather than facing it. (Fig.56) The loss of the entire northeast side of the church adds to the difficulties in reconstructing the initial
shape and function of the space. As a funerary space it contains six burial compartments, four in a long burial chamber excavated across from the entrance, and two in smaller *arcosolium* that are located adjacent to it. (Fig.57)

The original plan of the church was centralized, with the roughly hexagonal space and the burial chamber to the west and the semi-circular apse that can today only be projected since the collapse of the cliff-face to the rocky precipice below, to the east. This apse is believed to have been partially constructed rather than carved. 167 As the smaller *arcosolium* found on the southern wall make certain encroachments on the fresco decoration, they are assumed to be marginally later than the general decoration, although stylistic and paleographic evidence places them close to the date of the church overall.168

Although arches define the *arcosolia* and the apse, the hexagon’s ceiling is basically flat. The unusual layout found here indicates that this is not an imitation of a built structure, as was customary in all other cave churches that have thus far been documented.

The irregularity of the carved space is in contrast with the high quality of the paintings. Various artists can be detected through the changes in both the attention to detail and the application of paint, varying from broad strokes of color to minute detail. Thus, the patchwork of narrative scenes, along with the unusual configuration of the space contradicts the specific attentions paid especially to the donor panel, Deesis, Ascension, and the double equestrian portrait of Saints George and Theodore. The attention to detail, along with the application of gold, emphasizes the importance of the

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167 Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres*, p. 201
168 Ibid., 208.
images distinguishing them from the saints’ portraits and smaller, less defined narrative scenes.

The only systematic study of the entire program was included as a chapter in N. and M. Thierry’s *Nouvelles Eglises Rupestres de Cappadoce: Region du Hasan Dağı*.¹⁶⁹ Succeeding articles have focused on only two of the individual images: the donor panel and its accompanying inscription¹⁷⁰ and the icon of Hagia Marina defeating the demon Beelzebuth.¹⁷¹

5.1 Inscriptions

The donor panel with its inscriptions is the most often discussed element in this oddly shaped church. The inscriptions date the church to the reigns of the Selçuk Sultan Mesut (Masud) and the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos Paleologos. The overlapping dates of their reigns give a date of 1283-1295 for this church. The long inscription in white letters on the dark blue ground is interrupted by the heads of the three figures, the donors to each side of St George (Fig.58):

Εχαληργίθην ουτος ο.. πανεπτος νος του αγιου χαι ενδοξου μεγαλομαρτυρος Γεωργιου δια ουνδρομης πολου ποθου χαισι χολου

¹⁶⁹ Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres*, 201-213.


This very venerable temple of the glorious great martyr Saint George was decorated with the coveted assistance and the pains of the Lady T’amar shown opposite, the (wife) of Ami arzes Basil Giag (oupes)...

O Megalomartyr George of Cappadocia...Under the highest and noblest grand Sultan Mesut, while Lord Andronikos reigned over the Romans.

A second and more unusual inscription describes the means by which the donor paid for the decoration. This is written on the red border that faces west from the Ascension scene:

Επὶ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν πανενδεξίον (ω) ναὸν τοῦ αγίου Γεωργίου (ιου), ὁ (υ) εὐθυσμηνος ἔγη εὐτέλες (η) τοῦ Θαμαρῆς ἔπει (η) διδωκέν (ω) καὶ αμπελίον τοῦ πλευρᾶ, ὀπέρ χατέχω (ω) σαγιοράστης αὐτοῦ τοῦ Σιαραφατηνῆς.

This donation also to this venerable temple of St George was granted, by me, the humble Lady T’amar, from the vineyard purchased by Siaraphatanes.

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172 As transcribed and interpreted in Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Nouvelles Notes Cappadiennes,” 149. Readings used by Laurent and Vryonis were not transcribed on site, and the Lafontaine-Dosogne transcription is a more recent transcription than the Thierry expedition in 1963.

173 As transcribed and interpreted by Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres, 207.
Thus not only is T’amār mentioned twice as the primary donor of the decorations, but we also learn that she paid for these decorations with the sale of a vineyard to a certain Siaraphatenēs.

Basil may have been mentioned again in a third dedicatory inscription:

...καθαρᾷν τοῦ λευίτη ύπερ ψυχῆς λύτρωσιν τῶν ἐμῶν ἁμαρτίων. [...] οὗ δοῦλος. ¹⁷⁴ The complete purification, a purification such as the Levite, of the sins of my soul...your servant...

However considering the large number of tombs and the invocations of unrepresented donors that are common in this region as in others,¹⁷⁵ it may have referred to an entirely different individual.

The donor image itself portrays George at the center dressed in gold chain mail over a sea foam green shirt with gold cuffs. He wears a green tunic and leggings also trimmed with gold and lined with pearls. He also wears a red cloak and boots. Finally, he has a diadem upon the curls of his dark brown hair and a silver belt with pearls around his waist. He holds a long golden staff with his right hand and a decorated shield drawn in triangular profile with his left. Although parts of his face have been lost the detail of the painting is not only seen in the minutiae of his costume but also in the treatment of his hands, the left one of which can be seen to be not only elegant in form, but also precise in its attention to details such as his fingernails.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

To his left (the viewer’s right) stands T’amar presenting a model of a built brick structure, presumably this very church. Her name is Georgian in origin. She is dressed in long green robes with white trim and elaborate gold embroidery upon her skirts. She wears a flat white and pink headdress that extends as a veil upon her shoulders and gold and pearl earrings with jewelry in her hair. The bearded male donor, Basil Giacoupes (Yakup) is to the right of the saint. Basil wears a white kaftan and green shirt underneath, with a gold belt and trim, but is most distinguished by his white turban. T’amar’s byzantinizing costume has been consistently contrasted with that of Basil. There have been two varying interpretations of the differing costumes. The first, by Lafontaine- Dosogne, assumes that Basil was a Turkish convert, thus explaining the female donor as the bearer of the model of the church. However, Jolivet-Levy considers Basil’s adoption of Selçuk dress as an indicator of Christian integration into Muslim society. The donor panel will be discussed further below and will be integrated into the program as a whole.

5.2 Images of St George

The image of St George seen in this dedicatory scene is only one of six depictions of this warrior saint in this space. These images taken together represent individual examples of each iconographic type of St George found in the Byzantine tradition after

176 Her identity has been investigated and will be discussed below.


178 Jolivet-Levy, La Cappadoce Medievale, 80. These figures will be discussed further in the context of the entire program below.
the eleventh century. Early images of George and other warrior saints in Cappadocia display the attire of courtiers rather than soldiers, but in the Middle Byzantine era the cult of warrior saints, especially that of George expanded dramatically.179 Although especially venerated by soldiers, there were various apotropaic functions performed by these saints, who protected against demons, cured illnesses, and saved lives through miraculous intercessions.180 Thus they were conquerors of evil whether internal or external to the worshipper. It is for this reason that we often see George killing personifications of evil, such as serpents and other obnoxious beasts.

The first image of George that a visitor to the church would have encountered is outside the church to the right of the entrance (Fig. 59). Within the red borders of a shallow-arched niche on a pink-beige background above and green below, George rides a white horse. He is dressed in gold armor and a red cloak, and shown in the act of slaying a long orange serpent that has a head at each end of its tubular body. Much of the saint’s face and body, and the horse’s head have been lost. The distinctive details of the image are the horse’s tail which is knotted to form three loops and four partitions, and the snake which has been compared to a carving from Sultan Han in Kayseri, which dates to 1232, during the reign of Aladdin Keykubad. 181

179 As identified by Christopher Walter, The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 125. Representations of George in court dress include the Church of St John the Baptist in Çavuşin holding a cross in one hand, thus he is represented as a courtier martyr. In Küçük Tavşan Adası he is also dressed as a courtier but holds a sword in one hand to indicate his military status as well.

180 Ibid., 118.

181 Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres, 208.
A second image of George on horseback slaying a beast is placed above and to the north of the donor image. (Fig.60) The top frame of this image is below a depiction of the Transfiguration and contains the secondary dedication reported above that describes the sale of the vineyard. George’s armor and cloak as well as that of the horse are consistent in color with the other images of the saint. In this image George holds behind him in his left hand an elongated teardrop-shaped, white shield with a gold border and decorative zigzags and carries in his right a long spear which he aims at yet another obnoxious beast. This beast, however, is dark brown with an open pointed beak-like mouth and a distended tongue. The lower portion of this creature is missing, but what can be seen is a serpentine body with a lower layer painted in the same spotted waves as the partially visible monster in Canavar Kilise. Thus, rather than a serpent, a monster is being killed in this image. Other churches in Cappadocia that display George on horseback slaying a dragon or beast include: Mavrucan No. 3, Yılanlı Kilise, Yeşilköy (Ihlara), Pürenli Seki kilisesi, Yusuf Koç kilisesi, Avcılar, Saklı, and the Göreme chapels 2a and 26. 182

The third image of George is claimed to be of a slightly later period and by another hand than the rest of the fresco decoration.183 The most convincing evidence in favor of this later date is the fact that the *arcosolium* that contains the image is clearly cut into the narrative images above it. The *arcosolium* faces the entrance and is adjacent to the images of the Nativity and Adoration of the Shepherds. However, instead of being on the rear panel of the *arcosolium*, St George is painted on its western arch (Fig.61). The


rear panel seems to carry the outlines of two figures between a large cross, most likely Constantine and Helena. The image is in a square frame and is on a very small scale and less detailed than the other images. Most important, although the figure is lunging forward with a weapon, there is no serpent or figure below him. This type of George in an active pose but without an adversary, also known in icons and in other media, and in such churches him as the twelfth-century Djurdjevi Stupovi near Ivangrad and the Panagia Phorbiotissa at Asinou dated to 1105.184

The fourth image of George is part of a double equestrian portrait with St Theodore. It is on the wall adjacent to and above the second arcosolium (Fig. 62). Double portraits of George and Theodore vanquishing a serpent or monster were especially popular in Cappadocia, and are seen in many eleventh-century churches, as well as in the tympanum of Karşılı Köşk Kilise.185 What remains of this image are the red and gold colors of George’s clothes, a glimpse of the saint’s shield, and most important his meticulously drawn white steed. Facing George is Theodore, who holds their right arms up, as if holding a spear while riding a red brown steed. Theodore wears gold armor above a burgundy shirt and has a light green cloak blown by the wind in symmetry with George’s red cloak.

Adjacent to the wall with the double portrait is the largest image of the saint, one covering the entire wall that leads to the apse (Fig. 63). This is a portrayal of St

184 Walter, The Warrior Saints, 127.

185 An example of the process of twinning of warrior saints, whether affiliated in life or not, were portrayed in camaraderie for yet undeterminable reasons. Walter, p. 289. Although homoerotic attributions have been discussed in John Boswell, Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe (New York: Villard Books, 1994), especially in reference to Sergios and Bacchos whose Passio extensively relates the depth of their mutual affection, this interpretation has been all but disregarded in further discourse.
George’s rescue of the youth of Mytilene who was saved from servitude to the Saracens, an iconography that Christopher Walter traces to Sassanid art. St George, who is on a much larger scale than the youth, clasps the reins of the horse with his right hand and holds the small rider at his waist with his left. The colors worn by the warrior remain consistent with those in all the other depictions in this chapel, with an emphasis on red and gold, but in this instance the shield is decorated with greater detail in floral patterns, and the horse is drawn in a more cursory fashion. The pillion rider, his left leg astride the horse wears a simple pink tunic with white leggings. He holds in his left hand a chalice and in his right a glass flask. (Fig.64) There are some details of green ground below. The pink and white fragments may have represented a monster, but they may also represent minor attempts as landscape, as seen in the plant forms below the equestrian figure seen in Karşıl Kilise.

Thus the images of George include: two lone riders, one slaying a two-headed serpent the other slaying a chimera monster; a frontal portrait receiving the church from T’amar; a double portrait with Theodore in the act of slaying a serpent; and a portrait incorporating the pillion rider. Such a large number of images of a single saint in a small chapel is unusual, but can partially be explained as evidence of a specific regional devotion to the warrior saint here identified as George of Cappadocia. He was at one point believed to have been a Cappadocian aristocrat, who came to be revered throughout the Empire. It is notable that he also received specific praise in Georgia, the probable country of origin of the primary donor.

5.3 Portraits of Saints

The apotropaic and medicinal functions of George are echoed in the selection of other saint portraits in the church. Sergios (ϹΕΡΓΙΟϹ) and Bacchos (ΒΑϹΧΟϹ), known as both military and medicinal saints, are seen in the medallions in the doorway. They are accompanied by Leontios (ΛΕΟΝΤΙΝ), a military saint (Fig.65). These saints are only shown as busts in medallions. These are paralleled by the medical pair Kosmas (ΚΟϹΜΑϹ) and Damianos (ΔΑΜΗΑΝΟϹ) who are here linked with Thalelos (ΘΑΛΕΛΟϹ) and an unidentifiable saint upon the soffit between the central space and the apse. (Fig. 66) Kosmas and Damianos are shown in an awkwardly delineated space that intersects the image of the Ascension. They are bearded youths in alternating red and sky blue tunic and chausubles accented with gold and pearls. They carry medical boxes with spoons as attributes. These saints, known as the anargyroi, are commemorated for their medical miracles. Damianos to the left holds a white rectangle interpreted by Thierry as a tube of ointment, while Kosmas holds a larger gold box with a conical lid similar to those held by the medical saints in Karşî Kilise. The spoons, which are also crosses, serve as a dual reference to both the utensil as a medical tool and the cross held by martyr saints in prayer. Thalelaos situated above them may refer to either the Cilician martyr, or more likely, given this context, Thalaleos, medical martyr of Edessa. The saint is separated from Kosmas and Damianos by the bust of the archangel Raphael and is portrayed in full-length rather than in a bust. He is dressed in a white tunic and red

187 These saints are depicted in the act of healing as seen in Karşî Kilise
188 Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres, 208.
189 Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres, 209.
chausuble and holds a medicinal box similar to that held Kosmas but of a silver color and with a smaller lid. Below this figure is a highly damaged and unidentifiable medical saint, also holding a tubular box and spoon; he is paired with Thalaleos and wears inverse colors to emphasize the relationship between the two figures.

Next to the figure of the unidentified saint is the deacon St. Stephen who is dressed in a white tunic, holds a box of incense with his right hand, and swings a censer with his left hand. The unusual nature of this figure is that it encompasses three walls, beginning with his right shoulder and part of his halo on the curved wall of the apse, and continuing uninterrupted into to ledge that connects the apse to center and ending by encroaching upon the lower part of the unidentified medical saint. (Fig.67)

The lowest register of the apse depicts three bishop saints, whose inscriptions are highly damaged. The first on the left has been interpreted as Athinogenes (Ο ΑΓΟΣ...ΝΟΓΕΝΣ) and the middle one is assumed to be Blaise (…ΛΑΣ…). These saints are connected through having been bishops of Sebaste martyred in the fourth century. Another group that includes unidentifiable and damaged saints is found on the lowest register on the west wall below St George and the Youth of Mytilene (Fig.68). These are two female martyrs. To the far right is a figure in a red tunic and light green mantle beside a similar figure in a white tunic and red mantle. Each saint holds her hands in an orant gesture in front of her. To the far left is the remnant of a saint with arms stretched out and up. He wears elaborate red and gold vestments.

190 Similar to that in the upper part of the sanctuary wall of Karşi Kilise, however the action of the censer is more vigorous and the chains are in curves here rather than straight lines in the earlier church.

191 Thierry, Nouvelles églises rupestres, 209.
The last of the damaged and difficult to identify images is in the doorway below the medallions of Sergios, Bacchos and Leontios. (Fig.69) Only the halo, short brown hair, and flowing red cloak are currently visible. This figure carries a long sword which is pointed to the left of an inscription (Λ ΩΛΟΓΓ). The chance that this may be a seventh George is debatable; however there is a precedent for representing the warrior saint in court dress brandishing a sword. He is so depicted in Cappadocia in the earlier churches of the eleventh century in the churches of John the Baptist and Küçük Tavşan Adası. Thus, considering the collection here of many iconographic types of the one saint, yet another portrait of George must be considered a possibility. Although it is also possible that the inscription may indicate the other military saint, Longinos, the converted centurion also seen in detail in the Crucifixion scene. The lack of any military saints other than George makes this unlikely.

5.4 Hagia Marina

The only other remaining saint’s image is of Marina, who is shown slaying the demon Beelzebub (Fig.70). This is located below the double equestrian portrait on the left corner of the wall next to an arcosolium. This scene is depicted with Marina (ἩΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΙ.ΗΑ) dressed in a red mantle with a white tunic; her right hand is raised wielding a yellow hammer; she holds in her left hand a small dark nude with the inscription: Ο ΒΕΕΛΖΕΒΟΥΛ ... ΑΡΧ... ΑΚΟ... This scene represents a martyr of the Diocletian era who conquered a personification of evil. The oldest version of Marina’s Vita dates to the

192 As documented by J. Lafontaine-Dosogne. “Un theme iconographique peu connu,” 251.

88
ninth century. This describes the saint shattering a dragon with the sign of the cross and later beating the demon Beelzebub with a heaven-sent copper hammer before trampling him. All of this occurs while she awaits martyrdom in her cell in Antioch. Thus the inscription naming Beelzebub and the depiction of the hammer draws upon the traditions of the saint’s life. This image of Marina has been compared to one found in Hagia Marina in Kalamun in Syria which Lafontaine-Dosogne dates to the Palaeologan period through paleographic evidence (Fig. 71).\textsuperscript{193} Although represented in Cappadocia in eleventh-century churches, she is there depicted in a standard portrait form, rather than in the more narrative depiction found here in Kirk Dam Altı Kilise.\textsuperscript{194} Lafontaine-Dosogne claims that the Cappadocian and Syrian examples show that the subject is the product of Christian art of the eastern provinces. However it has been documented that such narrative portraits of Marina are seen in representations from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries. Examples include frescoes in the church of St Mercurius in Corfu of 1074, in the eleventh-century Sts Cosmas and Damian in Kastoria, in the church of St George in Kurbinovo of 1191, and on the porch of the fourteenth-century Sts. Constantine and Helena in Ohrid.\textsuperscript{195} Our image can, therefore, be connected to a tradition found throughout the Byzantine world.

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 256.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
5.5 Nativity

Within this patchwork of images of medical saints and apotropaic martyrs conquering evil are images of the Nativity, Crucifixion, Transfiguration, Ascension, and Deesis. The Nativity is located on a long strip above the long *arcosolium* containing four tombs. (Figs. 72, 73) On the far left of the scene are two figures rejoicing. One is located in the bottom corner and holds a large white container in his right hand while his left hand is raised up. Seated on a mound above is a figure in a large white conical hat, playing a flute. To their right are three angels in white robes and pointed red wings, the angel to the far left is emphatically gesturing with his left hand below and right hand to the sky. This section of the image is thus to be understood as the Annunciation to the Shepherds. The center of the panel is badly damaged but the silhouette of a reclining Virgin is still visible. In the far right corner are the other legible figures in this narrative, three haloed horsemen on white horses with long flowing red cloaks. They depict the Arrival of the Magi.

5.6 Koimesis

On the adjacent wall next to the donor image is a Koimesis painted in great detail. (Fig.74) The Virgin is on an elevated bier and dressed in ochre and dark blue. Christ stands in a central position above her holding an infant swaddled in white that represents her soul. Above Christ are two angels flying at each side with the same pointed red wings as in the Nativity. They hold out their outstretched arms which are covered in cloth, ready to receive Mary’s soul. There are six apostles to each side of the bier depicted in two rows of three each with his own gesture of mourning and varying facial expression.
Below the bier, two small figures represent the angel cutting off the hands of Jephonias. This is a representation that is by no means foreign to Byzantine tradition, as it is seen in nearby Yılanlı Kilise and the church of the Mavriotissa in Kastoria, both dated to the eleventh century.\footnote{This scene representing a Jew whose hands were cut off by angel for disrupting the Virgin’s funerary bier, has been is described as an indicator of anti-Semitism in Annabel Wharton Epstein, “Frescoes of the Mavriotissa Monastery Near Kastoria: Evidence of Millenarianism and Anti-Semitism in the Wake of the First Crusade,” \textit{Gesta} 21:1 (1982): 21-29, 26.}

5.7 Transfiguration

On the ceiling above the Koimesis is a large image of the Transfiguration, which remains in good condition with the exception of the top left corner. (Fig.75) The scene illustrated is Matthew 17:6, 7 in which the disciples Peter, James and John are awake and startled by the miracle. Christ is at the center. He is dressed in white, and blesses with his right hand and holds an object which has been identified as a book in his left.\footnote{Thierry, \textit{Nouvelles églises rupestres}, 210.} However, the object in his left hand is a small brown tube and thus unlikely to be a representation of a codex; it is more likely to be a scroll. A red and white mandorla surrounds Christ, and emanating from the figure are white lines representing rays of light. The figure to the right of Christ is a youth with short black hair dressed in blue and white who is identified as Moses by the inscriptions Ο ΠΡΟΦΙΤΙΣ ΜΟΗΣΙΟ. To Christ’s left is, presumably, Elijah whose outline and white cloak and beard are visible but whose inscription has been lost. Below these figures framed by a schematized mountain are the disciples, each is shown in a different pose. The enframing mountain is made up of
organically shaped mounds with triangular patterns which indicate depth. The figure to
the left, whose upper torso is damaged, may be identified as Peter. He sits upright and
points towards Christ in the sky. John (Ἰωάν) is in the center below Christ. He is recumbent
and clasps his cloak with one hand and holds his head with the other. His toes encroach
upon the border of the Koimesis scene below. Finally James (Ἱ) is found to the right; he
mirrors the pose and pointing gesture of Peter. The iconography remains consistent with
other churches found in eleventh-century Cappadocia.198

5.8 Crucifixion

Above St. George and the Youth of Mytilene and the double equestrian portrait is
the Crucifixion, the left half of which has been destroyed (Fig. 76). Christ in a white
loincloth has his head tilted down upon his right shoulder. Above him attached to the
cross, is a panel with the inscription: ΟΒΑΕΛΕΥC ΕΌΒας..левc which may be read as
“King of the Jews,” in reference to Christ.199 Above and to the right of the cross is the red
disc of the sun, whose rays are directed towards Christ. In the upper right corner is an
angel pointing to Christ with one hand and shielding his eyes with the other. Below, is a
lamenting St John to the right side with the scene of Longinos being dispatched by Pilate
behind him, the centurion is labeled ΛΟΝΓΗΝΟC ΟΕΛΑΤΤΑΡΧΙC interpreted as
Λονγίνος ὁ ἐλατονταρχής.200 Dressed in a coat of mail with a metal skirt and with a
red cloak he wears small white turban on his head and points to Christ with a text that

199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
indicates his speech: Αληθώς θεους ηυ ουτος, proclaiming that: this is truly the Son of God. This focus upon the conversion of the Roman soldier who would later be commemorated as a warrior saint adds to the general attention given to soldier saints within the iconography of Kırk Damaltı Kilise.

5.9 Ascension

Covering the rest of the ceiling of the central space is a large Ascension scene. Christ is seated on a thin curved line of black and white and is dressed in dark blue and red. He blesses with his right hand, while holding a scroll in his left. His cruciform halo is accented in floral patterns and green stripes, this decorative pattern is repeated on the cuff of his right sleeve. These embellishments are supplemented by the pearls at his neck and wrists. He is surrounded by a luminous mandorla of three layers, containing a dark blue interior white middle layer and a golden outer layer. The interior layers are decorated with a starburst pattern, and the gold border with red lines and pearls. This mandorla is held by four angels, two above and two below. The angels are dressed in white and red and have small pointed red wings. The angels below Christ have small round faces, while those above him have longer egg-shaped faces with chins that are narrower than their foreheads. (Fig.77) The angel above and to the left of Christ is divided in two by the apse, with his feet on one side and upper torso above cut in half by the curved space containing Kosmas and Damianos. This accentuates the irregularity of the space. (Fig.78)

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201 Ibid., 211.
The apostles below the angels are arranged in a semicircle. They are flanked on each side by an angel in white who points to the sky. Each apostle is individualized in both appearance and expression and identified by abbreviated inscriptions. The two ends of the image contain Biblical inscriptions. That to the right reads:

ANΔΡΕΣΤΑΛΗΕΟΙΤΙΕΣΤΗΚΑΤΕΒΑΣΟΝΤΕΣΧΤΟΝΟΥΠΑ...ΟΝ, identified as Acts of the Apostles 1:11, “Men of Galilee, they said, why are you standing here staring into heaven?”

The passage from Acts is completed to the left:

ΟΦΤΟϹΟϹΟΑΝΑΛΗΘΟϹΑΦΗΜΟΝΗϹΤΟΝοῦ

NONΙΤΑΛΙΝΕΛΕΥϹΕΤΕΚΑΘΟΝΤΟΠΟΝΟΕΑϹΑϹΟΕ

Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go.²⁰²

Such Biblical quotations are found in other narrative scenes in Cappadocia. One such example accompanies the Three Youths in a Fiery Furnace in Karṣî Kilise. These quotations may serve to build connections with other images; in the case of Karṣî Kilise it builds a liturgical connection between the Fiery Furnace and the act of baptism. In the Ascension scene here in Kûrk Dam Alṭî Kilise, the eschatological implication of the scene are emphasize in the references to the Second Coming and the Last Judgment.

²⁰² Ibid., 212.
5.10 Deesis

Small remnants of a Deesis provide the final scene in what was the apse space. All that remains are John the Baptist and a frontal Gabriel (ΓΑΒΡΗ) in imperial costume with lance and globe. There is also a medallion containing the bust of Uriel (ουΠΗΑ) who is depicted in the same manner as Gabriel.

5.11 Donor Panel reconsidered

Although there are many points of interest in the decoration of this church the main focus of literature has been to attempt to establish the identity of T’amar, the female donor of this “temple” of St George. Speros Vryonis identified the title of the male donor Basil as amir arzi, the head of a military bureau in charge of the army, its salaries, and catalogues. This position was identified in the court chronicles of Ibn Bibi.203 However, the identity of T’amar has received far more attention as she is considered to be not only the primary donor due to the inscription but also a woman of some importance in her own right. As such, she has been connected with several other women of Georgian origin known from the thirteenth century.

During this period many Georgian women are documented as having married into the Selçuk court in Konya. Intermarriage was yet another indicator of the permeability of the barrier between the Muslim and Christian communities of Asia Minor throughout the centuries as described above.204 Lady T’amar the mother of Sultan Aladdin Keykubad II (1249-57), and a woman simply identified as Gürcü Hatun (Georgian Lady), have been

204 See introduction.
considered as possible candidates for our donor. Gürcü Hatun was a follower of Rumi who was married to the Sultan Giyaseddin in 1237, as documented by the dervish Eflaki. Vryonis created a timeline which combined the known dates of the marriages of both Lady T’amar of Konya, Gürcü Hatun, and finally the dates of T’amar’s church in Belisirma. Vryonis’ timeline merges all three women into one persona and puts her in her seventies during the period of the concurrent reigns of Mesut and Andronikos.²⁰⁵ Many assumptions are made in the construction of this composite figure drawn from two women documented in the annals of Selçuk history and the one seen only in the donor panel in Kirk Dam Altı Kilise. The only reason provided by the historian in this case is the simple fact that all three were Georgian women, two of whom are known to have lived in the same century and to have been married to a Turkish sultan. As many marriages between Christian women and men of the Selçuk court (whether Muslim or Christian) have been documented, this factor does not warrant the conflation of two such Christian brides.²⁰⁶ In fact, in the latter part of the thirteenth century, Sultan Keykavus was so partial to the Christian community in his courts, including his wife, rumors emerged of his conversion to Christianity.²⁰⁷ Another obvious reason as to why all three historical figures could not possibly have been one woman is the fact that she is assumed to have placed her tomb with her presumed third husband, an amir arzes. Some consideration should be given to the possibility that for a widow of a sultan, and mother

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 17.

²⁰⁶ During the thirteenth century Christian brides were common even on the highest levels, with the Greek wife of Kilç Arslan II and Giyassedin’s Georgian bride T’amar, two sultans in this period had Christian mothers. This exogamous attitude was seen on all social levels of society, Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor*, 227-8.

of another sultan as prominent as Aladdin Keykubad, to marry a soldier, even of a relatively high rank, would have been a major step down in social strata and thus highly unlikely.

Even though the reenactment of history provided by Vryonis is flawed, his attribution was taken up by Antony Eastmond, who presents this composite T’amar as the grand dame of the Selçuk court, manipulating her way through marriages and alliances from Cilicia to Armenia.\(^{208}\) She is claimed to have been forcibly converted to Islam; but secretly maintained Christian sympathies. The story of her commission of a portrait of Rumi, is understood by Eastmond to be an indication of her Christian iconophilic tendencies. Such a reading of this story, attributed to Mevlana’s disciple Gürcü Hatun, both discounts the existence of Selçuk figurative art and assumes a pervasive Islamic iconoclasm. As demonstrated above in references to both the illustrated romance *Varka ve Gülşah* painted in the court in Konya and the *Kitab Daqa’iq al-Haqa’iq* from nearby Kayseri, figurative art was not only acceptable but flourished in the thirteenth century under Selçuk patronage.\(^{209}\)

5.12 Conclusions

Alas, Eastmond’s somewhat melodramatic narrative does not allow for the complications of cultural exchange and acculturation in thirteenth-century Asia Minor. For him, the clearly delineated Christian population, represented by the “long-oppressed” lady is here understood to be reclaiming a freedom embodied in a donor portrait that,

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\(^{209}\) Ibid., 167.
“reestablish[es] the founder’s Christian identity after nearly forty years of being dominated by Islam.” This overly-determined narrative, created by Vryonis and elaborated upon and perpetuated by Eastmond, presupposes a definite animosity and solid barriers of identity between the Muslim and Christian communities. As admitted by Vryonis himself, many Christian wives were admitted to the Selçuk court and enjoyed religious independence and power. It can be suggested that the conflation of three powerful Christian women in Anatolia in this period seems an unnecessary attempt to delineate the borders of Christian existence at this time. It is based on the assumption that there could not have been more than one powerful Christian woman in the whole of Asia Minor during the entirety of the thirteenth century.210

This image of a distinct and marginalized Christian community is contradicted by the many sources that indicate intermarriage and acculturation between the communities. As discussed above, the terms used for self-identity did not incorporate religious separations, and all who lived under Selçuk rule were deemed al-Rumi.211 The inscription of St George in Belisirma can therefore be considered an addition to Shukurov’s numismatic evidence, serving not only as proof of a “cultural-polyglossia,” but also as evidence of what Giovannini calls a form of cultural syncretism between the two religious groups living in Anatolia in this period.212 The dedicatory inscription itself

210 Similarly, the images of St George have also been used by contemporary historians for this purpose, by reinterpreting its content by projecting meaning upon iconography. Christopher Walter, without any evidence, considers the vanquished beasts described above as representations Muslim oppressors. Walter, The Warrior Saints, 284.


is evidence of a grey area for Christians in Anatolia in this period, with their allegiances to both Constantinople and Konya and thereby Mesut and Andronikos. In the spirit of a multi-faceted identity, the patrons of Kırk Dam Altı Kilise present themselves as being both devout Orthodox Christians and loyal subject of the Selçuk Sultanate of Rum.
CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION

Considering the artistic evidence provided by these four churches, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the social context in which they were created. What Kostof calls a *mongrel* art may, in fact, be true, as its pedigree is far from “pure,” but using less derogatory terms, such as hybrid, composite or inclusive, may be more helpful. For, as we have seen in the geometric facial features and lioness of Ağacaaltı Kilise, the dedicatory panel in Kırk Dam Altı Kilise, and the Turkic facial features in Karşı Kilise, it was a hybridized population that produced works incorporating elements of both Turkish design and iconography into Christian paintings. This did not, however, supersede a strong sense of tradition and communication with territories under Greek Orthodox rule, as seen in the saints, portraits in all churches discussed, as well as in Canavar Kilise as a whole.

In *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, first published in 1971, Speros Vrysonis claimed that the process of assimilation into Turkish society, whether Selçuk or Ottoman, took over four centuries. Thirty years later, he maintained that the decline of “Hellenism” and the rise of Islam were more profound in Central and Western
Anatolia. Another perspective was proposed in 1981 by Alexis Savvides who claimed that the:

“virility and novel character of Turco-Iranian culture and civilization brought about a new atmosphere in Christian Anatolia and gradually effected a comparatively easy assimilation of its inhabitants.”

The works discussed in this thesis incorporate new formal styles and symbols as early as 1212 in Karşı Kilise. Thus artistic evidence of the thirteenth century seems to support Savvides’ argument that assimilation came readily to this region.

In retrospect, the main Selçuk influences considered here have been those found in the local artistic production of medreses and manuscripts. Thus, they represent sources and forms readily available to the Christian community. As most studies of the art of the region are based on either Christian or Islamic art, the works produced in a society that displayed elements of both have been difficult to categorize. Looking at Cappadocian art through a Constantinopolitan or Nicaean lens, these works may seem provincial, crude, or even strange. These have been the perspectives of the major catalogs written by Jerphanion, Jolivet-Levy, Lafontaine-Dosogne, and Thierry. These invaluable works have cataloged and analyzed the many churches of Cappadocia, providing a strong foundation for any study regarding the artistic production of the Christian Cappadocians. However, a new approach that accounts for artistic developments within Cappadocia as a whole, whether by Christian or Muslim, must be incorporated into analysis of thirteenth-century churches as their production would have been influenced by both.


The utilization of different sources and a willingness to experiment with different combinations of style and iconography meant that the four churches discussed here are highly divergent in style in their incorporation of new iconographic elements. Together they indicate varied degrees of acculturation and cultural continuity in this region. In the case of Karşı Kilise, there are only hints of Turkish influence. These are seen in two small birds that are seemingly out of place, and in the facial features of many figures. These figures can be aptly described in terms used by Rüçhan Arık to describe similar faces found on the tiles of the Selçuk palace at Kubadabad in Konya, “fully round with almond-shaped eyes…and a small dainty mouth.”215 Canavar Kilise, perhaps due to its monastic identity retains a Byzantine iconography that links it to evidence from Smyrna and Kastoria. By using images of St Arsenios and St Mary the Egyptian receiving the Eucharist from Zosimos, the monastic character of the church is maintained, which is indicated by the earlier nave as well as the surrounding rooms. Canavar Kilise provides evidence that although the bishops and metropolitans migrated to Constantinople the monks may have maintained a presence and a sense of continuity here. The church of St George or Kırk Dam Altı Kilise also betrays continuity in this region, mainly with images, that reference the art of eleventh-century Cappadocia. At the same time it displays donor images and an inscription that verify the existence of Greek and Georgian landowners who were also ranking members of the court in Konya. The Lady T’amar and amir arzi Basi Giacoupes, provide examples of a powerful Christian woman whose funerary chapel presents a disjunctured yet impressive fresco program. It is Ağacaltı

Kilise that provides the most innovative space. Its iconography, color palette, and stylistic choices remain unique in their fusion between Turkish and Greek traditions. The emphasis upon geometric form is married to significant iconographic experimentation with images of the Selçuk lioness, the Byzantine griffin, and more importantly, a novel Koimesis iconography.

This visual evidence should influence our reading of the major text considered here, namely the dedicatory inscription found in Kırk Damaltı Kilise. In itself, the text clearly acknowledges the influence of and allegiance to both the sultan and the emperor simultaneously. However, historians have attempted to eliminate any elements of peaceful coexistence by writing an almost fictional story of a sultan’s wife who, having been oppressed for decades finally commissions a Christian funerary space as an act of reaffirming her Christian identity. Eastmond’s reliance upon Vryonis’ timeline and his discussion of the donor panel outside of the context of Kırk Damaltı Kilise as a whole, led him to ignore the complexity of the evidence of the Christian courtier’s creation of an extraordinary chapel decorated by highly skilled contemporary artists.

If we begin by formulating the visual evidence, it is possible to propose an alternative narrative based on an alternative worldview. The perspective of the Turkish art historian writing the current study will be unable to escape all apperceptions, but will nonetheless be able to expand our consideration of these works by offering a distinct perspective that opens a different manner of narrating these paintings. The premise of this new narrative is based upon the social exchange between the Arabs and later the Selçuks, the mutual recruitment of soldiers, as well as the exchange of luxury goods and design elements. These are the historical basis upon which the divergent styles of thirteenth-
century church decoration in Cappadocia is considered here rather than a premise of provincial ignorance or ineptitude of artists.

As in all human societies, cultural definitions of identity and assimilation cannot be so readily and swiftly identified. Within these polarized modes of continuity and acculturation the population considered in this study, the Greek Orthodox community in thirteenth-century Cappadocia, there was a middle ground of existence in which Orthodox traditions and iconography, in addition to language and religion, were maintained even as Turkish images and ideas made their way into the sacred Christian sites. When we choose to see this evidence, we can tell another story: one in which these local communities negotiated a living identity that both embraced and transcended their “Byzantine” and “Selçuk” origins.
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