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## **The Images of Eagles in the Context of the Architecture of the Ani Cathedral and the El 'Adhra Cathedral in Hah<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction (A. Kazaryan)**

The architecture of the Christian Orient is characterized with the severity of its expressive means and the limited use of sculptural images. Even the churches of the medieval Armenian capital Ani under the Bagratuni dynasty contain rare examples of relief images<sup>2</sup>. All the more valuable are samples of such ones preserved on the façades of these churches, which have always attracted the attention of scholars, but extremely rarely became objects of study. There are two high reliefs on the southern façade of the main cathedral, which was built in Ani in the last two decades of the 10<sup>th</sup> century by the architect Trdat for Shahanshah Smbat II Bagratuni and completed under the wife of the next Shahanshah Gagik I, Queen Katranide [19; 6; 8]. Their locations are unusual, and their forms have no parallels in the previous architecture of Armenia. At that, this article provides the first statement of similarity with the reliefs of eagles on the drum of the dome of the El 'Adhra Cathedral in Northern Mesopotamia, the creation of which is attributed by specialists to the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries [1; 4, pp. 56—70; 11, p. 197], but which contains traces of medieval reconstructions. This fact of close development of a rare iconographic idea of paired reliefs of eagles with some artistic and stylistic similarity of the sculptures on two monuments of neighbouring regions of the Christian Orient world encourages a more thorough comparison [9] and an attempt to explain the presence of eagles in the external compositions of the above-mentioned cathedrals.

### **Materials and methods (A. Kazaryan)**

The discussed monuments of architecture and monumental sculpture are mostly still in existence to the present day. Belonging to the material heritage of medieval Armenian culture, they are located on the territories of various modern states of the Middle East. This circumstance makes it difficult for a full-scale study of these works, but the authors of the article traveled over the years, analyzing the features and condition of the monuments on site, photographing the material in detail. In particular, the expeditions were made almost annually to Ani, in the Kars region of Turkey, and in 2023 a trip was made to the Tur 'Abdin region, located in the modern Mardin province of Turkey, where the masonry and reliefs of the cuboid drum were studied during a visit to the El 'Adhra church in Hah. Some sculptural images of eagles,

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<sup>2</sup> Unlike the examples of mural paintings in Ani churches. In particularly, the study of remains of the painting in Ani Cathedral develops in last investigations [14].

attracted as analogues, do not exist now, and the study was based on archival photographs that had already been published. Thus, the method of full-scale study of monuments and the comparative method are the main ones in this study. At the same time, the interest was not only in the field of iconography, but also in the stylistic peculiarities of the images, which made it possible to make judgments about the chronology and belonging of the monument to a certain artistic tradition. The authors of the article wanted to explore the sculptures of eagles in connection with the architectural composition of church facades, in fact revealing the creative concepts of architects and their desire to achieve a synthesis of arts in monumental architecture. Finally, the desire to understand the essence of the presence of the studied reliefs, the research is aimed at understanding the belonging of the local spread of the practice of depicting eagles to a certain large tradition going back centuries. However, when considering the symbolism of eagles on the most solemn facades of churches, first of all, we were interested in the tradition of the Christian era, which in many ways differs from the ancient one. Consideration of this issue could not but lead to a discussion of ideas about the belonging of images of eagles with a victim in their claws, either to a religious and mystical context, or to the embodiment of secular heraldic symbols.

### **Reliefs on the Southern Façade of the Ani Cathedral (A. Kazaryan)**

The Ani eagles face frontally, wings outstretched, and an animal in their claws. Being carved in the same red-ochre tuff from which the entire cathedral is laid out, including the plastic and carved decor on the façades, these sculptural figures look absolutely organic, appropriately complementing the splendid, theatrical composition of the southern wall of the main volume of the building. The high reliefs are located symmetrically relative to the axis of the façade, on which the brightest accents of its architectural composition seem to be strung: a portico on four supports, a group of three windows — including the central one, especially large and framed with a rectangular carved frame, a high archivolt, a horizontal belt course above it, and an oculus in a round frame and, finally, a cornice gable completing the elevated middle zone of the façade — the end of the southern wing of the exterior (Fig. 1).

Due to the presence of a profiled archivolt in its upper part, this entire central zone of the southern façade of the Ani Cathedral can be interpreted as the central section of the blind arcade of this façade. The arcade on high and slender half-columns envelops the surface of the walls of the main volume of the cathedral, and it keeps integrity on three of them. On the southern wall only, being clearly expressed on the side sections of the façade, the arcade is interrupted in the centre saturated with various forms, and the archivolt is sharply raised above the rows of neighboring sections of the arcade.

It is noteworthy that the archivolt contains wings-imposts (a solution similar to the type of arched edge above the windows, widespread since the 7<sup>th</sup> century), which serve as visors over the sculptures of eagles.

The reliefs are located on the sides of the large window and are enclosed in tympanums of flat arched niches, directly adjacent to wider and deeper, paired façade niches traditional for Armenian architecture. The presence of another pair of niches is a unique solution and, most likely, found by the architect Trdat to highlight those sculptures, emphasizing their role in the façade composition (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Ani Cathedral. Central part of the Southern façade. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2012



Fig. 2. Ani Cathedral, Southern façade. Central window and eagles.  
Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2015

From the technological point of view, the arches of those niches were formed in solid blocks of rectangular perimeter: the height of the left one is 96 cm, the right one is 79 cm.<sup>3</sup> The eagles were created by excavating and deepening the background under the arched cutout. The radius of the arch, 73 cm for the left block and 79 cm for the right one, was approximately determined by the width of each niche. The highest points and surfaces of the relief, i.e. the front parts of the body and wings, are at the level of the original surface of the block. We do not know how far the heads of the birds, which are badly damaged, extended forward, but most likely they remained within the surface of the same blocks. Despite its significant deepening, the back plane of the stone does not reach the depth of the back wall of the niche, which was undoubtedly done intentionally and aimed at creating a sharp shadow under the block with the eagle, thereby highlighting it.

The method of creating an arch as a sculptural form, i.e. by carving it in a rectangular block, was used by the masters of the previous era, the 'Golden Age' of Armenian architecture. If earlier an arch in such a block was imitated with its illusory thickness made by drawing, scratching seams-chamfers along the imaginary boundaries of the arch stones (Mastara, the cathedral in Artik, mid-second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century), then the Ani masters also covered the imitated arch from the front and inner sides with a reddish tone, separating it in colour from the corner parts of the rectangular block. It seems, the eagles themselves were highlighted with a tonal coating in relation to the background surface. Now, this painting is barely noticeable, so the previous researchers did not mention it. But it was undoubtedly much brighter initially. Somewhere on the eagles, especially on the surface of the wings, whitish traces are visible; possibly they are the remains of primer on the stone. One can assume also there was a two-colour painting, in red and white, as it was done on the capitals and archivolts of the arcade, as well as in the squinches of the large façade niches.

The western high relief on the left is located at a height of 10.54 m, and the eastern one at a height of 10.70 m from the threshold of the southern entrance to the cathedral, which suggests a view on them from a considerable distance; it completely justified the generalized interpretation of the forms of these works of monumental art. The rounded head directly passes into a dense vessel-like body and ends with a tail expanding downwards. Wings with a plastic silhouette and in the form of a curved plate grow from the upper part of the body. The upper and inner contours are almost equal on both sculptures and are determined by plastic lines emphasized with narrow bordures (Fig. 3–4).

The only difference is that the left bird has longer wings, and their edges rest against the rounded contour of the end of the niche. The legs of the eagles are shown frontally, they are long and muscular. In the claws of the left eagle, a victim is partially preserved; it is a calf or a lamb [12, p. 320, ill. 8], it is extremely difficult to identify the exact species due to poor preservation and generalized forms.

These Ani eagles differ from previously known samples on Armenian monuments — Pashvak, Zvartnots (641–661), and Surb Khach church of Aghtamar (915–921) — in their wing span, the absence of a turn of the head, the stylization of the general shape of the wings,

<sup>3</sup> Dimensions are taken from the restoration drawings of the cathedral by an architect İ.Y.Özkaya. Also, see monument's drawings by T. Toramanyan [18].



Fig. 3. Ani Cathedral, Southern façade. Left eagle. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2018



Fig. 4. Ani Cathedral, Southern façade. Right eagle. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2018

and the smooth wings and body. Later, at the end of the Bagratid era, however, on the church of the Tsakhats Kar monastery (1041), and especially in the Zakharid era, eagles of a similar silhouette were created, but, as a rule, they had plumage or an ornamentation.

The exception is the monumental eagle mounted on the main defensive wall of Ani, built in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century [5, p. 240]. The masonry around the relief allows us to attribute it to the period of reconstruction of the walls in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, the damaged edges of the block in question and its style similar to the reliefs on the cathedral, makes it possible to attribute this relief as a spolia created in Bagratid period. The eagle's posture with open-draped form of wings brings it even closer to the variants used on the El 'Adhra drum. In most subsequent samples of eagles on buildings from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the postures and wing spans are close to those of the Ani Cathedral reliefs and indicate a direct or indirect reference to them.

One of them is presented on the Ani Church of Saviour (1035), its dome has been restored at least twice [10; 7]. Such a sculpture is inscribed under the northern archivolt of the blind arcade of the drum; it has rather generalized forms, with a smooth chest, but with a wing plumage. A photograph of the northern side of the monument made by A. Vruyr in 1912 (the archive of M. Mazmalyan), shows this facet, which subsequently collapsed [12, pp. 320–321, pl. 11]. On the western side of the same drum, there is a second eagle, without prey in its claws in one of the links of the western side. Both sculptures are located in the zone of the construction layer of 1192 [7, pp. 73–75, pl. 7, 13]. Either the masters of the 12<sup>th</sup> century were guided by the model of paired eagles on the façade of the Ani Cathedral, or yet masters of 1035 realized this idea, and their work has been repeated during the 1192 repairing.

The eagle in the composition with lions in the Geghard Monastery shows stylistic similarity with the eagles on the Ani Cathedral. While maintaining the posture and the degree of the wingspan, the forms lack some of the details characteristic for the Ani high reliefs. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the author of that sculptural composition turned to them as a model.

The paired images of eagles are found on the cathedral of the Gandzasar Monastery (1216–1238) in two locations: in the composition of the large cross with the Crucifixion on the western façade, and on the northern side of the drum, in the ends of the niches. The latter

example is close in location and orientation to the cardinal points with the solution on the drum of the Church of the Saviour.

### **Reliefs of El 'Adhra in Hah (A. Kondrateva)**

As noted, among the works outside Armenia, the closest in form and stylistic features to the Ani Cathedral's eagles, are the relief images of birds in the church of El 'Adhra (Mother of God) in Hah in the province of Tur 'Abdin in Northern Mesopotamia.

The first sample is located in the conch of the apse, above a large relief cross. The bird is presented as a frontal image in a downward flight, with an extended neck towards the top of the cross and touching it with the beak. Slightly open wings have a wave-like curve, echoing the silhouette of the body and a tail that widens towards the end. There is no plumage on the bird's body, except for a hint of it along the lower edge of the wings. The location, posture and shape of the bird almost directly imply the image of a dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. But it is not less obvious that the basic forms of this bird coincide with those depicted on the drum of the church and which can be interpreted as images of eagles.

The cubic drum of El 'Adhra is decorated with two tiers of niches with a cornice between them (Fig. 5). The second tier is the result of work carried out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The niches of the first tier, the number of which is seven on each side of the drum, are created by arranging paired round columns at distances from each other and covering these gaps with conches. The paired columns rest on common bases and are crowned with pseudo-Corinthian imposts. The niches are connected to each other with a profiled band running around the conches. Above the horizontal sections of this belt course on the imposts, i.e. between the archivolts, there is a relief of vertically oriented smooth leaves (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. El 'Adhra in Hah. Drum from the South-West. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2023



Fig. 6. El 'Adhra in Hah. Western side of the drum. Niches of the first row. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2023

In the conches of two niches on the western side of the drum, there are bas-relief images of eagles. Both of these niches are to the left of the central one, which has a window opening at its base and an openwork carved cross in the conch. This Greek cross is decorated with bunches of acanthus leaves, that sprout from the ends of the arms, turning towards the diagonal axes, where they join with shoots coming from an adjacent arm. At the place of their connection a five-leaf palmette is formed. The same cross is placed in a shell in the niche of the central arch in the apse of this church.

One of the eagles is placed in the first, outer niche of the row, and the second one is in the niche adjacent to the central one and one away from that one with the first eagle. The birds are depicted frontally, and the wings are slightly open and have a wave-like curve. Both figures are poorly preserved, especially their heads and legs. The eagles differ slightly in proportions, some forms and the degree of wing spread. The head of the first one is slightly superimposed on the archivolt; the wings are raised and widely spread to the sides. This eagle is larger due to its location along the entire conch, which suggests that this image is more subordinate to the architectural form. The second relief is smaller in size and has more compact proportions. The wings of this eagle are very slightly raised to the sides and located along the body; the head is less inclined downwards. Both birds have no plumage, if you do not take into attention the hint of plumage in the form of a jagged edge of the wings (Fig. 7-8).

It is not recognizable what was represented in the conch between the two eagles due to the poor state of preservation of that central part of the composition. In the conch of the other side niches the Greek cross and a sculpted ram's head are presented. In the bases of the conchs of other three sides of the El 'Adhra drum, there are maximally generalized, geometrically stylized forms and bodies: palmettes, curved conchs, triangular stems, balls.

In other churches of the Tur 'Abdin Province, the relief in the form of an eagle is found only in one monument: in the church of Mor Kyriakos in Arnas. Early Christian in its foundation, that church was numerously rebuilt and restored.

The eagle is located on the keystone of a wide carved archivolt, which can be attributed to the initial phase of construction. The relief combines the image of a frontally oriented body



Fig. 7. El 'Adhra in Hah. Western side of the drum. Left eagle. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2023



Fig. 8. El 'Adhra in Hah. Western side of the drum. Right eagle. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2023

with a head turned to the side and one, left wing; the right wing, judging by the archivolt ornament that matches the eagle's body, was absent initially (Fig. 9). Obviously, unlike Armenia, the topic of eagles on the façades, was episodic both in early Christian times and in the Middle Ages, when, most likely, the eagles on the El 'Adhra drum were created.

Images of eagles were present, however, in the art of Ancient Mesopotamia. On the so-called victory stele of the Sumerian ruler Eannatum, circa 2450 B. C., an eagle is depicted with the god Ninurta [2, p. 124]. It this, possibly, the earliest surviving image of an eagle with a victim, and it is not the animal that is being clawed, but one of the enemies. The bird is shown frontally with its wings spread wide and its head in full face above a net with fallen enemies; at that, the chest and head are rendered in volume. Ninurta is depicted with an eagle in his hand and other attributes that define him as the god of the elements [19, p. 109]. Standards with the image of an eagle accompanied the rulers of Achaemenid Iran in military campaigns, possibly representing the Great King or serving as a metaphor for storm and rain [19, pp. 116–119]. The topic of the eagle, including that one with slightly open wings, was widespread in Ancient Roman sculpture, including in the East: samples are presented in Palmyra, in the National Museum of Damascus.



Fig. 9. Church of Mor Kyriakos in Arnas. Eagle on the keystone of archivolt of the apse. Photo by A. Kazaryan, 2023

### **Symbolism of Location of Relief Eagle Figures in the Architectural Monument on the Example of the El 'Adhra Cathedral in Hah and the Ani Cathedral (E. Loshkareva)**

In Christian art, relief images of eagles were noted as early as the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries, first of all, in monuments of the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Palestine). One of the earliest Armenian example comes from the Zvartnots Cathedral<sup>4</sup> (641–661). Images of eagles decorated there huge capitals that crowned the columns on the diagonals of the underdome square. Those figures of the birds are presented in an 'heraldic' posture with powerful clawed paws spread out and wings open wide. The plumage of the birds is carefully worked. In Ani, the earliest known stone relief of an eagle was present in the interior of the Palace Church of the citadel, on the capital of a pilaster, which N. Marr dated to the period of reconstruction of the church in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries [15, p. 33]. There were eagles set in a pair of non-identical figures turned towards each other, each of them raised wings and clutched a lamb in its claws. Their plumage is schematically conveyed by a pattern of triangles. It is possible, however, that the sculptural composition 'an eagle with an animal in its claws' presented in a 'heraldic' frontal posture appeared at first in the region<sup>5</sup> in the architecture of Tayk [12, p. 317], on the façade of the cathedral of the Oshki Monastery. Here, the bird's wings are spread along its body; the plumage is carefully worked out. In this context, the figures of eagles on the façade of the Ani Cathedral can be considered in a completely new way. The already known 'heraldic' posture is combined there with the almost unique for Armenian art undulating shape of outstretched wings, imitating flight, and the presence of an animal in the eagle's claws.

Openly artificial, highly stylized depiction of a bird was typical for the art of the Near East, in contrast to the Roman classical monuments with their predominance of realistic forms and postures. In Near Eastern art, the idea of an eagle as a symbol of a certain deity existed at least up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, as evidenced by the images from Kedesh and Hatra. As a rule, birds were associated with the cults of deities personifying the sun and light, such as Baal-Shamin, Zeus-Jupiter, and Helios. In the case of single-figure samples, the eagle could personify the deity itself. It's clearly visible on the Syrian relief from Suwayda [21, pl. 50d]. However, such an interpretation cannot be applied to paired images: there are no examples of the image of a deity expressed twice in one place and in the same image. On a fragment of a lintel from Hatra (1<sup>st</sup> century CE) [21, pl. 50c], a relief from the Temple of Bel in Palmyra (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE), and a relief of Helios from Baalbek (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE), eagles frame the central figure of the deity and are traditionally interpreted as his servants or messengers.

From a stylistic point of view, Near Eastern (Hellenistic Oriental) art provided a model for the image of the eagle in Christian monuments of the region in the late Roman and early Byzantine periods. Perhaps, along with this, the understanding of the image of the eagle as a God's servant was also adapted.

S. Werlin interprets in this way the paired images of eagles on some lintels of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries from Palestine, comparing them with relief compositions with figures of Angels on the sides of the central image (that of Christ, saints, the Cross) in Coptic and Byzantine monuments [20, p. 146]. Since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the images of the eagles have moved further and

<sup>4</sup> A relief image of an eagle with outstretched wings is found on the impost of a pilaster on the western facade of the Karasnits Basilica (5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries) in Pashvak, Vaspurakan [3].

<sup>5</sup> The dating of the stone block with the body of an eagle from the city wall of Ani is not established for sure.

further away from direct Near Eastern parallels; it should be associated with the dominance of Christian culture, in the perspective of which that symbolism has got a new interpretation. In Christian symbolism, the figure of the eagle does not have a single fixed meaning. The variety of interpretations, related both to the texts of the Holy Scripture and to patristic versions, includes the understanding of the eagle figure as an image of the Christian soul, the Church, heavenly powers, Christ, and renewal in the Resurrection. The relief image of the eagle with raised wings became a frequent subject in Coptic funerary steles of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>6</sup> [13; 17]. Researchers tend to explain the meaning of such an image by analogy with Roman tombstones with a scene of *apotheosis*, where a bird of prey, like a *psychopomp*, raised the soul of the deceased. In the context of Christian monuments of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, such an image of an eagle replaces the figure of an angel.

On the western side of the lower tier of the drum in the El 'Adhra church in Hah, both figures of eagles<sup>7</sup> are located to the left of the central niche with a Holy Cross in a conch. As it was noted, beside the figure of an eagle, other niches contained spherical forms that have preserved traces of processing in the form of rays diverging from the center, and palmettes. The former ones can be interpreted with a high certainty as solar signs, the latter ones (palmettes) had been associated with the symbolism of the heavenly divine world in the culture of Mesopotamia for a long time. Palmettes in the form of a banana leaf placed in the entrevolts between the niches also refer to the image of the Garden of Eden. All together, these auxiliary images can refer to the image of the Heavenly Kingdom, Paradise. The very idea of representing the image of the Heavenly Kingdom in the cupola drum of a Christian church does not seem surprising. With this interpretation, the figures of eagles may represent personifications of heavenly forces: angels, for instance.

Above-mentioned eagle in the Oshki Monastery is placed on the façade in close proximity to the figures of two archangels, shown in their usual anthropomorphic form. It is hard to believe that all of these figures have the same meaning here. It seems that by the 10<sup>th</sup> century the semantics of the eagle figure had undergone changes<sup>8</sup>.

In the case of the eagles from the Ani Cathedral the attention is drawn to the unusual location of the birds on the façade of the cathedral in niches on the sides of the entrance, which is unusual for Armenian art. In the monuments of the 3<sup>rd</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries, the paired images of the eagles with spread wings are found on the lintel above the entrance [20, pp. 10–89]. But in all the mentioned cases the birds flank the central image in the form of a wreath, shell or ring of snakes tied in a knot, and there is not a single example of an eagle with an animal in its claws. There have been long-standing disputes on the issue of the appearance of the figure of an eagle with an animal in its claws in Armenian architecture and its symbolism; in recent studies, it is more often centered at the religious-mystical, rather than the secular-heraldic meaning of

<sup>6</sup> In Armenian art, similar tombstones appear in the Late Middle Ages [16].

<sup>7</sup> The original number of niches where figures of a bird of prey were set is currently unknown. Also, the state of preservation of the figures does not allow us to understand with certainty whether there was anything in the bird's claws, but it seems that not a single relief image of an eagle with a victim in its claws is known in the Christian monuments of Tur 'Abdin.

<sup>8</sup> In this regard, noteworthy if the later appearance (not earlier than 1216) of winged creatures above the kneeling figures of the founders in the relief decoration of the drum of the Church of St. John the Baptist of the Gandzasar Monastery.

the image. However, the problem of interpretation itself is far from complete and requires a search for a solution. Let us note that, unlike the Near Eastern examples, in the monuments of Sasanian Iran the figure of an eagle with an animal in its claws is quite common, especially in applied art. The influence of the art of Sasanian Iran on Armenian art has been repeatedly noted by researchers, it is possible that the meanings of prototypes could also be adapted in the course of borrowing some forms, and they transformed the content of that symbolism. In the context of all considered above, one can come to the conclusion that the eagle symbol should be understood, firstly, as a sacred, not a secular image, expressed in the style of a certain period and region; secondly, in the perspective of the religious development of a specific cultural and ethnic group. Unfortunately, the poor study of literary and material evidence of the Christian East still prevents a deep analysis of this issue.

#### **Conclusion (A. Kazaryan, A. Kondrateva, E. Loshkareva)**

The study revealed the peculiarities of the presence of sculptural figures of eagles on the façades of two outstanding monuments of medieval architecture, and also determined the degree of similarity between them: the pairs of eagles are present in both monuments on a single plane and in niches, under the canopy of their arches; there is a noticeable similarity in the silhouettes of the birds, in the degree of spreading their wings, even in the difference between the forms of the left and right birds in both monuments. Of course, the difference in the sizes of the eagles was dictated by the scale of the buildings and the locations of the sculptures; and the difference in the interpretation of the surfaces of the forms is obvious.

The problem of searches for a direct connection between these two monuments, caused by the interaction of two neighboring architectural traditions contains certain difficulties. On the one hand, the El 'Adhra Cathedral basically dates back to the decline of Late Classical architecture; and, on the other hand, it contains traces of reconstructions on the walls of both the main volume and the dome. But the lack of research on architectural stratigraphy with the determination of the time of reconstructions does not allow us to associate some forms of the monumental with a specific period. Among such forms are the drum and the conch of the apse.

The analysis showed that the appearance of a new eagle symbol is closely related to changes in the cultural paradigm of the Middle Ages. One possible explanation may be the idea of depicting the Kingdom of Heaven on the dome of a Christian temple, which is not unusual. In this context, the eagle figures adorning the dome may symbolize heavenly powers such as angels.

It is obvious that the image of the eagle should be seen as a symbol with a sacred meaning, rather than a secular one. However, due to a lack of knowledge about literary and material sources related to the Christian East, it is difficult to conduct a thorough analysis of this topic.

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**Title.** The Images of Eagles in the Context of the Architecture of the Ani Cathedral and the El 'Adhra Cathedral in Hah

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**Abstract.** For the first time, the article draws attention to the peculiarities of the sculptures of two eagles on the southern façade of the Ani Cathedral, built in the last two decades of the tenth century in the Armenian capital. It is noted that they were given special importance, due to which special niches were created for their placement. Attention is drawn to the paired images of eagles in this monument and to the broad interpretation of this idea later, in Armenian architecture of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The closest analogues of these sculptures are proposed to consider the eagles on the drum of the El 'Adhra Cathedral in Northern Mesopotamia, presumably constructed from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and which was rebuilt in the Middle Ages and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The symbolic meaning of the eagles on the walls of these churches is proposed to be explored in the field of sacred rather than secular issues, as well as taking into account the religious development of a particular cultural and ethnic group.

**Keywords:** medieval architecture, sculpture of the eagle, Christian Orient, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Ani Cathedral, El 'Adhra in Hah

**Название статьи.** Образы орлов в контексте архитектуры кафедрального собора в Ани и собора Эль-Адра в Хахе<sup>9</sup>

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**Аннотация.** В статье впервые обращается внимание на особенности скульптур двух орлов на южном фасаде кафедрального собора Ани, построенного в последние два десятилетия X в. в столице Армении. Отмечается, что им придавалось особое значение, в связи с чем для их размещения были созданы специальные ниши. Обращает на себя внимание парное изображение орлов на этом памятнике и широкое толкование этой идеи позднее, в армянской архитектуре XIII в. Ближайшими аналогами этих скульптур предлагается считать орлов на барабане собора Эль-Адра в Северной Месопотамии, предположительно построенного в период с VI по X вв. и который перестраивался в Средние века и

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в начале XX в. Символическое значение орлов на стенах этих церквей предложено усматривать в сакральной сфере, а не светской проблематики, а также с учетом религиозного развития конкретной страны.

**Ключевые слова:** средневековая архитектура, скульптура орла, христианский Восток, Армения, Месопотамия, кафедральный собор в Ани, Эль-Адра в Хахе