

УДК 7.033.2(5)

ББК 85.103(2), 85.103(3)

DOI 10.18688/aa2515-2-16

A. L. Makarova

## Artistic Features and the Time of Creation of the Ani Cathedral Paintings<sup>1</sup>

The Cathedral of Ani (late 10<sup>th</sup> — early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>2</sup> was constructed during the reign of the Bagratid royal dynasty by the outstanding Armenian architect Trdat. This period also saw the creation of some of the most significant architectural and monumental works, which predetermined the further development of Transcaucasian art.

The architecture of the Ani Cathedral has been the subject of close scrutiny by researchers since its discovery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. The traces of painting in the apse of the church were given only general comments<sup>4</sup>, which was due to the state of preservation, as the painting was under a layer of later whitewash. Almost all researchers believed that the conch of the altar apse could have contained a throned image of Christ surrounded by angels [12, p. 39; 17, pp. 481–489]. As for the dating of the painting, there are two assumptions. Nicole Thierry believed that all the surviving paintings of the Ani settlement, including the paintings of the cathedral, date back to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> — beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries [16, pp. 68–71; 18; 20, p. 204]. Nikolai Kotandjian was the first to admit that the paintings of the cathedral could well have been created soon after the completion of construction in 1001 [7, p. 140].

In recent years, ancient paintings have begun to emerge from beneath the thinned and partially crumbling whitewash. This has increased interest in the monument.

Among the most recent studies, the following works are devoted to the paintings of the Ani Cathedral. In 2021, Cristina Maranci [10] published an article in which she partially deciphers the painting program of the altar conch using computer processing of photographs. She offers her own interpretation of its iconographic interpretation, as well as deciphers the inscription on the bema wall and makes a number of general comments on the style.

Recently we have proposed a different interpretation of the mural program, based on a thorough visual examination and subsequent computer processing of the photographs. The publication [8] reveals a significant portion of the altar apse painting, corrects Maranci's assumption about the presence of an expanded scene of the prophet Ezekiel's vision in the conch,

<sup>1</sup> The study was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Science Foundation (project No. 22-18-00354-II, <https://rscf.ru/project/22-18-00354> Architecture and monumental art of Ani as a phenomenon of world artistic culture. Formation of the metropolitan school of Armenian architecture in the 10<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries), at the National Research Moscow State University of Civil Engineering.

<sup>2</sup> For the architecture of the cathedral see: [4, p. 91; 5, pp. 26–27; 22].

<sup>3</sup> For extensive literature on Ani by European researchers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Available at: <http://www.virtualani.org/accounts/villari.htm> (accessed 26 August 2025).

<sup>4</sup> For detailed historiography see: [8].

and conducts a detailed iconographic analysis of the painting in the context of Eastern Christian art of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the style (as far as possible, given the state of preservation), on the basis of which more precise conclusions can be drawn regarding the dating of the painting.

The mural program of the Ani Cathedral can be reconstructed as follows. The conch of the altar apse depicts the Theophany. A monumental figure of Christ sits on the throne. Above the Savior's head is a segment of the sky, resting on a halo; the design replicates the architectural relief beneath the plaster (part of the plaster on the right has fallen away, revealing the original sculptural decoration). Christ's right hand is raised in a blessing gesture, while his left hand holds an open Gospel almost horizontally, revealing text in Armenian (Ill. 27).

Apocalyptic Creatures stand at the foot of the throne: on the left are the eagle and the lion; on the right, the angel and the ox (Ill. 28).

In the northern and southern sections of the conch, angels are depicted standing in a half-turn stance. Each holds a staff in the left hand, while the right is extended forward (possibly holding a sphere). A faint pattern of feathers is discernible on the wings of the angels. The figures are large in proportion, dressed in voluminous garments with an abundance of folds, and closely resemble one another (Ill. 29, 30, 31).

Beneath the conch of the altar apse, two rows of figures are separated by broad ornamental bands. Directly beneath the Theophany scene is an equal-armed cross with forked roundings (decorative knobs) widening at their ends. At the lower part of the cross, two semicircles are visible, resembling flourishing branches. Flanking the cross, there appear to be angels (as can be inferred from the faint silhouettes). On either side of the cross, slender, graceful columns are discernible on small double pedestals. On both sides there are six figures. On the southern side, the first two figures are slightly turned towards each other, holding a large open book. In a similar manner, the first two figures on the northern side are presented as well. Given their number and poses, these figures most likely represent apostles. On the southern wall of the bema (βήμα) in the second row, a scroll with an inscription<sup>5</sup> has been preserved, which most likely belonged to a standing figure — possibly a prophet.

Thus, it can be assumed that the second row beneath the Theophany looked as follows: in the center there was the cross, flanked by angels; further along there were the apostles, standing frontally or slightly turned towards each other. Prophets or high priests might have been depicted on the walls of the bema.

In the lower, third register, another row of figures can be discerned, with nine on each side of the central window. The outermost figures in the row are placed on the wall of the bema (similar to the lost figure with the scroll). Their garments resemble prophetic attire. On the south side of the central window, almost all figures hold scrolls. The second figure, possibly, belonged to the prophet Daniel<sup>6</sup>. To the north of the central window, scrolls are visible in the hands of the first, fifth, seventh, and eighth figures. The first figure is presumably identified with the prophet David, and the fifth with Solomon. The second figure from the window in the

<sup>5</sup> Maranci reconstructs it as follows: [...ԳԻՏ]Ա[ՍՁԻԶ] ԶԻ ՄԵՐՁԵԱԼ Է Ա[ՐԶԱՅՈՒԹԻՒՆ] ԱՅ (for her interpretation, see [10, p. 244]). For our commentary and alternative interpretation, see: [8].

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of the attribution of the figures of the prophets, see: [8].

northern part of the apse holds a closed book in its left hand, its right palm extended forward, and its garments resemble a phelonion, suggesting it could have belonged to a saint hierarchy.

Medallions featuring half-length figures of saints, adorned with pearl-lined borders, are placed on the altar arch.

Despite the mural's condition, a partial reconstruction of the artistic style of the Ani Cathedral's paintings seems feasible. Previous studies have identified the closest set of iconographic and programmatic analogies within the monuments of Eastern Christian art from the late 10<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries [8]. Notably, the closest parallels are found in the monuments of Cappadocia and the neighboring principality of Tao-Klarjeti (Tayk)<sup>7</sup>.

Despite the grand scale of the cathedral, the masters harmoniously and proportionally integrated the images into the apse's space. Architectural features, such as the relief transition from the conch and the decorative relief molding above the central window, are also taken into account. The paintings are divided by wide ornamental bands, which serve a constructive role in the overall compositional structure, defining the pictorial scheme and imparting special solemnity and regal splendor to the painting.

The majestic image of Christ enthroned is enlarged, creating a sense of closeness to the viewer. His face is elongated, approaching a rectangular shape, with soft strands of hair cascading over His shoulders. His face exhibits archaic features: large, symmetrically placed eyes with outlines that extend beyond the outer contour, and a wide nose. The ears have a rare shape that is also found in Armenian painting, as seen, for example, in the archangel Gabriel in the scene of the Annunciation from the 10<sup>th</sup>-century Gospel (manuscript No. 7739, Matenadaran) [6, p. 91, table 15]. Christ's right hand, positioned in a blessing gesture, is gracefully inclined backward, the proportions of the hands are slightly enlarged, and the fingers are elongated. The cross-shaped halo is richly adorned with a string of pearls. A similarly ornamented halo with pearls<sup>8</sup> is also found in the image of the Savior from the Deesis in the paintings of the Manglisi drum (20s of the 11<sup>th</sup> century) [23, pp. 46–52; 24, pp. 137–142]. The proportions of Christ's body in the Ani Cathedral are close to natural (although some exaggeration of the hands is present), the shoulders are rounded, and the silhouette of the figure is soft, widening like a bell towards the bottom due to the voluminous garments.

The figures of the apocalyptic Creatures depicted on the four sides of the Savior's throne add a shade of Hellenistic naturalism to the paintings. They are unusually large for an established iconographic scheme of this type, as if the artists were attempting to create an individual portrait of each of them, which reminds us of early Byzantine monuments (for example, the

<sup>7</sup> The flourishing of the principality of Tao-Klarjeti occurred during the reign of David III (the Great) Kourpalates (960s — 1000). The painted ensembles from the last third of the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century include: the Church of St. John the Baptist in Parhali (before 973), the Otkhta Church (circa 978), the Church of St. John the Baptist in Oshki (last third of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and 1036), the cathedral of the Ishkhani Monastery (circa 1032), the cathedral of the Khakhuli Monastery (second quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century), and others. For detailed historiography see: [28, 29].

<sup>8</sup> A similar "string of pearls" adorns the Savior's halo and the medallions with saints, as well as the edges of the altar arch. The pearl-adorned halo in Byzantine art is found in various periods of time, but more often in early monuments. For example, on Christ in the apse mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna (546–548 AD), in the miniatures of "Sacra Parallela" (Paris, National Library of France, gr. 923, second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century), on Christ and King Gagik in the sculptural decor of the eastern facade of Aghtamar (915–921), and many others.

symbols of the evangelists in the altar mosaic of Hosios David in Thessaloniki, from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century, or in the mosaics of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, from the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and others). The ox is depicted with an extended front leg and small wings at the back. Its large face, turned in full-face view, features large expressive eyes and wide nostrils. On its forehead, one can discern an elongated rhombus-shaped black spot<sup>9</sup>.

Above the ox, there is a half-figure of an angel dressed in a voluminous, light-colored tunic and himation. He seems to be peeking out from behind the throne, grasping one of the balusters with his left hand while pointing toward Christ with his right. The lion is depicted symmetrically to the ox, lying on its front paws, with a small wing closely positioned between the throne and its back. The eagle is depicted standing on the lion's head, with its wings slightly extended, and its head turned towards the throne. For the apocalyptic Creatures, Maranci draws a parallel with the miniatures from Ani by the master Ignatios (the Gospel of 1236 from the Horomos Monastery, Library of the Cathedral of Christ the Almighty, New Julfa, MS 36) [10, p.240]. We cannot agree with such a comparison. Although these miniatures were created in Ani, their artistic principles are far removed from the pictorial monuments of the Bagratid era and correspond to the tastes of a later period. In turn, the artist Ignatios could very well have seen the paintings of the cathedral.

The richly decorated throne (Ill. 32) is positioned at a slight foreshortening. It has four separate legs connected by crossbars, and the armrests are decorated with knobs featuring petal-shaped finials. The throne is encrusted with gemstones, square in shape, and rows of pearls. This is reminiscent of how the throne of Emperor Leo VI is decorated in the mosaic of the narthex of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (early 10<sup>th</sup> century). Thrones similar in shape (with a curved backrest) and decorative principles can also be found in the paintings of Cappadocian churches from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, such as in the Haçlı Kilise in Kızıl Çukur (early 10<sup>th</sup> century) and others.

However, the closest analogy can be found in the paintings of the Church of the Savior in Chvabiani (978–1001, Svaneti) [26, pp. 11–23]. Here, as in the Ani Cathedral, the high backrest of the throne curves at the top of the throne, echoing the shape of the mandorla surrounding the image of Christ<sup>10</sup>.

Maranci compares the throne to the richly decorated throne of the Virgin Mary from the Adrianople Tetraevangelion of 1007 (No. 887, fol. 7 v., Library of the Monastery of St. Lazarus, Venice) [10, p.250]. It is important to note that these two thrones cannot be considered direct analogies, as they differ in shape and ornamental design. Rather, there is a common tendency among the artists to emphasize the royal status and metropolitan origin of these forms through richly decorated attributes, which seems quite natural for the Bagratid era. If we talk about stylistics, then in the proportions of the figure of the Virgin Mary from the Adrianople Gospel, the exquisite pattern of the folds of Her garments, the elongated fingers of Her hands, a common mood is captured with the paintings of the Ani Cathedral and Chvabiani.

<sup>9</sup> The rhombus was unlikely to have been black originally; its paint composition may have included zinc white pigments, which have altered over time.

<sup>10</sup> Richly decorated thrones were also found in the temple paintings of Tao-Klarjeti, for example, in Parkhali and Tbeti.

Angels are represented in statuesque, elegant poses on either side of the conch of the altar apse of the Cathedral of Ani. They are portrayed in a wide stride in a three-quarter turn, with the leg protruding forward slightly bent at the knee, which lends a particular stability to the figures. Two large wings extend behind their backs, as if the angels have just completed a flight. They are dressed in long, voluminous tunics. The ends of their himatia are thrown over the arm, cascading down to the ground in a waterfall of zigzagging folds.

In their poses, garments, and the depiction of figures with their corporeal weight, as well as in the presence of light highlights in the form of doubled zigzag lines (for example, on the angels' knees and elbow bends) — one senses a discernible reference to the antiquating monuments of the early medieval period<sup>11</sup>. It is enough to recall the angel from the "Annunciation" scene in the early miniature of the Echmiadzin Gospel (No. 2374, fol. 229, 6–7<sup>th</sup> century) [6, pp. 8–11, 78, fig. 2]. In the angels of Ani, the Hellenistic component takes on a more conventional and stylized character, and a number of new features are added. The origins of such stylistic techniques should be sought in the art of the late 10<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Thus, we see that from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the artistic influence of Byzantium is strengthening in Asia Minor, leading to the emergence of new monuments oriented toward metropolitan tastes. A vivid example of this art is the paintings of the New Church of Tokalı (950s) [19, pp. 437–444, 21, pp. 169–173; 25]. Under their influence, a distinctive regional school formed in Transcaucasia, to which one can attribute the frescoes of Tao-Klarjeti and other monuments, such as the miniatures of the Adrianople Tetraevangelion<sup>12</sup>. We can compare the angel from the northern part of the conch of the Ani Cathedral with the angel from the Annunciation scene in the Otkhta-eklesia (partially preserved) [14, p. 180]. They have almost identical silhouettes, proportions, and wing patterns. Similar features are also noted in the angel in the northern part of the altar conch in the paintings of the cave church of St. Dodo (David Gareja, Georgia, 10<sup>th</sup> century). The resemblance to the paintings of Tao-Klarjeti is also expressed in the overall principle of shaping the drapery folds. They emphasize the anatomy of the bodies, gently highlighting their outlines, and display various textures: from large to fine and fragmented, diverging with elongated frequent lines, as seen on the garments of angels carrying the cross in the dome paintings of Ishkhani. Similar techniques are also present in the way of shaping the draperies in prophetic figures at Otkhta-eklesia (especially on the prophet's cloak to the left of St. David), as well as on the garments of Melchizedek from the northern slope of the central window.

In Ani cathedral the figures in the second row (the apostles?) are evenly arranged on either side of the central composition with the cross. They also exhibit features of the classical style, as can be judged by their silhouettes and drawing, including: proportions close to natural, stable postures (they stand right along the very edge of the ornaments, and their toes sometimes extend beyond the edges of the delineation), and complex, elegant drapery patterns. The figures

<sup>11</sup> Maranci also draws parallels with Armenian paintings of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. She compares the throne of the Ani Cathedral with the pedestal from Aruch and the throne in Lmbat [10, p. 250]. The appeal to monuments of this period is evident in the architectural and sculptural traditions of the Bagratid era, which may have also affected painting. On monumental painting in Armenia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, see: [2, pp. 133–142].

<sup>12</sup> On Byzantine influences in Armenian medieval painting, see: [1].

in the second row resemble apostles in the paintings of Chvabiani, where the connection with classicizing Byzantine art is expressed more vividly, as well as in Khakhuli.

There is something very vitally convincing in the way the four central figures, in pairs, hold large open books. The artists seem to emphasize the challenges faced by these characters. Their actions suggest a reverent attitude and include a liturgical subtext. This artistic freedom reflects a common approach shared with pre-iconoclastic art.

Also noteworthy is how the lower edge of the garments is depicted, voluminously falling from the raised hands of the apostles (?). It forms a multi-tiered zigzag line (like an antique ribbon), creating a sense of spatial depth from the formed folds of the garments and bordered by a double band. The edge of the cloth in the hands of the Apostle John from Chvabiani, on which an open Gospel is vertically placed, the garments of the saint in the southern part of the apse, and also Christ's himation in the murals of Otkhta and others, look exactly the same. By analogy with the monuments listed above, one can imagine that in the Ani cathedral murals, this technique was further enhanced by a painterly layer that created the effect of chiaroscuro modeling<sup>13</sup>.

The stylistic features listed are also characteristic of the figures in the third row, in which prophets and saint hierarchs are presumably located (Ill. 33). Here, it is important to pay attention to the form of the scrolls: narrow and long, they have a characteristic fold in the middle. We find exactly the same shaped scrolls in the prophetic row of Otkhta.

In the figures of the Ani Cathedral, features not typical of the classical style also appear, characteristic of the monuments from the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries. These are manifested in deliberately distorted anatomy, for example, in the emphasized elongated fingers or enlarged feet (as if the figure is drawn from a specific angle). This is further enhanced by regional specifics, as seen, for example, in the figures of the apostles in the paintings of Tatev (930) [9] or in the image of the Evangelist Matthew from the Georgian Sinai Tetraevangelion of the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (No. 38 (12), Sinai) [13, pp. 89–91, tab. 27], among others. The national component, betraying the hand of local masters, is present in the images of saints in medallions on the triumphal arch of the cathedral. Typologically, the faces are similar to the paintings in the Church of the Holy Cross on Aghtamar Island [15]. The enlarged faces of angels from the Ani Cathedral, with their suggested symmetry of features, may foreshadow the ascetic direction in painting of the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This ascetic style would be most clearly manifest in the paintings of Ishkhani, Oshki, and Khakhuli in Tao-Klarjeti, and other Transcaucasian monuments created closer to the middle of the century<sup>14</sup>.

The ornaments in the apse of the Ani Cathedral, separating the registers with images, represent a rare, if not unique, combination of three wide bands with different variations of floral patterns. These ornamental bands, quite self-sufficient in their compositions and themes, rather resemble architectural reliefs. They are refined yet opulent, featuring intricate volumetric patterns.

The triple composition of ornaments directly under the conch of the altar apse looks as follows. The uppermost, narrowest row consists of two plant shoots with voluminous leaves,

<sup>13</sup> On Chvabiani's connection with classicizing Constantinopolitan art, see: [28].

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed discussion of the style of these monuments, see: [30].

some of which slightly overlap each other. The remaining background gaps create a sense of depth. A similar ornament is seen on the triumphal arch in Otkhta-eklesia. The transition to the next pattern is made in the form of a delineation decorated with braiding, forming small circles at the center of the interlacings. The middle ornament is the most complex and largest of the three. This is a vine winding in a wavy line (goes to a meander) with leaves growing from it. The lower ornament is the most readable, resembling lilies in shape. We find an analogy to this in the mosaics of Tsromi (7<sup>th</sup> century) and others. In Transcaucasia, such an ornament is often found in architectural decor and sculpture [11].

The tier of ornamental compositions separating the second and third registers also consists of plant motifs. One of them, the central one, traces its origins to acanthus and represents a voluminous vine of a complex shape curling into rings. Lush leaves resembling flowers are inserted within formed circular interlacings. A nearly analogous ornament is found at Otkhta in the third and fourth registers of the altar apse. In the third row, it is complemented by diminutive personifications (an “inhabited vine”). Zaza Skhirtladze notes the antique origins of this iconography [14, pp. 245–247]. It is also worth noting the artistic commonality between these motifs and the ornamental insets dividing the compositions in Khakhuli and Parkhali.

It is possible to reconstruct the approximate color scheme of the Ani Cathedral according to those areas where pigments have emerged through the crumbled plaster. The background is bright blue (most likely lapis lazuli), red and yellow ochre are visible in the clothing, and lead white could have been partially used, as there are transformed areas of painting — a rhomboid spot on the muzzle of an ox from apocalyptic Creatures, light strokes and highlights on the faces and clothing of angels. On the angel's chiton in the southern part of the apse, a light malachite pigment is quite well visible. The connection with the Tao-Klarjeti school in terms of color composition is also obvious. The presence of bright blue (lapis lazuli) backgrounds in Armenian monuments of monumental painting, close in time to the cathedral, is noted in the Aghtamar painting.

Thus, it can be said with almost no doubt that the paintings of the cathedral in Ani were created shortly after its construction. An analysis of the artistic features allows us to conclude that the paintings follow the general trends of the late 10<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries common to Transcaucasia and the entire Christian East. The closest parallels are found in the temple decorations of Tao-Klarjeti, which are confirmed by the similarity in design, color palette, ornaments, as well as the overall approach to compositional construction of paintings. The presence of a classicizing line in the paintings of the cathedral is also close to the frescoes of the Church of the Savior in Chvabiani, although the latter are much more closely related to the Constantinopolitan examples of the turn of the centuries.

In all these artistic ensembles, important ideas are embedded. In the luxury, grandeur, in the claim to metropolitan execution, the high cost of the materials used, one can feel the ambitions of the new ruling dynasties<sup>15</sup>, wishing to emphasize their status and independence, as well as the autonomy of the Church in this region (which is complemented by complex theological programs).

<sup>15</sup> In Ani — Bagratuni, Tao-Klarjeti — Bagratuniani.



In an effort to preserve local artistic specificity, a corresponding style emerges, recognizably rooted in Constantinopolitan traditions but with a fresh interpretation of established techniques. This it is an exquisite, occasionally even refined style, very solemn (enhanced by architectural forms), yet it retains elements of distinct local character.

## References

1. Hakobyan Z. *Vizantiiskoe khudozhestvennoe vliianie v armianskoi miniatiure XI veka. Adrianopol'skoe i Trapezundskoe Evangeliia (K voprosu ob iskusstve armian-khalkidonitov) (Byzantine Artistic Influence in 11<sup>th</sup> Century Armenian Miniatures. The Adrianople and Trebizond Gospels. (On the Art of the Armenian Chalcedonians))*, Ph. D. Thesis. Available at: <https://www.hist.msu.ru/Science/Disser/Akopian.pdf> (accessed 08 August 2024).
2. Hakobyan Z. Monumental Painting of Armenia in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century in the Context of the Eastern Christian Tradition. Zakharova A.; Maltseva S.; Staniukovich-Denisova E. (eds). *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art: Collection of Articles*, 2016, vol. 6, pp. 133–142. DOI 10.18688/aa166-2-14 (in Russian).
3. Kazaryan A. Metropolitan school of Armenian architecture of the Bagratid period. A new survey of the development. *Questions of the History of World Architecture*, 2017, vol. 8, pp. 87–116.
4. Kazaryan A. Retrospective Review as a Creative Method of the architects of the Armenian Kingdom of Bagratids. *Academia. Architecture and Construction*, 2022, no. 4, pp. 22–30.
5. Kazaryan A. Y. Domes of the churches of Ani architectural school of the Bagratid Epoch: Typology and the origin of forms. Maltseva S. V.; Staniukovich-Denisova E. Iu.; Zakharova A. V. (eds). *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art: Collection of articles*, vol. 15. St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg University Press Publ., 2025, pp. 22–30 (in Russian). DOI 10.18688/aa2515-2-14.
6. Korkhmazian E. *Armenian Miniatures. Matenadaran Collection*. Yerevan, Nairi Publ., 2007. 315 p.
7. Kotandjian N. Les décors peints des églises d'Arménie. Durand J.; Rapti I.; Giovannoni D. (eds). *Armenia Sacra, Mémoire chrétienne des Arméniens (IV–XIII siècle). Exhibition catalogue*. Paris, Louvre Publ., 2007, pp. 137–144.
8. Makarova A. The Paintings of the Altar Apse of the Cathedral in Ani in the Context of the Development of Medieval Monumental Painting in Transcaucasia (Based on the Materials of the 2024 Expedition). *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, 2025, vol. 109, pp. (in Russian) (in print).
9. Manukian S. Wall Paintings of Tatev (930). Genesis Forest. Hakobyan Z.; Mikaelyan L. (eds). *Collected Articles in Memory of Felix Ter-Martirosov*. Erevan, Erevan State University Publ., 2015, pp. 296–325 (in Russian).
10. Maranci C. Visions of Ani: Software-recovered Painting from The Apse of the Cathedral and the Church of Saint Gregory «Abugamrenç». *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 2021, vol. 40, pp. 233–261.
11. Mikaelyan L. The Motif of Acanthus and Palmette in Early Medieval Sculpture of Armenia and in the Art of Sassanid Iran. Zakharova A.; Maltseva S.; Staniukovich-Denisova E. (eds). *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art: Collection of Articles: Collection of Articles*, 2016, vol. 6, pp. 220–229. DOI 10.18688/aa155-2-22 (in Russian).
12. Orbeli I. *Catalogue of the Ani Museum of Antiquities*, vol. 1. St. Petersburg, Imperial Academy of Sciences Publ., 1910. 39 p. (in Russian).
13. Schmerling R. *Khudozhestvennoe oformlenie gruzinskoi rukopisnoi knigi IX–XI stoletii (Artistic Design of Georgian Manuscripts of the 9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*. Tbilisi, Metsniereba Publ., 1979. 239 p. (in Russian).
14. Skhirtladze Z. *The Murals of Otkhta Eklesia*. Tbilisi, Christian Art Studies Center of Georgian Patriarchate Publ., 2009. 486 p. (in Georgian and in English).
15. Thierry N. Paintings of the Church of the Holy Cross in Akhtamar (915–921). *Second International Symposium on Georgian Art*. Yerevan, Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR Publ., 1978. 11 p. (in Russian).
16. Thierry N. The Wall Paintings of Ani. Cuneo P. (ed.). *Ani. Documents of Armenian Architecture*. Milano-San Lazzaro; Venezia, 1984, pp. 68–71.
17. Thierry J.-M., Donabédian P. *Les arts arméniens*. Paris, Mazenod Publ., 1987. 623 p.
18. Thierry N.; Thierry M. *L'église Saint-Grégoire de Tigran Honenc' à Ani (1215)*. Louvain, Peeters Publ., 1993. 85 p. (in French).



19. Thierry N. De la datation des églises de Cappadoce. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 1995, vol. 88, pp. 419–455 (in French).
20. Thierry N. Du développement comparé des peintures murales dans les royaumes arméniens. *L'Arménie et Byzance. Histoire et culture*, 1996, no. 12, pp. 203–225 (in French).
21. Thierry N. *La Cappadoce de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*. Turnhout, Brepols Publ., 2002. 316 p. (in French).
22. Toramanyan T. *Cathedral in Ani*. Yerevan, Agency of historical-cultural museums and the preservation of historical environment Publ., 2008 (in Armenian, in Russian, and in English).
23. Velmans T. L'image de la Dèisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde Byzantin. *Cahiers Archéologique*, 1980–1981, vol. 29, pp. 47–102 (in French).
24. Velmans T., Alpago Novello A. *Miroir de l'invisible. Peintures murales et architecture de la Géorgie (VIe — XVe s.)*. Milano, Jaca Book Publ., 1996. 296 p. (in French).
25. Wharton Epstein A. *Tokali kilise. Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia*. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection Publ., 1986. 228 p.
26. Zakharova A.; Sverdlova S. Original Wall Paintings at the Church of the Saviour in Chvabiani (Upper Svane-ti, Georgia) and Byzantine Art at the Turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> cc. *Zograf*, 2016, no. 39, p. 11–23.
27. Zakharova A.; Maltseva S. The Materials of Nikolai Okunev's Expedition of 1917 on the Wall Paintings of Parkhali. Zakharova A.; Maltseva S.; Staniukovich-Denisova E. (eds). *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art: Collection of Articles: Collection of Articles*, 2017, vol. 7, pp. 679–688. DOI 10.18688/aa177-9-69.
28. Zakharova A.; Maltseva S. New data on the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century murals in Tao-Klarjeti based on the materials of N. L. Okunev's 1917 expedition. *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, 2018, vol. 102, pp. 288–317 (in Russian).
29. Zakharova A. Wall Paintings of the Ishkhan Cathedral and Byzantine Art of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Hakob-yan Z.; Garibian N.; Asryan A. (eds). *Historical Tayk'. History, Culture, Confession. Collected papers*. Yerevan, Holy Etchmiadzin Publ., 2019, pp. 366–387.

**Title.** Artistic Features and the Time of Creation of the Ani Cathedral Paintings

**Author.** Makarova, Anna L. — Ph. D., researcher. Moscow State University of Civil Engineering, Yaroslavskoye Shosse, 26, 129337 Moscow, Russian Federation; mashico@inbox.ru; SPIN-код: 9060-3144, ORCID: 0000-0002-1262-4967; Scopus ID 57205694786

**Abstract.** The architecture of the Ani Cathedral, built at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Armenian architect Trdat, has been the subject of intense research since its discovery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, traces of painting in the church's apse have received only general comments. This was due to the state of preservation, as the paintings were under a layer of later whitewash. Regarding the dating of the paintings, there are two theories. Nicole Thierry believed that all surviving paintings from the Ani settlement, including those of the cathedral, date to the late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nikolai Kotanjan was the first to suggest that the cathedral's paintings could well have been created shortly after construction was completed in 1001. Among the most recent studies, an article by Cristina Maranci (2021) is devoted to the paintings. This article also allows for an early creation of the paintings, but does not draw definitive conclusions. This article analyzes the style of the paintings of the Ani Cathedral. Based on the obtained results, the hypothesis regarding the early dating of the painting is confirmed. The temple decorations of the neighboring principality of Tao-Klarjeti are considered the closest analogies. This is supported by the similarity of the design, color scheme, and ornamentation, as well as the general approach to compositional construction. The presence of a classicizing line in the cathedral painting is close to the frescoes of the Church of the Savior in Chvabiani (978–1001, Svane-ti).

**Keywords:** wall paintings, Armenian frescoes, architect Trdat, Transcaucasia, the Ani Cathedral, altar apse, Bagratids, Theophania

**Название статьи.** Художественные особенности росписи кафедрального собора Ани и уточнение времени создания<sup>16</sup>

**Сведения об авторе.** Макарова, Анна Львовна — кандидат искусствоведения, старший научный сотрудник. Московский государственный строительный университет, Ярославское шоссе, 26, Москва, Российская Федерация, 129337; mashico@inbox.ru; SPIN-код: 9060-3144; ORCID: 0000-0002-1262-4967; Scopus ID: 57205694786

<sup>16</sup> Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда № 22-18-00354-П, <https://rscf.ru/project/22-18-00354/>, в Национальном исследовательском Московском государственном строительном университете (НИУ МГСУ).

**Аннотация.** Архитектура Анийского собора, созданного на рубеже X–XI вв. армянским зодчим Трдатом, находилась под пристальным вниманием исследователей с момента его открытия в XIX в. Следам росписи в апсиде храма отводились лишь замечания общего характера, что было обусловлено сохранностью, так как живопись находилась под слоем поздней побелки. Что касается датировки росписи, то существует два предположения. Николь Тьерри считала, что все сохранившиеся росписи анийского городища, включая росписи собора, относятся к концу XII — началу XIII вв. Николай Котанджян впервые предположил, что живопись собора вполне могла быть создана вскоре после завершения строительства в 1001 г. Из новейших исследований росписям посвящена статья Кристины Маранчи (2021 г.), в которой исследовательница также допускает ранее создание живописи, однако окончательных выводов не делает. В настоящей статье анализируется стиль росписи собора Ани. На основе полученных результатов подтверждается предположение относительно раннего варианта датировки живописи. В качестве самых близких аналогий предлагаются храмовые декорации соседнего княжества Тао-Кларджети, что подтверждается схожестью рисунка, колорита, орнаментов, а также общим подходом к композиционному построению. Присутствие классицизирующей линии в живописи собора близко фрескам церкви Спасителя в Чвабиани (978–1001 гг., Сванетия).

**Ключевые слова:** настенная живопись, армянские фрески, архитектор Трдат, Закавказье, кафедральный собор в Ани, алтарная апсида, Багратиды, Феофания



Ill. 27. Christ on the Throne. Painting of the altar apse of Ani Cathedral, Turkey. Photo and drawing by A. L. Makarova, 2024



Ill. 28. The ox. Painting of the altar apse of the Ani Cathedral, Turkey. Photo by A. L. Makarova, 2024



Ill. 29. Angel. The northern sections of the conch of the Cathedral of Ani, Turkey. Photo and drawing by A.L. Makarova, 2024





Ill. 30. Fragment of the composition "Theophany". The southern sections of the conch of the Cathedral of Ani, Turkey. Photo and drawing by A. L. Makarova, 2024



Ill. 31. Fragment of an angel's figure. The southern sections of the conch of the Cathedral of Ani, Turkey. Photo and drawing by A. L. Makarova, 2024



Ill. 32. Fragment of the throne. The southern sections of the conch of the Cathedral of Ani, Turkey. Photo and drawing by A. L. Makarova, 2024



Ill. 33. Figures (prophets?). Paintings of the southern part of the altar apse of the Cathedral of Ani, Turkey. Photo and drawing by A. L. Makarova, 2024