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The Gift of Emperor Michael, Papal Textiles with *Chrysoclabas* and Figurative Art in the Period of Iconoclasm

The dispute over the place and function of images in the Eastern Orthodox Church (726–780 and 815–843), referred to as a controversy among scholars and as iconoclastic heresy among members of the Orthodox Church, constituted a turning point both in the political history of the Byzantine Empire and in the history of its art. It is therefore hardly surprising that this period has enjoyed a great popularity among scholars for nearly one hundred years.[1] However, a vast majority of the discussions associated with the artistic aspect of the discussed issue focus on the analysis of theological arguments used by both parties to the conflict, whereas the art created at that time is very often disregarded or mentioned perfunctorily. The reasons for this are complex and seem to stem as much from the scarcity of preserved artefacts as from the prejudices of the scholars, unwilling to associate the works of figurative art with Iconoclasm.[2]

1. The first comprehensive study dedicated to the problem of Iconoclasm was the collection of excerpts from the writings of the heretics, provided with a German translation and commentaries by Georg Ostrogorsky, see G. Ostrogorsky, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites*, (Historische Untersuchungen 5), Breslau 1929. The discussion on the huge body of research on various aspects of Iconoclasm certainly goes beyond the scope of this paper. Bibliographic references and the summary of the views presented in earlier studies can be found in L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History,* Cambridge 2011 (hereafter referred to as: Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011).
2. Among the texts discussing the art dated to the period of Iconoclasm (both religious art and that related to the imperial court), the following ones are particularly

Such an attitude can be illustrated by the fact that the group of liturgical fabrics with depictions of Christ and saints, known from written sources and surviving remnants, are simply ignored by the scholars studying this period. These works of art, despite being classified as handicraft products, constitute prime examples of the finest craftsmanship; they are also particularly noteworthy for their size and the way they were displayed in public, which makes them similar to monumental paintings.[3] For that reason, an extensive study of written sources of information on the production of silk fabrics with figurative motifs in Byzantium in the age of Iconoclasm — with an attempt to specify the date and the origin of two exceptional samites in the collection of the Vatican Museo Sacro with the scenes of *Annunciation* and *Nativity* in the backdrop — is fully justified.

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On Christmas Day in 811, Michael I Rhangabe crowned his eldest son, Theophylact, in Hagia Sophia. On that occasion, he offered numerous precious gifts to the Cathedral of Constantinople, including golden vessels embedded with precious stones, and a set of four curtains shot with gold and purple threads which featured holy images. The fabrics have not survived until the present day, and are only known from the references made in the Chronicles of Theophanes the Confessor: *He offered a sumptuous adornment for the holy sanctuary, namely golden vessels set with gems and a set of four curtains of ancient manufacture, splendidly embroidered in gold and purple and decorated with wonderful sacred images*.[4]

noteworthy: A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Le dossier archéologique*, Paris 1984 (here: after the revised and supplemented edition from 1998); R. Cormack, *The Arts during the age of Iconoclasm*, in: *Iconoclasm, Papers given at the 9th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies (University of Birmingham, March 1975)*, eds. A. Bryer, J. Herrin, pp. 35—44. As far as more recent studies are concerned, this collection of papers published in the aftermath of the 2009 symposium is particularly noteworthy: *L'aniconisme dans l'art religieux byzantin. Actes du colloque de Genève (13 octobre 2009)*, Genève 2014.

3. The manner in which curtains were displayed in Byzantine Imperial and (to a smaller extent) Church ceremonies from the 9th to the 14th century is discussed by M.G. Parani, *Mediating presence: curtains in Middle and Late Byzantine imperial ceremonial and portraiture*, "Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies" 42 (2018), pp. 1—25.

4. *Theophanis chronographia: Textum graecum continens*, rec. C. de Boor, (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig 1883, vol. 1,

The reference to the figural representations is in stark contrast to the description of gifts offered one generation earlier by Empress Irene of Athens at the time of her regency (780—90) to the sanctuary of the Mother of God of the Life-giving Spring. As an expression of gratitude for curing the haemorrhage which ceased after drinking the holy water — according to the anonymous *Tale of the Holy Church of the Mother of God at the Spring* — along with liturgical vessels and fabrics shot with gold threads, the Empress commissioned portraits of herself and her son, Constantine VI, to be made in mosaic and placed on the side walls of the sanctuary.[5] As Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne points out, the text of the *Tale* only mentions the imperial portraits, while making no references to any representations of Christ, the Mother of God or the saints.[6] Images of the rulers were in conformance with the iconoclastic doctrine, which allowed for the likenesses to be made but condemned their use for cult purposes.[7]

The fact that Theophanes mentions textiles with sacred images can, therefore, be indicative of the change that took place as a result of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), which restored the worship of religious representations. However, due to the cursory character of the source, we cannot say what representations were depicted on textiles offered by Emperor Michael. We can only try to reconstruct their possible appearance based on

p. 494 [A. M. 6304]: προσήγαγε πολυτελῆ κόσμον τῷ ἁγίῳ θυσιαστηρίῳ ἐν σκεύεσι χρυσοῦ διαλίθοις καὶ τετραβήλοις ἀρχαιοτεύκτοις ἐκ χρυσοῦ καὶ πορφύρας λαμπρῶς καθυφασμένοις καὶ θαυμασταῖς ἁγίαις εἰκόσι πεποικιλμένοις (translation after C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284—813,* Oxford 1997, p. 678); see also J.B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire, from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I, AD 802—867*, London 1912, p. 23.

5. *Acta Sanctorum*, Bruxellis 1910, vol. 65 [Novembris III], ed. J. Greuse, pp. 878—80; C.A. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312—1453: sources and documents*, Toronto 1986, pp. 156—157; *Miracle Tales from Byzantium*, transl. A.-M. Talbot, S.F. Johnson, Harvard, Cambridge Mass., London 2012, pp. 222—223. See also Grabar, op. cit., pp. 240—242 and footnote 103 (the healing and the mosaics date back to the period between 780 and 790). More on the votive crown, decorated with pearls (which was previously removed by Leo IV the Khazar), offered by Irene and Constantine to an unspecified church on Christmas Day in 780, can be found in *Theophanis chronographia*, (de Boor), vol. 1, p. 454 [A. M. 6273]; Mango, Scott, p. 627.

6. J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Pour une problématique de la peinture d'église byzantine à l'époque iconoclaste*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 41 (1987), pp. 321—337, here: 322. The lack of evidence confirming that Irene rapidly reinstated figurative painting in church interiors is highlighted by Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, pp. 294—296.

7. A. Grabar, op. cit., pp. 165—185.

the surviving examples from the period. Two fragments of silk samite (Greek: ἑξάμιτον) from the Sancta Sanctorum at the Lateran are presently held in the collection of the Vatican Museo Sacro (accession nos. 61231 and 61258). They were found by the German Jesuit Hartman Grisar in a local treasury in June 1905, where they were used as the lining of a silver casket reliquary, deposited in a cypress wood box, along with other valuables.[8] The bigger piece (68.7 × 33.6 cm) features two medallions, both 32 cm in diameter, with a foliage motif and a repeated *Annunciation* scene (fig. 1), whereas the smaller piece (31.5 × 27.5 cm) depicts the *Nativity* (fig. 2), framed with an identical medallion, 30 cm in diameter. They are undoubtedly fragments of a larger piece of fabric, which was later cut and whose fragments were lost. This is evident from the same technique of broché, complex twill weave (½ Z), used in both pieces, as well as from the selection of threads in five colours: red, green, ochre, white and blue (purple), but first and foremost from the similar sizes of the medallions and identical ornamentation in the form of fleurons arranged in palmettes. The weaved figures are also stylistically similar.[9]

8. The fabrics were introduced to the academic dispute by Ph. Lauer, *Le Trésor du Sancta Sanctorum*, "Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot" 15 (1906), pp. 7–146, here: pp. 109–111, pl. XV, XVIII/5 (and p. 113, where he links the discovered silks to the passage about the textiles offered by Michael III to Pope Benedict III); H. Grisar, *Die römische Kapelle Sancta sanctorum und ihr Schatz*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1908, pp. 130–131, pl. VI–VII (where he associates the fabric with Egyptian or Syrian milieu and dates it to the period between the 6th and the 9th century, allowing a wide dating range, while suggesting that the second half of this period is a more probable time frame for their creation); J. Lessing, O. von Falke, *Die Gewebe-Sammlung des Königlichen Kunstgewerbe--Museums Berlin*, Berlin 1913, pl. 6.

9. As Rudolf Pfister has demonstrated on the basis of chemical analysis, the red dye in the former textile comes from *rubia tinctorum*, whereas in the latter Polish cochineal was used. However, in his opinion, it does not necessarily indicate a different origin of each of the fragments. The considerable size of the fabric could have resulted in the shortage of the material, due to which it was necessary to use yarn from a different source, see R. Pfister, *Sur les tissus du Trésor de Sancta Sanctorum*, in: *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionlae degli Orientalisti*, Roma 1938, pp. 661–666; and after him M. Martiniani-Reber, *Nouveau regard sur les soieries de l'Annonciation et de la Nativité du Sancta Sanctorum*, "Bulletin de liaison du Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens" 62–63 (1986), pp. 12–19, here: 12–13. The colour analysis was conducted by M. King, D. King, *The Annunciation and Nativity silks: a supplementary note*, "Bulletin de liaison du Centre international d'études des textiles anciens" 63–64 (1986), pp. 20–21, here: 20. On the weaving technique used, see: A. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving AD 400 to 1200*, Vienna 1997 (hereafter referred to as: Muthesius 1997), p. 175 (cat. no. M35), fig. 20AB; R. Schorta, *Zwei Seidenfragmente mit Szenen aus der Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu*, in: *799. Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit.*

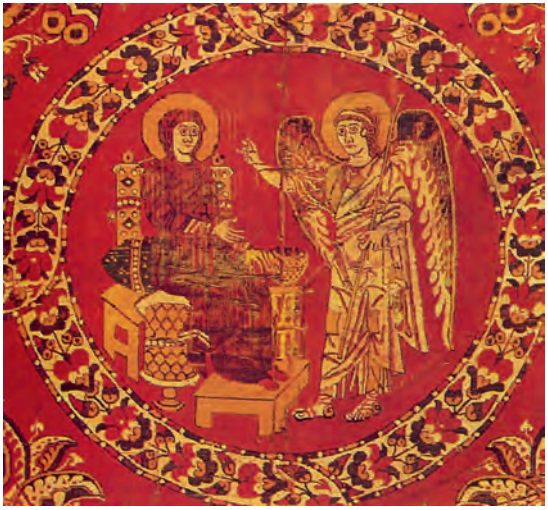

Fig. 1. Samite in five colours from the Sancta Sanctorum, *The Annunciation* (detail), ca. 800, Museo Sacro, Vatican, after: J. Lessing, O. von Falke, *Die Gewebe-Sammlung des Königlichen Kunstgewerbe-Museums Berlin*, Berlin 1913, pl. 6

Fig. 2. Samite in five colours from the Sancta Sanctorum, *The Nativity* (detail), ca. 800, Museo Sacro, Vatican, after: J. Lessing, O. von Falke, *Die Gewebe-Sammlung des Königlichen Kunstgewerbe-Museums Berlin*, Berlin 1913, pl. 6

Moreover, a small sheet of silk fabric, as we can deduce from the preserved fragments of the three medallions and an illegible figural composition, which was once part of the same piece as the Vatican samites, was found in St Peter's Abbey in Baume-les-Messieurs, Jura.[10]

Unfortunately, we can neither determine when the fabric was deconstructed, nor what its original purpose was. Grisar mentions that it was a part of a reliquary containing Christ's sandals (as suggested by the *titulus* reading: *sandalia D. N. J. C*) and links this fact to a reference made in the *Liber Pontificalis*, according to which this relic was kept in Rome during the pontificate of Nicholas I (858–867).[11] Twelfth-century records

Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn, hrsg. Ch. Stiegemann, M. Wemhoff, Paderborn 1999, vol. 2, pp. 657–660, here: 657 (no. IX 38a, b).

10. M. Martiniani-Reber, *Tissus*, in: *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. J. Durand, Paris 1992, p. 192, fig. 1.

11. Grisar, op. cit., pp. 62, 101–102; *Liber pontificalis*, eds. M. Ożóg, H. Pietras, Kraków 2015, vol. 2, p. 228 [hereafter referred to as: *LP;* CVII 30].

unambiguously confirm the presence of this relic at the Lateran Basilica, and the description found in *Liber de ecclesia lateranensi,* written by John, local canon and deacon, suggests that already during the pontificate of Alexander III (1159–1181), the reliquary, together with two staurothekes, was kept in the cypress altar in the Sancta Sanctorum (*sandalia id est calciamenta Domini nostri Iesu Christi*).[12] However, this information is a clue to the reliquary only, with no reference to the cloth which was lining it.[13] There are also some doubts regarding the credibility of Grisar's account, as he was suspected of misdescribing the discovery.[14] For that reason, the time when the Vatican samite was created can be established only on stylistic and technological grounds.

Based on a colour and ornament analysis, as well as general stylistic similarities to the mosaics of Ravenna, Otto von Falke suggested that the fabric could have originated from the Alexandrian milieu in the first

12. According to the *Ordo Romanus* written by Benedict, Canon of the Vatican Basilica, the relic of Christ's sandals was carried in processions during the pontificate of Pope Innocent II (1130–1143), see *Patrologiae latinae, cursus completus*, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris 1862–1865, vol. 78, column 1053 [XI 74]. The relic is also mentioned by Peter the Deacon of Monte Casino († ca. 1140), see *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, ed. P. Geyer, (Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 39), Vindobonae 1898, p. 109. The account of John the Deacon (*Patrologiae latinae...*, vol. 194, col. 1556 [XII *De ecclesia Sancti Laurentius in palatio*]) is discussed, along with other sources by Grisar, op. cit., pp. 59–60, 70–71, 87, 94; Lauer, op. cit., pp. 29–33.

13. The same doubts concerning the Vatican Pegasus silk found in the Pope Paschal I's reliquary (see below, footnote 19) were expressed by L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the iconoclast period (ca 680–850), The sources: an annotated survey*, (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 7), Aldershot 2001 (hereinafter referred to as: Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001), p. 82; see also Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, p. 341 (*The fabric could have been inserted at any time in the history of the reliquaries in question, so it need not be as ancient as its casing; and it was not necessarily new when it was first used in any case...*).

14. Volbach (and Muthesius after him) claim that the reliquary with Christ's sandals in fact contained a silk cloth with a scene of hunting lions and tigers, which, according to Grisar (pp. 97–100, 127, figs. 43, 70), lined the inside of a silver chest housing an enamel staurotheke of Paschal I, see W.F. Volbach, *Catalogo del Museo Sacro della Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana*, Roma 1942, vol. 1, "Tessuti", pp. 44–45, chart 40; idem, *Early Decorative Textiles*, London and New York 1969, p. 126, fig. 59. Muthesius 1997, pp. 62, 64, footnote 29, fig. 19A (M40). The traditional approach that links the *Annunciation* and *Nativity* textiles to the reliquary of Christ's sandals can be found in: Schorta, *Zwei Seidenfragmente...*, p. 659; G. Cronini, *Silk with the Annunciation*, in: *Byzantium 330–1453*, eds. R. Cormack, M. Vassilaki, London 2008, p. 389 (no 48); A. Izdebski, *Siły rynku i potęga symboli: marmur, jedwab i mechanizmy gospodarki bizantyjskiej od V do XII w.*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 118 (2011), pp. 5–31, here: 15.

half of the 6th century.[15] This hypothesis has been fully adopted by Lester D. Longman, who supplemented the comparative material with additional examples.[16] Their argumentation was, however, refuted by Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, who highlights the similarity between the samite and the papal gifts for churches in Rome and Ravenna mentioned repeatedly in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Accordingly, he suggests that the Vatican silks should be dated to the late 8th century, but taking into consideration that the fabrics are often referred to in the source as *Tyrea* and *de Tyreo,* he concludes that *the Annunciation* and *Nativity* could have come from a Syrian workshop.[17]

Apart from the general similarity in the arrangement of the medallions and the floral ornament, the examples of woollen Coptic textiles, considered by von Falke and Longman as analogous, reveal, both in terms of style and production technique, that their manufacturers belonged to a provincial milieu, which makes them decidedly inferior to the Vatican samite. When citing sixth-century examples of the over-stylized lotus flower, von Falke seems to be forgetting that they can only determine the *terminus post quem* for the Vatican textiles. Similar ornamental filling can be found, for instance, in a fragment of silk serge, woven in five colours, depicting a Sasanian king, Bahram V Gor (420–438) during

15. O. von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin 1913, vol. 1, pp. 48–52, plate 68; see also C. Cecchelli, *Il tesoro di Laterano, V: Le Stoffe*, "Dedalo" 7 (1926–1927), pp. 468–488, here: 469 (although he is generally inclined towards a wide dating range – between the 6th and the 8th century and links it to Constantinople); A. Nahlik, *Zarys jedwabnej tkaniny dekoracyjnej do końca XVIII w.*, Toruń 1971, p. 6 (he dates it to the 6th–7th century and links it to Alexandria or Syria).
16. L.D. Longman, *Two fragments of an early Textile in the Museo Cristiano*, "The Art Bulletin" 12 (1930), pp. 115–130.
17. W.F. Volbach, *Catalogo...*, vol. 1, pp. 39–40, pls. 29–31; idem, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 96–97, 109, 118, figs. 51–52. Volbach initially accepted von Falke's opinion about the Alexandrian provenance of the fabric and the explanation according to which Syrian motifs were present because they were widespread in Egyptian art. Still, in the book *Early Christian Art,* London 1961, p. 362, he tentatively suggests that the textiles could have been made in Syria after 600 CE. His ultimate dating was accepted among others by J. Beckwith, *Byzantine Tissues*, in: *Actes du XIVe Congrès International des études byzantines: Bucarest, 6–12 septembre, 1971*, eds. M. Berza, E. Stinescu, Bukarest 1971, vol. 1, pp. 343–353, here: 348; L. von Wilckens, *Die textilen Künste: von der Spätantike bis um 1500*, München 1991, pp. 38–41. On the basis of the red background, the Vatican samite is linked to a group of textiles from ca. 800 CE by D. King, *Patterned Silks in the Carolingian Empire*, "Bulletin de liaison du Centre international d'étude des textiles anciens" 23 (1966), pp. 47–52.

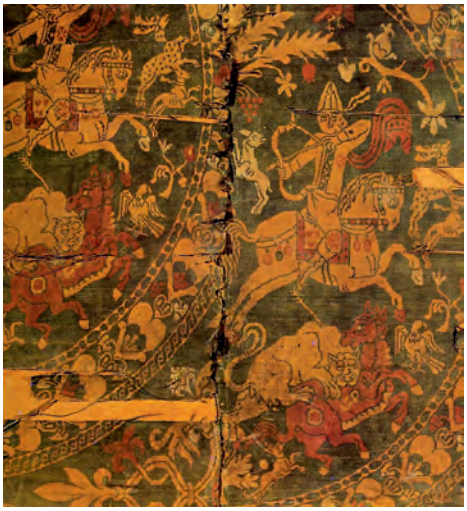

Fig. 3. Samite in five colours, *Bahram V Gor hunting*, before 835, Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, photo: author

Fig. 4. Silk fabric from Charlemagne's tomb featuring a charioteer, before 814, Paris, Musée Cluny, photo: author

hunting (fig. 3),[18] which was used before 835 CE as a covering on the inner side of the doors of the golden retable in the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan (created by Volvinius), and also, in a humbler form, on a purple silk textile from Charlemagne's tomb in Aachen (before 814, fig. 4).[19]

18. Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, p. 100, 121, fig. 46; M. Martiniani-Reber, *Chasse de Bahram Gour*, in: *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. J. Durand, Paris 1992, p. 195 (she dates it to the 9th century); Muthesius 1997, pp. 68–71, 174, fig. 25A (cat. no. M31 along with earlier bibliography; dates the fragment measuring 52 × 54 cm to the turn of the 9th century. Fragments of the same silk textile can be found in the collection of the Kolumba Museum (previously Diözesanmuseum) in Cologne (believed by von Falke to have been made in Alexandria in the 6th century), on the cover of one of the manuscripts in the Cathedral Library in Prague, in the treasury of the Basilica of Saint-Remi in Reims, at the Hermitage and in Saint-Calais (the department of Sarthe), see Muthesius 1997, p. 213, figs. 25A–B, 26A, 79B (cat. no. M347–M350d); Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 95–96, fig. 61; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, pp. 338–340, fig. 43; see also A. Walker, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries CE*, Cambridge 2012, p. 28, fig. 9 (he dates the fragment from the basilica of St. Cunibert in Cologne to the first half of the 9th century).

19. Accession no. Cluny 13289. Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 114, 126, fig. 56; M. Martiniani-Reber, *Quadrige*, in: *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. J. Durand, Paris 1992, p. 194 (she identifies it as a Constantinopolitan product from the 8th century); Muthesius 1997, pp. 72–73, 173

The so-called Samson (or David) and the Lion samite, woven in five colours, and the four-coloured Pegasus pillow from the Sancta Sanctorum, seem to be the closest to the Vatican artefact in terms of the manufacturing technology. The Samson samite was used as the lining for the inside of Saint Alexander's reliquary, which was transferred from Rome to Ottobeuren Abbey (founded in 764) in the late 8th century,[20] whereas the Pegasus pillow was later reused as the cushion for the enamel cross in Paschal I's silver reliquary (fig. 5).[21] Similar examples include the samites with figural compositions associated with Constantinople, featuring hunting scenes in medallions filled with floral motifs. However, their layout is slightly different from the design of the textiles with the *Annunciation* and the *Nativity*.[22]

(cat. no. M29, M333a), fig. 23A (she has put forward a hypothesis that the samite, woven in a Constantinopolitan palace workshop, could have been sent to Rome in 781 together with Byzantine envoys negotiating the engagement of Charlemagne's daughter to Constantine VI the Blind); R. Schorta, *Quadrigastoff*, in: *799. Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, hrsg. Ch. Stiegemann, M. Wemhoff, Paderborn 1999, vol. 1, pp. 62–64 (no. II 17); Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 90, 92–95, fig. 58 (they tie it to the Vaticane samite).

20. Accession no. Victoria & Albert 7036–1860. Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 89, 95, 108, fig. 48 (he links the fabric to the reference in *LP*, vol. 2, p. 134 [CIII 21] on the Tyrian textiles offered in 833/834 by Pope Gregory IV to the church of Saint Chrysogonus); M. Martiniani-Reber, *Soierie au Samson ou au belluaire*, in: *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. J. Durand, Paris 1992, p. 199; Muthesius 1997, pp. 67–68, fig. 78A (no M26, M369); Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, p. 98, fig. 65. Two other fragments, in the collection of the Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Washington, D.C. (accession no. BZ 1934.1) and in the Musée de Cluny in Paris (accession No. Cl. 3055), are published by J.L. Ball, *Silks with "Samson" and the Lion*, in: *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century*, eds. B. Ratliff, H.C. Evans, New York 2012, pp. 153–154 (no 102AB) and inconsistently dated to different periods (the late 6th – early 7th century, and the 7th–9th century). For more information on the textiles with Sasanian motifs from the 8th–9th century and the possibility that they were made in Constantinople during the period of Iconoclasm, see Walker, op. cit., pp. 25–36.

21. Accession no. 1275; Volbach, *Catalogo del Museo...*, pp. 44–45; idem, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 112–113, 128, fig. 60; R. Schorta, *Stoff mit Flügelpferdchen*, in: *799. Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, hrsg. Ch. Stiegemann, M. Wemhoff, Paderborn 1999, vol. 2, p. 656 (no. IX 37) dates it to the early 9th century and indicates Syria or Byzantium as the place of origin. A. Muthesius, *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic silk weaving*, London 1995 (hereinafter referred to as: Muthesius 1995), p. 61 (she also highlights the shift to the twill weaving technique at the turn of the 9th century, by joining the warp threads in pairs, which made the fabric stronger); Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 82, 89, 91, 102, fig. 70.

22. Among other examples of this type, the fabric featuring a foot soldier from the Werner Abegg collection in Riggisberg, Switzerland (accession no. 485; 8th century), is particularly close to the Vatican artefact (regarding the way the eyes and faces

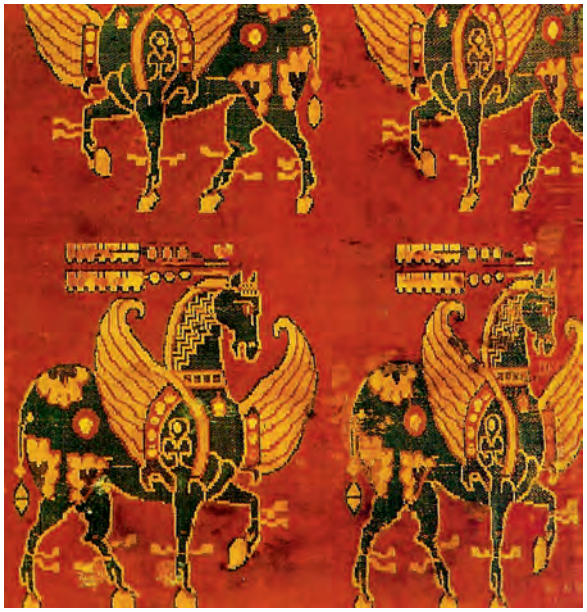

Fig. 5. Four-coloured pillow with the Pegasus motif from the reliquary of Paschal I in the Sancta Sanctorum (detail), before 817, Museo Sacro, Vatican, photo: author

The exceptional character of the composition depicted on the Vatican textiles, with monumental figures shown in a three-quarter view (*en trois quarts*), and the illusion of depth achieved by means of linear perspective, as well as robes shaped by folds, clearly indicate that the author might have been inspired by the style of monumental painting. Similarities between the samite and some compositions from the figurative art have already been pointed out by Longman, who has highlighted the panel with the *Annunciation* on the throne of Maximianus in Ravenna in the context

were woven) as well as the one with a couple of equestrian spearmen hunting lions from the reliquary of Saint Austremonius at the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Calmin at Mozac, Auvergne, currently in the collection of the Museum of Fabrics and Decorative Arts in Lyon (Musée des Tissus et des Arts décoratifs; accession no. 27.386) and at the Bargello in Florence (accession no. 2293C), associated with the grant of Pepin II of Aquitaine (838–864), dated to the 8th or the first half of the 9th century, see Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 109, 118, figs. 50, 55; M. Martiniani-Reber, *Suaire de saint Austremoine*, in: *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises,* ed. J. Durand, Paris 1992, p. 197; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 96–98, figs. 62, 64; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, pp. 225–226, fig. 21; K. Otavský, A.E. Wardwell, *Mittelalterliche Textilien,* vol. 2, *Zwischen Europa und China*, Riggisberg 2011, pp. 122–129 (no. 37, 39); Muthesius 1997, p. 175, fig. 24B (no. M34); Walker, op. cit., p. 29, fig. 12.

of general compositional analogies and the miniatures of *the Paris Psalter* (*Par. gr. 139*) in the context of stylistic parallels.[23] However, in terms of iconography, a closer analogy can be found in the aforementioned Paschal I's cross,[24] where the arrangement of figures appears as a mirror reflection of the compositions on the textiles from the Sancta Sanctorum. In turn, the simplified form of the robes, with the shading arranged in triangular shapes in the Vatican cloth, resembles the manner in which Christ's chiton and himation are presented in the *Ascension* mosaic in the dome of the Hagia Sophia church in Thessaloniki (between 690 and 885)[25] and the cape and tunic of the enthroned Virgin with the Christ Child in the conch of the apse of the Cathedral of Constantinople (787–797).[26] The folds of Mary's

23. Longman, op. cit., pp. 122–124, figs. 13–14. Whereas Lauer, op. cit., p. 110, compares Mary's figure to the mosaic representations of the Virgin Orans.

24. Accession no. 1216, see e.g. Lauer, op. cit., pp. 47–48; Grissar, op. cit., pp. 78–80 pls. I–II; K. Wessel, *Byzantine Enamels: From the 5th to the 13th Century*, New York 1968, pp. 46–60, figs. 7–8b; E. Treude, *Goldenes Emailkreuz*, in: *799. Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit. Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, hrsg. Ch. Stiegemann, M. Wemhoff, Paderborn 1999, vol. 2, pp. 650–651 (no. IX 32); E. Thunø, *Image and relic: mediating the sacred in early medieval Rome*, Rome 2002, pp. 17–51 (on the Annunciation pp. 33–34), fig. 7, chart III. The Latin inscription running along the edge of the staurotheke points unambiguously to the figure of Paschal I: *ACCIPE QUAESO A DOMINA MEA REGINA MVNDI HOC VEXILLVM CRVCIS QVOD TIBI PASCHALIS EPISCOPVS OPTVLIT* (*My Lady and the Queen of the world, accept this standard of the cross, which is offered to You by Bishop Paschal*) deciphered by Charles Morey, see Ch. Morey, *The inscription on the enamel cross of Paschal I*, "The Art Bulletin" 19 (1937), pp. 595–596, fig. 1. The reliquary should not be associated with Pope Paschal II (1099–1118), both for palaeographic and stylistic reasons (Thunø, pp. 19–20 compares his enamels with the decoration of the early 9th-century Byzantine Fieschi Morgan staurotheke, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City).

25. Muthesius 1997, p. 67 highlights the rendering of the folds of the robes in both compositions. For more recent information on the topic of the mosaic in the Hagia Sophia church in Thessaloniki see: Ch. Bakirtzis, E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou, Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Mosaics of Thessaloniki, 4th–14th century*, Athens 2012, pp. 258–263, 284–290 and 292–294 (on the topic of dating), figs. 23–25.

26. Cyril Mango and Ernst Hawkins narrowed down the mosaic's wide dating range (from the 8th to the 14th century) by connecting it to Photios I of Constantinople's *XVII homily*, delivered on 29 March 867 on the occasion of the reconsecration of the cathedral, and identified the rulers mentioned in the inscription on the arch of the apse: Ἃς οἱ πλάνοι καθεῖλον ἐνθάδ' εἰκόνας ἄνακτες ἐστήλωσαν εὐσεβεῖς πάλιν (*The images, removed by those who were mistaken, were reinstated by devout emperors)* as Michael III and Basil I. Their findings were corrected by Nicolas Oikonomidès, who pointed out the discrepancies between the description provided by Photios I and the actual appearance of the mosaic, and decided that the inscription refers to the joint reign of Irene and her son Constantine VI

maphorion, depicted with simple lines, are analogous to the mosaic decorations found in the apses of the Roman churches founded by Pope Leo III (only the chancel arch with the scenes of *the Annunciation, the Transfiguration* and the *Enthroned Virgin with Child* survived in the church of Saints Nereus and Achilleus, ca. 815), Pope Paschal I (the basilicas of Saint Praxedes and San Zeno Chapel, 817/818; Santa Maria in Domnica, 818/819; and Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, 819/820), and Pope Gregory IV (827–844; the Basilica of San Marco al Campidoglio next to the Palazzo Venezia, 829–833).[27] All of the aforementioned arguments suggest that the woven Vatican textile was created later, thus making Volbach's dating, around the turn of the century, the most probable one.[28]

Due to the iconoclastic controversy, which was by definition disadvantageous to the development of figurative religious art, Anna Muthesius put forward a hypothesis according to which the medallions in the Museo Sacro

(787–797), whereas the apse, white-washed during the Second Iconoclasm, was covered with a new fresco depicting the standing figure of Virgin with Child in the 9th century; according to him the fresco was removed after the earthquake in 1347, see C. Mango; E.J.W. Hawkins, *The Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. Report on Work Carried out in 1964*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 19 (1965), pp. 113–151, here: 142–148, figs. 1–14; N. Oikonomidès, *Some Remarks on the Apse Mosaic of St. Sophia*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 39 (1985), pp. 111–115.

27. The grants of popes Leo III, Paschal I and Gregory IV are discussed in *LP*, vol. 2, pp. 102, 109–111, 113, 127–128 [XCVIII, 111, C 8, 10–11, 14, 19, CIII 8] and for the inscriptions accompanying the mosaics see, e.g.: M.B. Mauck, *The Mosaic of the Triumphal Arch of Santa Prassede: A Liturgical Interpretation*, "Speculum" 62–64 (1987), pp. 813–828; R. Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom. Ikonographie und Ikonologie*, Münster 1990, pp. 27–29, 46–51, 63–81, pls. 3–8, figs. 29a–b, 53, 82a–b; Thunø, *Image and relic...*, p. 128; C. Bolgia, *The mosaics of Gregory IV at S. Marco, Rome: papal response to Venice, Byzantium, and the Carolingians*, "Speculum" 81 (2006), pp. 1–34, here: pp. 2–3, 9–16, 30–34, figs. 1–4, 8–10, 13; C. Goodson, *The Rome of Pope Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation, 817–824*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 149–158, figs. 26–28, 3031, 35; E. Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition*, Cambridge 2015, pp. 16–22, 43–44, 143–148, 192–194, figs. 1, 6–8, 10, 26–27, 46–47, 51, 62, 82–83, 91–92, pls. I–III, IX–XII, XVI–XVIII, XXII. Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, pp. 443–445 have recently questioned the widely accepted theory about the Greek origin of the mosaicists working in Santa Prassede and San Zeno Chapel.

28. The dating to the turn of the 9th century is generally accepted in the contemporary academic literature, as indicated by descriptions in exhibition catalogues, see e.g. *The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art*, ed. J.P. O'Neil, New York 1982, pp. 102–103 (no. 39); Schorta, *Zwei Seidenfragmente...*, pp. 657, 659; Cronini, loc. cit.; T.K. Thomas, *Annunciation*, in: *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century*, eds. B. Ratliff, H.C. Evans, New York 2012, pp. 152–153 (no. 101).

must have been created after 843 CE, when the dispute had finally ended.[29] Her arguments have been rejected by John Haldon and Leslie Brubaker. According to them, there is no logical ground to exclude the period between the beginning of Irene of Athens's regency (780–787) and the beginning of Leo V the Armenian's reign (813–820) as a period when figurative religious art, including the Vatican fabric, was created.[30] Contrary to Muthesius's opinion, there are no technological clues allowing us to ascertain when the fabric was made.[31] The samite fabric woven in with the (½) weave was produced between the 4th and 12th centuries (though a simplified version was produced until the mid-16th century), with its popularity peaking around 1000 CE, when it began to be superseded with lampas fabrics.[32] Henry Maguire's general observation on the disappearance of repeated religious

29. Muthesius 1997, p. 67; eadem, *Studies in Silk in Byzantium*, London 2004 (hereinafter referred to as: Muthesius 2004), p. 29, no. 20AB; eadem, *Textiles as Text*, in: *Wonderful Things: Byzantium Through Its Art: Papers from the Forty-second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, London, 20–22 March 2009*, eds. A. Eastmond, L. James, Farnham-Burlington 2013, pp. 185–202, here: 196–198, fig. 14.3 and footnote 48, which contains a lengthy discussion on the hypothesis put forward by Haldon and Brubaker. Cf. also a recent study by A. Muthesius, *"Being" in Constantinople (4th–15th centuries) witnessed through the testimony of precious textiles*, "Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας", Περίοδος Δ', 38 (2017), pp. 333–354, here: 339. Martiniani-Reber, *Nouveau regard...*, pp. 14–15 argues that the textiles might have been created either before or after the Iconoclasm, but not during the controversy.

30. Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 103–108; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, p.337, figs. 45–46. The current state of the discussion on the Vatican textiles is referred to by W.T. Woodfin, *The embodied icon: liturgical vestments and sacramental power in Byzantium*, Oxford 2012, p. 34 and footnote 115; however, he does not present his own point of view concerning the time when the fabrics were made.

31. The problems regarding the appropriate methodology that would enable precise dating of Byzantine textiles were pointed out by Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 80–82; Walker, op. cit., p. 36. The methodology could hopefully be improved by the introduction of radiocarbon dating (on the basis of presence of carbon-14), see Ch. Verhecken-Lammens, A. De Moor, B. Overlaet, *Radio-Carbon Dated Silk Road Samites in the Collection of Katoen Natie, Antwerp*, "Iranica antiqua" 41 (2006), pp. 233–301, here: 273–274 (as a result of the procedure, the dating for a group of twelve Central Asian silks was narrowed down to the period between 646 and 715, or assuming a wider perspective to 600–803, with 95% accuracy). The results of the current analyses are published on this website: http://www.textile-dates.info.

32. On the weaves used in Byzantium – see Muthesius 1995, pp. 55–56, fig. 1; eadem, *Essential Processes, Looms, and Technical Aspects of the Production of Silk Textiles*, in: *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh trough the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A.E. Laiou, Washington 2002, vol. 1, pp. 147–168, here: 152–158; Muthesius 2004, pp. 43–49.

scenes in the post-iconoclastic textiles should be added to this list of contradicting arguments.[33] The accepting of the late date proposed by Muthesius would mean that the repeated *Annunciation* scenes were unique in the art of that period. For that reason it seems more appropriate to accept the period between 787 and 813 CE as the date of its creation.

Regardless of whether we adopt the turn of the 9th century or the second half of the 9th century as the time when the Vatican samite was woven, its late dating raises another question, this time concerning the place of its origin. Alexandria, suggested initially by von Falken (as well as his theory about the existence of the so-called Alexandrian group of silks),[34] has to be rejected, as there is no evidence supporting the claim that, after almost two hundred years of Arab occupation, it was possible to find active high-end weaving mills using Christian motifs in Egypt. Woollen and linen textiles from that period were not made in Alexandria, but rather in the provincial town of Akhmim (Panopolis), and they were marked by highly abstract and simplified forms, whereas rare silk textiles, usually with secular motifs, were always woven in two colours: purple and the natural colour of undyed yarn.[35]

Syria, as a weaving centre of a stronger connection with Byzantium, cannot be excluded as the place where the fabric was made, though a gradual

33. H. Maguire, *Magic and the Christian Image*, in: *Byzantine Magic*, ed. idem, Washington 1995, pp. 51–71, here: pp. 58–60.

34. Von Falken's theory has already been criticized by N.P. Kondakov, *Les costumes orientaux à la cour byzantin,* "Byzantion" 1 (1924), pp. 7–49, here: 33, 38, as he believed that some of the textiles in the group originated from Byzantium and suggested that they should be dated to the 7th–8th century. The idea of the Alexandrian origin of the samite has been revisited by A. Gonosová, *On the Alexandrian Origin of the Vatican Annunciation and Nativity Silks*, in: *Sixteenth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstracts of Papers*, Baltimore 1990, pp. 9–10. Just like von Falken and Longman, she starts her analysis with a methodically questionable comparison with woollen textiles. The scholar then slightly corrects the unfortunate early dating, adopting the period shortly before the Arab conquest 640/641 as the creation date. The discussion on the problem of von Falken's groups of Alexandrian silks is reported in detail by Muthesius 1997, pp. 65–66.

35. However, under the reign of the Tulunids (868–905) and early Fatimids (until 1012), the Copts enjoyed a certain degree of tolerance of the Muslim rulers. Nevertheless, the textiles with religious motifs made at that time (e.g. the *clavi* from Akhmim with the Enthroned Theotokos among angels in the Bode Museum in Berlin and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as the fragment with Virgin and Child in the treasury of the cathedral in Trier, 7th–8th century) are marked by arbitrary and geometric character of figures, which makes the identification much more difficult. Cf. Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 64–65, 92, figs. 40–41, 45.

decline in the number of weaving workshops could be observed in the area after 636 CE.[36] Therefore, the Vatican textiles were in all probability woven in Constantinople, in one of its imperial workshops.[37] Their existence in the period between the first and second Iconoclasm is confirmed by the anonymous *Tale of the Divine and Venerable Church of the Most Holy Mother of God, Called the Hodegon*, according to which there was an imperial weaving mill in the vicinity of Marina's palace under Constantine V (741–775) (βασιλείας ἐξυφαίνεται ὕφανσις).[38] However, it might have been burned down on Christmas Day in 792 (as Theophanes reports: *On 25 December, in the second hour, as a result of a nocturnal thunderstorm, part of the imperial workshop of the embroiders in gold thread located at Chrysion was caught by fire*),[39] but it

36. For more information on the transfer of silk manufactures from Syria to Asia Minor in the 8th and 9th centuries see Muthesius 2004, p. 42. Nevertheless, Leo the Deacon also lists Chinese textiles (probably silk), along with gold and silver and perfumes, among the spoils brought by John I Tzimiskes from his expedition to Syria in 972, see: Leonis diaconi Caloënsis, *Historia libri decem: et liber de Velitatione bellica Nicephori Augusti*, rec. Ch. B. Hase, (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae), Bonn 1828, p. 163 [X 2]: *ἐκ Σηρῶν ὑφάσματα καὶ ἀρώματα*. Cf. also English translation: *The history of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine military expansion in the tenth century*, introduction, translation, and annotations by A.-M. Talbot & D.F. Sullivan (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 41), Washingon D.C. 2005, p. 204 and note 18.

37. G. Migeon, *Les arts du tissu,* Paris 1929, pp. 27–33, already associated the Vatican textiles featuring the Annunciation and Nativity with a Byzantine workshop, but he retained the traditional dating to the 6th–7th century.

38. Ch. Angelidi, *Un texte patriographique et édifiant: Le «Discours narratif» sur les Hodègoi*, "Revue des études byzantines" 52 (1994), pp. 113–149, here: p. 145 [v. 187]; Ch. Angelidi, T. Papamastorakis, *The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Hodegon Monastery*, in: *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine art*, Athens 2000, pp. 373–385, here: 374; P.Ł. Grotowski, *The Hodegon. Considerations on the location of the Hodegetria sanctuary in Constantinople*, "Byzantina Symmeikta" (Appendix) 27 (2017), pp. 26, 33.

39. *Theophanis chronographia*..., vol. 1, p. 469 [A.M. 6285]: τῷ δὲ Δεκεμβρίῳ μηνί κέ, ὥρᾳ δεύτερᾳ τῆς νυκτός, βροντῆς καὶ ἀστραπῆς γενομένης, ἀνήφθη μέροξ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ ἐργοδοσίοθ τῶν χρυσοκλαβαρίον κατὰ τὸν χρυσίωνα, translation after Mango, Scott, p. 644. Based on the description of the reception of the Arab envoys from Tarsus, sent by Sayf al-Dawla (31 May 946), in *the Book of Ceremonies*, it may be assumed that the place called *Chrysion* was located in the vicinity of the imperial palace, to the north or north-east of it, cf. Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris, *De Cerimoniis aulae byzantinae libri duo*, rec. J.J. Reiske, (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae), Bonn 1829, vol. 1, pp. 583–584, 586, 588 [II 15/2BC-3]; see also J. Featherstone, *Ol'ga's Visit to Constantinople*, "Harvard Ukrainian Studies" 14 (1990), p. 293–312, here: 300–301; idem, *Δι Ενδειξιν: Display In Court Ceremonial (De Cerimoniis II, 15)*, in: *The Material and the Ideal. Essays in Medieval*

was probably soon rebuilt,[40] because *The Patria of Constantinople* mentions Χρυσόκλαβον located above the Great Palace of Constantine I (306—337)[41] — that is, most probably, on the eastern slopes of the First Hill. Albrecht Berger identifies this workshop with the burnt-down weaving mill mentioned in *The Chronicle* of Theophanes the Confessor.[42] The existence of a textile production centre to the north of the imperial palace and Hagia Sophia is also confirmed by the fact that the house of the leader of the weavers' guild was located there (βασιλικῆς ἱστουργίας ὄντι μελεδωνῷ). Leo the Deacon recounts that during the second usurpation of the curopalate Leo Phokas the Younger (971), one of the conspirators, staying at the district of Sphorakion (to the north-east of Hagia Sophia), surreptitiously slipped into the residence of the aforementioned leader. Accordingly, it may be concluded that it was not located far away.[43] We cannot be certain if the fabrics offered by Michael I Rangabe to Hagia Sophia, and the Vatican samite in particular, came from the workshop in the district of Chrysion. However, the presented evidence proves the existence of a weaving centre in the capital of the Byzantine Empire, making this hypothesis probable.[44]

Art and Archaeology in Honour of Jean-Michel Spieser, eds. A. Cutler, A. Papaconstantinou, (The Medieval Mediterranean 70), Leiden-Boston 2007, pp. 75—112, here: 95, 98—99.

40. Robert S. Lopez claims that after this fire, Empress Irene moved the imperial weaving mills to the palace of Eleutherios, see R.S. Lopez, *Silk industry in the Byzantine Empire*, "Speculum" 20 (1945), pp. 1—42, here: 7 and footnote 2.

41. *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, ed. Th. Preger, (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig 1907 (reprint New York, 1975), p. 145 [I 60]; cf. also the new edition with an English translation: A. Berger, *Accounts of medieval Constantinople*, (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 24), Harvard, Cambridge Mass., London 2013, pp. 36—37.

42. A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinopuleos*, (Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά 8), Bonn 1988, p. 216.

43. Leonis diaconi Caloënsis, op. cit., pp. 146—147 [IX 4]; Talbot, Sullivan, pp. 190—191. More on the tenth-century guild (σύστημα) of weavers in Constantinople see: Α. Χριστοφιλοπούλου, *Σύστημα βασιλικών ιστουργών: ένα σωματείο κρατικών υφαντουργών τον 10ο αι.*, in: *Βυζάντιον: αφιέρωμα στον Ανδρέα Ν. Στράτο*, Αθήνα 1989, vol. 1, pp. 65—72.

44. Adam Izdebski's opinion (loc. cit.) that the Constantinopolitan weaving centre was of little significance, as it was isolated after the Arab conquest of Alexandria and Syria and, therefore, incapable of producing fabrics with representations of human figures over the following two centuries, remains in contradiction to the sources from the period of Iconoclasm, which mention fabrics with figural motifs. On the confiscation of pictures and fabrics with representations of saints, upon Constantine V's order (τῶν ἁγίων ἐκτυπωμάτων, ὅσα ἐν πίναξι καὶ ὅσα ἐν ῥακεσι), from Anthousa, abbess of the monastery of Mantineon, see: *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi*,

On the other hand, Rome, as well as the entire Latin Europe, cannot be identified as a potential place of origin of the samite because of the material it was made from. In ancient times, silk was imported from China, and the Romans initially believed it to be of plant origin.[45] Thanks to the efforts of Justinian I (527–565), it started to be produced in the Byzantine Empire.[46] Already during his reign, a silk tablecloth interwoven with gold and silver threads, featuring the images of Christ, Peter and Paul as well as the depictions of the miracles of the Saviour, was offered to the Hagia Sophia.[47] Both the procedure for obtaining the yarn and the distribution of

ed. H. Delehaye, (*Propylaeum* ad acta Sanctorum Novembris), Bruxelles 1902, col. 850. More on the problem of representations on fabrics in the period of Iconoclasm: A. La Barre Starensier, *An art historical Study of the Byzantine Silk Industry*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation) Columbia University 1982, pp. 143–180; Maguire, op. cit., pp. 51–71, here: 54–55.

45. Roman 3rd–5th-century writers, such as Gaius Julius Solinus, Ammianus Marcellinus and Martianus Capella, also suggest such origin of the fabric, see C. Ivlii Solini, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, ed. Th. Mommsen, Berolini 1895, p. 182 [50,2]; A. Marcellini, *Rerum Gestarum. Libri qui suupersunt*, vol. 2, ed. J.C. Rolfe, (LOEB Classical Library 315), Cambridge Mass., London 2000, p. 386 [XXIII 6/67]; Martianus Felix Capella, *De nuptis Philologiae et Mercurii*, ed. J. Willis, (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig 1983, p. 245 [VI 693]. Only Pausanias mentions a silk-producing insect called *ser*, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, vol. 3, ed. W.H. Jones, (LOEB Classical Library 272), Cambridge Mass., London 1977, pp. 159–161 [VI 26/6–9].

46. In 530–531, in the face of a war with Persia, Justinian proposed that Christian Ethiopians and Himyarites should take control over the trade of silk from India. Since they could not drive out Persian merchants from the ports where they had seized all the merchandise brought from India, about 552/553 CE, the emperor imported silkworms to Byzantium with the help of a group of monks and undertook to produce silk yarn independently, see Procopii Caesariensis, *Opera omnia,* ed. J. Haury, (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig 1905 (reprint G. Wirth, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 108–110, vol. 2, pp. 576–577 [I 20/9, I 20/12, VIII 17,1–8]. However, in his *Chronicle*, which has not survived, Theophanes of Byzantium (second half of the 6th century) presented a different account of the transfer of silkworms into the Byzantine Empire. According to his account, the cocoons must have been smuggled from China (ἐκ Σηρῶν) in a hollowed-out cane by an anonymous Persian, see Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. R. Henry, vol. 1, Paris 1959, p. 77 [codex 64]; see also G. Greatrex, S.N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars*, vol. 2, "AD 363–630. A Narrative Sourcebook" London–New York 2002, p. 129 (they claim that silkworms were brought from Sogdia); Muthesius, op. cit., 1995, p. 122; eadem, *Essential Processes...*, pp. 150–151; Izdebski, op. cit., p. 13 (mistakenly mentions 533 CE).

47. See Pavlvs Silentiarivs, *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae. Descriptio Ambonis*, ed. C. de Stefani, (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig 2009, pp. 51–55 [v. 755–806] (see Appendix).

unbleached linen and textiles were strictly controlled and remained an imperial monopoly until the 10th century.[48] The first records of silk production in Western Europe appeared as late as in 823, as a result of Arabian workshops operating in the Iberian Peninsula.[49] Due to this fact, the theory about the local, Roman origin of the Vatican cloth has to be rejected.

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Although Rome was not a silk production centre, it remained an important destination for textile products and, to a certain extent, a centre of their redistribution.[50] The pages of the *Liber Pontificalis* present numerous references to the textiles offered by popes to Roman shrines. They are usually called curtains (*vela*) and coverings (*vestis*), and sometimes accompanied with the term of undoubtedly Greek origin — *chrysoclabas*,[51] or a description *de stauracim*,

48. The operation of silk manufacturers' and merchants' guilds was regulated by the laws listed in *The Book of the Prefect* which imposed much stricter punishments for the illegal sale of ready-made products (σηρικός) than for the illicit trade of cocoons or silk yarn (μέταξα), see: *Τὸ ἐπαρχικὸν βιβλίον. The Book of the Eparch*, *Le livre du prefet*, ed. I Dujčev, London—Geneva 1970, pp. 32—38, 242—247 [VI 6, 10, 12—16, VII 1, 3, 5, VIII 1—5, 7—9, 11]; see also Lopez, op. cit., pp. 2—3; Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 79—80; La Barre Starensier, op. cit., pp. 101—109; Muthesius, op. cit., 2004, pp. 8—9 (on silk textiles as diplomatic gifts) and p. 56 (on the restrictions on silk trade).

49. O.R. Constable, *Trade and traders in Muslim Spain: the commercial realignment of the Iberian peninsula, 900—1500*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 47—138, 173—81 (177—178 in particular), and after her L. Brubaker, *The Elephant and the Ark: Cultural and Material Interchange across the Mediterranean in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 58 (2004), pp. 175—195, here: 190; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, p. 83 and footnote 16; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, p. 337.

50. Abbot Odo of Cluny mentions the purchase of silk fabrics in Rome at a price lower than in Constantinople in *The Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac* (855—909), see Odon de Cluny, *Vita sancti Geraldi Auriliacensi*, ed. A.M. Bultot-Verleysen, Bruxelles 2009, pp. 174—175 (I, 27). A silk altar covering offered by Michael III (842—867) to Pope Benedict III (855—858) is mentioned in *LP*, vol. 2, p. 218 (CVI 33).

51. The term is a compound of the Latin word *clavus-i*, meaning a vertical, decorative stripe of fabric on the tunics of senators and equites (see e.g. H. Leclerq, *Clavus*, in: F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. 3, part 2 *Ciacconio — Cyzique*, Paris 1914, cols. 1847—1850), and Greek *χρυσός* — gold. The final form of the word was derived from Greek rather than Latin, as evidenced by the replacement of the original consonant *v* with *b* reflecting the Byzantine transcription with letter β. In Byzantium the term *χρυσόκλαβος* (a synonym of Lat. *aurioclavatus*) appears in Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris, *De Cerimoniis*, vol. 1, p. 82 [I 10] as a name for an element of protospatharios's ceremonial *spekion* worn during the Holy Monday procession. In turn, textile manufacturers called *χρυσόκλαβάριοι* are mentioned in *the Kletorologion of Philotheos* (899), see *Les*

or *quadrapula* (or *octopolum*),[52] and also *Tyrea* or *Alexandrinus*, which appear to be references to the purple dye and the way they were decorated, rather than to the place of their origin.[53]. These textiles fulfilled three essential functions: they served as coverings for the altars or as curtains hung between columns, and, occasionally, they were also used to cover the tombs of martyrs.[54] It is difficult to say what the original purpose of the Vatican fabric was. Inspirations by monumental painting, clearly manifested in the shaping of figures in contrapposto poses, in the modelling of their robes, and in the illusion of

listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles, ed. et trad. N. Oikonomidès, Paris 1972, p. 133 and the commentary on p. 317; cf. also *supra*, footnote 39.

According to M. Martiniani-Reber, *Tentures et textiles des églises romaines au haut moyen-âge d'après le Liber Pontificalis*, "Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Moyen Age" 3 (1999), pp. 289–305, here: 297–298, the term *chrysoclava* could have been used to refer to woven or sewn-on decorative medallions, similar to the ornaments depicted on the curtains flanking Mark the Evangelist in fol. 81v of the Saint Medard de Soissons Gospel (*Par. lat. 8850*), offered in 827 to the abbey in Soissons by Louis the Pious. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei...*, pp. 51–52 and footnote 5, claims that these mentions may refer to embroideries and not textiles.

52. E.g. *LP*, vol. 2, pp. 60–77, 90–92, 95–99, 101–102 [XCVIII 27–66, 82–85, 93, 95, 97–104, 109, 111] et passim. Martiniani-Reber, *Tentures et textiles...*, pp. 292–293 believes that the terms *quadra-* and *octapulum* could have referred to the shape of the fabrics, while the name *stauracin* can be associated with the fruit of the styrax tree (Lat. *styrax*), light yellow in colour, or – which is, in her opinion, more probable – with the motif of cross (Gr. *σταυρός*). Similarly, Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, p. 85 and footnote 31, suggest that *stauracin* refers to the motif of cross used in decorations, while *quadra-* and *octapulum* indicate a fabric folded four or eight times. The argument put forward by Muthesius, op. cit., 1997, p. 28, according to which these terms refer to the greater density of the weave, remains unconvincing.

53. E.g. *LP*, vol. 2, pp. 77, 79, 96, 100 [XCVIII 66, 68, 97, 107] et passim. Muthesius, op. cit., 1997, p. 66 and footnote 26; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, p. 83 (*Tyrian* – as a term denoting purple, in the context of silk in particular), p. 85 (*Alexandrian* – as a reference to a colour and not the place of origin); Martiniani-Reber, *Tentures et textiles...*, pp. 291, 296 claims that the term *Alexandrian* could have described a type of textile decoration, or was used for trade purposes to enhance the value of the fabrics. The traditional approach linking *Tyrian* and *Alexandrian* textiles with Syria and Egypt is presented e.g. by Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles...*, pp. 72–73.

54. For example, the fabrics offered by Pope Leo III for the altar of the Vatican Basilica with the scenes of the *Nativity, Ascension* and *Descent of the Holy Spirit*, *LP*, vol. 2, pp. 71, 73 [XCVIII 48, 53]; the curtain with the images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles before the altar at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls *LP*, vol. 2, p. 75 [XCVIII 60] and *LP*, vol. 2, p. 70 [XCVIII 47] on the coverings for the graves of the martyrs Primus and Felician in the Rotunda of St. Stephen on the Celian Hill. Sometimes silk curtains – *podeai, copertoria* – were used to cover icons, *LP*, vol. 2, p. 159 (CIV 37); see also Muthesius, op. cit., 1997, pp. 124–126.

Fig. 6. Reliquary casket from the Church of Saint Hermagoras in Samagher near Pula, depicting the interior of the Vatican Basilica, ca. 400—430, National Archaeological Museum, Venice, photo: author

depth created by means of foreshortening perspective, but also observed in the reduction of details to the absolute minimum in order to make the composition clear, do not only show that the author must have had some artistic training, but also that the textiles were designed to be publicly displayed.

The tradition of suspending draperies between the columns of an altar screen dates back to the early Christian period. The reliefs covering the sides of the reliquary casket (ca. 400—430) found in 1906 during the excavations in the apse of the Saint Hermagoras church in Samagher near Pola (modern Pula in Istria; now in Croatia) depict the interior of a shrine with a ciborium and an altar screen supported by spirally fluted columns, which may indicate that the relief shows the interior of the Vatican Basilica of St. Peter. The architrave supported by them features draped curtains (fig. 6).[55] In turn, according to Caroline J. Goodson's interpretation, Paschal I ordered silk curtains to be hung inside Santa Maria in Domnica,

55. M. Guarducci, *La capsella eburnea di Samagher: un cimelio di arte paleocristiana nella storia del tardo impero*, Trieste 1978, pp. 18—58 (on identifying the interior as St. Peter's Basilica); J. Elsner, *Closure and Penetration: Reflections on the Pola*

which he had renovated, on special wooden frames (*trabs*) installed in front of the entrance to the altar.[56]

During the First Iconoclasm, information about silk fabrics offered by popes to Roman churches occasionally appeared in the *Liber Pontificalis.* The authors of the biographies fail to mention any textiles featuring figural representations.[57] The trend visibly intensified only at the turn of the 9th century. The fabrics featuring evangelical scenes were first recorded under the date 793/794 among the gifts offered by Pope Adrian I (772–795) to the Roman churches of Santa Maria Maggiore (the covering for the altar with the scenes of *Annunciation*, *Nativity, Presentation of Christ at the Temple* and *Ascension)*, of Saint Peter in Chains (a composition showing the liberation of the apostle by an angel), and that of St. Lawrence (purple covering for the altar featuring the *Passion* scenes and the *Resurrection*).[58] However, they constituted just a small share of more than a thousand fabrics offered by the pope to Roman shrines.[59]

The rise in the number of textiles with evangelical representations was observed by the author of the life of Pope Leo III (795–816) in 798–800, that is, about five years after the fire at the imperial weaving workshop, the destruction of which might have caused an interruption in the supply of silk textiles to Rome. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the pope offered

Casket, "Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia" 26 (2013), pp. 183–227, here: 187, 214, 221–225, figs. 4–6, draws attention to the curtains covering the Ark of the Covenant as the ideological model for the curtains hung around the altar.

56. *LP*, vol. 2, p. 111 (C 13) and the reconstruction proposed by Goodson, op. cit., pp. 145–148, fig. 24. It should be noted that four purple silk curtains, designed to be displayed in that manner, were decorated with crosses and *gammadia* only, unlike the covering of the altar with the *Nativity* scene. The figural compositions with the *Annunciation* and *Nativity* on a brocade curtain, suspended from a chancel arch at the Basilica of Saint Paul by order of Pope Gregory IV, are mentioned by, e.g., *LP,* vol. 2, p. 138 (CIII 27).

57. *LP*, vol. 1, pp. 231, 244 and footnote A [XCII 9, XCIII 19], mentions individual silk gifts: covering for the altar and white curtains offered by Pope Gregory III (731–741) to the Church of Saint Chrysogonus and curtains suspended between the column for the basilicas of Saint Peter and Saint Paul founded by Pope Zachary (741–752). The source does not mention similar gifts offered under Pope Stephen II (752–757) and Pope Paul I (757–767), see also Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 84–85; a topographical comparison of the papal donations mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* from the times of Pope Gregory II (715–731) to Pope Eugene II (824–827) can be found in the form of a table in Goodson, op. cit., pp. 280–326.

58. *LP*, pp. 18–20, 49 [XCVII 45, 48, XCVIII 4–5].

59. Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, pp. 85–86.

silk textiles with evangelical scenes (such as: *Annunciation, Presentation of Christ at the Temple, The Calling of Peter and Andrew, Jesus Saving Peter on the Lake, Jesus transferring the authority over the Church to Peter, Christ Healing a Blind Man, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, the Passion cycle, *Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Teaching of the apostles, The Martyrdom of Peter and Paul, The Dormition of the Holy Virgin*, as well as *The Finding of the True Cross* and *The Martyrdom of Saint Anastasius*) to twenty churches in Rome and Ravenna.[60] To a lesser extent, this tradition was continued by popes Stephen IV (816–817), Paschal I (817–824), Gregory IV (827–844), and Leo IV (847–855).[61] The distribution of silk textiles in Rome evidenced by the *Liber Pontificalis* remains consistent with the aforementioned Byzantine sources.[62] On the other hand, by confirming the presence of silks with evangelical scenes in Rome, the *Liber Pontificalis* offers important evidence that they were produced at the turn of the 9th century. Their unique character is reflected in a great disproportion between the general number of textiles offered by popes to Roman churches and the scarcity of references to the presence of evangelical scenes on them.[63]

60. *LP*, vol. 2, pp. 51, 60–61, 63–64, 66, 71–76, 78, 90, 95, 98–102 [XCVIII 7–8, 27–29, 32–35, 38, 48, 51–53, 55, 60–62, 67, 82–83, 93, 101, 103–104, 106–109, 111]. L.E. Phillips, *A Note on the Gifts of Leon III to the Churches of Rome: vestes cum storiis*, "Ephemerides liturgicae" 102 (1988), pp. 72–78; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, p. 83 and chart on pp. 104–107 list more than 700 silk fabrics offered by Pope Leo III to various churches.

61. See respectively: *LP*, vol. 2, pp. 104, 107, 109–111, 114–121, 128–135, 138–141, 143, 167–169, 172–173, 178 184–186, 192, 196–197, 199 [XCIX 3, C 5–6, 8, 10, 12–13, 20, 23, 25–26, 29, 33–35, 38–39, CIII 10–14, 16–18, 20–22, 27, 30, 33, 37, 41, CV 10–11, 14, 21–23, 37, 55–56, 57, 59, 75, 87, 89, 95]. Muthesius, op. cit., 1997, p. 125; Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, pp. 337–338, point out that it is only in the case of textiles with figural representations identified explicitly as silk fabrics that we can be certain of their Eastern provenance; the other textiles could have been local products sewn on a silk background.

62. Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2001, p. 86, note that while the discrepancy in the number of textiles with figural representations mentioned in the biographies of popes Adrian I and Leo III may be explained by a different approach to the phenomenon assumed by the authors of their biographies. However the general tendency (taking into account the diminishing number of examples after 815) indicates that there is a clear relation between the frequency of the references made in the *Liber Pontificalis* and the production in Constantinople and its limited scope.

63. Brubaker, Haldon, op. cit., 2011, p. 338. The researchers point out that only twenty-seven textiles from among those mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* were described as bearing representations of human figures (out of which two – probably with sewn-on appliqués of a local origin – in 793/794; eight in 798/800; six in 812/813 and five in 813/814). A twelve-year gap in the records of papal gifts, between

The import of Byzantine silk fabrics is a part of a broader phenomenon, namely the emulation of imperial patterns at the papal court. The clearest manifestation of this custom was the construction of a tower at the Lateran surmounted by a portrait of Christ, initiated by a Greek from Calabria — Pope Zacharias. Undoubtedly, this structure can be ideologically linked to the Chalke Gate at the Imperial Palace in Constantinople.[64] In turn, the construction of the new triclinium at the Lateran, initiated by Pope Leo III, was probably inspired by the official reception hall in the same palatial complex. The links between the two capitals were particularly essential at the time of Iconoclasm, when the supporters of the Orthodoxy invoked the theological authority of the pope in the disputes against the ruling iconoclasts, and the icons regarded as miraculous were taken to Rome, and thus saved.[65]

800 and 812 CE, might have been caused by the conflict between Nikephoros I and Charlemagne over Dalmatia, which started in 803 CE (the so-called *Pax Nicephori*), and ended with the 812 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

64. *LP*, vol. 1, p. 244 [XCIII 18]: *He made from their foundations, in front of the offices of the Lateran, a portico and tower, where he set up bronze doors and railings, and adorned it in front of the doors with a figure of our Saviour.* R. Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308*, Princeton 1980, p. 121, was the first to connect the mention in the *Liber Pontificalis* with Chalke, see also P. Speck, *Kaiser Leon III. Die Geschichtswerke des Nikephoros und des Theophanes und der Liber Pontificalis*, (Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά 20), Bonn 2003, pp. 603–605. While acknowledging Krautheimer's observation in general sense, J. Haldon, B. Ward-Perkins (*Evidence from Rome for the image of Christ on the Chalke gate in Constantinople*, "Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies" 23 (1999), pp. 286–296) point out that there was no portrait of Christ on Chalke under Pope Zacharias, as it had been removed by the order of Leo III the Isaurian in 726.

65. The idea of Rome as an Orthodox refuge for religious icons and their worshipers is reflected in the legend about the icon of the Mother of God of Lydda (the so-called *Maria Romaia*), painted on marble, which was thrown by Patriarch Germanus I (715–730) into the waters of Bosphorus and which floated to Rome of its own will, see E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, Leipzig 1899, pp. 205**–207**, 234**–258**; idem, *Maria Romaia. Zwei unbekannte Texte*, "Byzantinische Zeitschrift" 12 (1903), pp. 173–214, here: 174–183; M. Salamon, *Pamięć wspólnoty śródziemnomorskiej. Rozważania nad tradycją bizantyńskich ikon maryjnych*, in: „Portolana. Studia Mediterranea", ed. D. Quirini-Popławska, vol. 1, Kraków 2004, pp. 81–92., here: pp. 86–87. The emigration of numerous iconodules during the persecutions of Leo V the Armenian (813–820) is mentioned by *Scriptor Incertus*, ed. F. Iadevaia, Messina, 1987, p. 72: Τούς γὰρ μεταβάντας πιστοὺς ἔν τισι κλίμασι καὶ εἰς χώρας τὰς μὴ προσηκούσας αὐτῷ πέμπων εἰς τοὺς τοπάρχας... The journey of the icons also took place in the opposite direction. E.g. Nicetas, a strategos of the Theme of Sicily, brought an icon of Christ icon from Rome to Constantinople, see *Un confesseur du second iconoclasme: La Vie du Patrice Nicétas,* ed. D. Papachryssanthou, "Travaux et mémoires" 3 (1968), pp. 309–351, here: 325.

They survived in Roman treasuries and churches for centuries, protected from any potential damage, allowing us to get a glimpse of what the art of the imperial capital in the period between the first and second Iconoclasm might have looked like.

Even though our knowledge of the history of textiles in the Early Middle Ages is still fragmentary, by means of the study of written records we can confirm the revival in the production of figurative silk fabrics in Constantinopolitan mills between the First and Second Iconoclasm (787–815), and the presence of this type of decorations in Roman churches. There, beyond the jurisdiction of Iconoclast emperors, Byzantine products, including the samite with the scenes of *Annunciation* and *Nativity*, could survive. With its exquisite craftsmanship, this masterpiece testifies to the highest artistic level of imperial weaving workshops.

Illustrations

1. Samite in five colours from the Sancta Sanctorum, *The Annunciation* (detail), ca. 800, Museo Sacro, Vatican, after: J. Lessing, O. von Falke, *Die Gewebe-Sammlung des Königlichen Kunstgewerbe-Museums Berlin*, Berlin 1913, pl. 6
2. Samite in five colours from the Sancta Sanctorum, *The Nativity* (detail), ca. 800, Museo Sacro, Vatican, after: J. Lessing, O. von Falke, *Die Gewebe-Sammlung des Königlichen Kunstgewerbe-Museums Berlin*, Berlin 1913, pl. 6
3. Samite in five colours, *Bahram V Gor hunting*, before 835, Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, photo: author
4. Silk fabric from Charlemagne's tomb featuring a charioteer, before 814, Paris, Musée Cluny, photo: author
5. Four-coloured pillow with the Pegasus motif from the reliquary of Paschal I in the Sancta Sanctorum (detail), before 817, Museo Sacro, Vatican, photo: author
6. Reliquary casket from the Church of Saint Hermagoras in Samagher near Pula, depicting the interior of the Vatican Basilica, ca. 400–430, National Archaeological Museum, Venice, photo: author

Appendix

Paul the Silentiary, *A Description of Hagia Sophia*, vv. 755—806.
Translated by W.R. Lethaby, H. Swainson in eidem, *The Church of S. Sophia, Constantinople. A Study of Byzantine Building*, London—New York 1894, pp. 42—52.

πῇ φέρομαι; πῇ μῦθος ἰὼν ἀχάλινος ὁδεύει;
ἴσχεο τολμήεσσα μεμυκότι χείλεϊ φωνή,
μηδ' ἔτι γυμνώσειας ἃ μὴ θέμις ὄμμασι λαῶν.
μυστιπόλοι δ', ὑπὸ χερσίν, ὅσοις τόδε θεσμὰ κελεύει,
Σιδονίης φοίνικι βεβαμμένον ἄνθεϊ κόχλου
φᾶρος ἐφαπλώσαντες ἐρέψατε νῶτα τραπέζης,
τέτρασι δ' ἀργυρέησιν ἐπὶ πλευρῆισι καλύπτρας
ὀρθοτενεῖς πετάσαντες ἀπείρονι δείξατε δήμῳ
χρυσὸν ἄλις καὶ φαιδρὰ σοφῆς δαιδάλματα τέχνης.
ὧν μία μὲν ποίκιλλε σέβας Χριστοῖο προσώπου·
τοῦτο δὲ καλλιπόνοιο φυτεύσατο χείρεσι τέχνης
οὐ γλυφίς, οὐ ῥαφίδων τις ἐλαυνομένη διὰ πέπλων,
ἀλλὰ μεταλλάσσουσα πολύχροα νήματα πήνη,
νήματα ποικιλόμορφα, τὰ βάρβαρος ἤροσε μύρμηξ.
χρυσοφαὲς δ' ἀμάρυγμα βολαῖς ῥοδοπήχεος ἠοῦς
ἁπλοΐς ἀντήστραψε θεοκράντων ἐπὶ γυίων,
καὶ Τυρίῃ πόρφυρε χιτὼν ἁλιανθεΐ κόχλῳ,
δεξιὸν εὐτύκτοις ὑπὸ νήμασιν ὦμον ἐρέπτων·
κεῖθι γὰρ ἀμπεχόνης μὲν ἀπωλίσθησε καλύπτρη,
καλὰ δ' ἀνερπύζουσα διὰ πλευρῆς ὑπὲρ ὤμου
ἀγκέχυται λαιοῖ ο· γεγύμνωται δὲ καλύπτρης
πῆχυς καὶ θέναρ ἄκρον. ἔοικε δὲ δάκτυλα τείνειν
δεξιτερῆς, ἅτε μῦθον ἀειζώοντα πιφαύσκων,
λαιῆι βίβλον ἔχων ζαθέων ἐπιίστορα μύθων,
βίβλον ἀπαγγέλλουσαν, ὅσα χραισμήτορι βουλῇ
αὐτὸς ἄναξ ἐτέλεσσεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ ταρσὸν ἐρείδων.

Whither am I carried? Whither tends my unbridled speech? Let my bold voice be restrained with silent lip lest I lay bare what the eyes are not permitted to see. But ye priests, as the sacred laws command you, spread out with your hands the veil dipped in the purple dye of the Sidonian shell and cover the top of the table. Unfold the cover along its four sides and show to the countless crowd the gold and the bright designs of skilful handiwork. One side is adorned with Christ's venerable form. This has been fashioned not by artists' skilful hands plying the knife, nor by the needle driven through cloth, but by the web, the produce of the foreign worm, changing its colored threads of many shades. Upon the divine legs is a garment reflecting a golden glow under the rays of rosy fingered Dawn, and a chiton, dyed purple by the Tyrian seashell, covers the right shoulder beneath its well-woven fabric; for at that point the upper garment has slipped down while, pulled up across the side, it envelops the left shoulder. The forearm and hand are thus laid bare. He seems to be stretching out the fingers of the right hand, as if preaching His immortal words, while in His left He holds the book of divine message—the book that tells what He, the Lord,

πᾶσα δ' ἀπαστράπτει χρυσέη στολίς· ἐν γὰρ ἐκείνῃ
τρητὸς λεπταλέος περὶ νήματα χρυσὸς ἑλιχθείς,
σχήμασιν ἢ σωλῆνος ὁμοίϊος ἤ τινος αὐλοῦ,
δέσμιος ἱμερόεντος ἐρείδεται ὑψόθι πέπλου,
ὀξυτέραις ῥαφίδεσσι δεθεὶς καὶ νήμασι Σηρῶν.
ἱστάμενοι δ' ἑκάτερθε δύω κήρυκε θεοῖο,
Παῦλος, ὅλης σοφίς θεοδέγμονος ἔμπλεος ἀνήρ,
καὶ σθεναρὸς κληιδοῦχος ἐπουρανίων πυλεώνων,
αἰθερίοις δεσμοῖσιν ἐπιχθονίοις τε κελεύων.
ὃς μὲν ἐλαφρίζει καθαρῆς ἐγκύμονα ῥήτρης
βίβλον, ὁ δὲ σταυροῖο τύπον χρυσέης ἐπὶ ῥάβδου.
ἄμφω δὲ στολίδεσσιν ὑπ' ἀργυφέῃσι πυκάζει
πήνη ποικιλόεργος· ἐπ' ἀμβροσίων δὲ καρήνων
νηὸς ἑκολπώθη χρύσεος, τριέλικτον ἐγείρων
ἀγλαΐην ἀψῖδος· ἐφεδρήσσει δὲ βεβηκὼς
τέτρασι χρυσείοις ἐπὶ κίοσι. χείλεσι δ' ἄκροις
χρυσοδέτου πέπλοιο κατέγραφεν ἄσπετα τέχνη
ἔργα πολισσούχων ἐριούνια παμβασιλήων·
πῇ μὲν νουσαλέων τις ἀκέστορας ὄψεται οἴκους,
πῇ δὲ δόμους ἱερούς. ἑτέρωθο δὲ θαύματα λάμπει
οὐρανίου Χριστοῖο· χάρις δ' ἐπιλείβεται ἔργοις.
ἐν δ' ἑτέροις πέπλοισι συναπτομένους βασιλῆας
ἄλλοθι μὲν παλάμαις Μαρίης θεοκύμονος εὕροις,
ἄλλοθι δὲ Χριστοῖο θεοῦ χερί· πάντα δὲ πήνης
νήμασι χρυσοπόρων τε μίτων ποικίλλεται αἴγλη.
πάντα μὲν ἀγλαΐῃ καταειμένα, πάντα νοήσεις
ὄμμασι θάμβος ἄγοντα·

accomplished with provident mind when His foot trod the earth. The whole robe shines with gold: for on it gold leaf has been wrapped round thread after the manner of a pipe or a reed, and so it projects above the lovely cloth, firmly bound with silken thread by sharp needles. On either side stand two of God's messengers: Paul, replete with divine wisdom, and the mighty doorkeeper of the gates of heaven who binds with both heavenly and earthly bonds. One holds the book pregnant with holy ordinance, the other the form of the cross on a golden staff. And both the cunning web has clothed in robes woven of silver; while rising above their immortal heads a golden temple enfolds them with three noble arches fixed on four columns of gold. And on the hem of the veil shot with gold, art has figured the countless deeds of the Emperors, guardians of the city: here you may see hospitals for the sick, there sacred fanes. And elsewhere are displayed the miracles of heavenly Christ, a work suffused with beauty. And upon other veils you may see the monarchs joined together, here by the hand of Mary, the Mother of God, there by that of Christ, and all is adorned with the sheen of golden thread. Thus is everything clothed in beauty; everything fills the eye with wonder.

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Abstract

Piotr Ł. Grotowski

The Gift of Emperor Michael, Papal Textiles with Chrysoclabas *and Figurative Art in the Period of Iconoclasm*

Keywords:
samite, Sancta Sanctorum, Iconoclasm, *Book of Pontiffs*

On Christmas of the year 811, Emperor Michael I Rangabe solemnly crowned his elder son Theophylact in the church of Hagia Sophia. On this occasion, he offered numerous precious gifts to the cathedral, which included a set of four curtains embroidered with gold and purple. Sacred images were depicted on them. These textiles have not survived to our times, and are known to us only thanks to the short record in the Theophanes' Chronicle. However, it is possible to reconstruct their form on the basis of their preserved contemporary examples.

The practice of donating silks decorated with figural religious motifs to churches is confirmed by the Book of Pontiffs. The source mentions gifts given by popes Hadrian I (772–795), Leo III (795–816), Paschal I (817–824), Gregory IV (827–844) and Leo IV (847–855) to shrines in Rome and Ravenna. The textiles mentioned by that source include both those decorated with ornamental motifs (griffins, crosses), and those adorned with evangelical scenes (Annunciation, Nativity, Entry into Jerusalem, Passion, Ascension, Descent of the Holy Spirit), as well as images of Christ and saints. The word *chrisoclabum* (or *chrisoclavum*), repeated in written sources, seems to relate to compositions placed inside medallions, and perhaps also to exceptionally precious appliqués of gold and purple fastened to the textile background.

As early as 75 years ago, Wolfgang F. Volbach sought to associate two pieces of silk samite with the Annunciation and Nativity scenes (kept at the Vatican Museo Sacro; initially dated to the 6th century.) with papal gifts from the turn of the 8th and the 9th century. His hypothesis, accepted by most scholars, has recently been disputed by Anna Muthesius, who suggests a later date for both silks (after 843). Due to this fact, it seems necessary to offer a new analysis and interpretation of both textiles that will rely on the current body of knowledge about the Byzantine art of the 8th and the 9th century.

Abstrakt

Piotr Ł. Grotowski

Dar cesarza Michała, papieskie tkaniny z chrysoclabas i problem sztuki figuratywnej w epoce ikonoklazmu

Słowa kluczowe: samit, Sancta Sanctorum, ikonoklazm, *Liber pontificalis*

W Boże Narodzenie roku 811 Michał I Rangabeusz dokonał w Hagii Sofii uroczystej koronacji swojego najstarszego syna, Teofilakta. Z tej okazji złożył w konstantynopolitańskiej katedrze liczne drogocenne dary, wśród których — obok złotych naczyń wysadzanych szlachetnymi kamieniami — znalazł się komplet czterech zasłon przetykanych złotem i purpurą. Ukazano na nich *święte obrazy.* Tkaniny te nie przetrwały do naszych czasów i są znanej jedynie dzięki wzmiance w *Kronice* Teofanesa Wyznawcy. Możemy jednak rekonstruować ich wygląd na podstawie zachowanych przykładów z epoki.

Zwyczaj ofiarowywania do kościołów jedwabnych tkanin zdobionych motywami figuratywnymi, także religijnymi potwierdzają wzmianki w *Liber pontificalis* na temat darów ofiarowywanych przez papieży Hadriana I (772—795), Leona III (795—816), Paschalisa I (817—824), Grzegorza IV (827—844) i Leona IV (847—855) do świątyń Rzymu i Rawenny. Wymieniane w tekście tkaniny są opisywane zarówno jako zdobione motywami ornamentalnymi (gryfy, krzyże), jak i scenami zaczerpniętymi z *Ewangelii* (*Zwiastowanie, Boże Narodzenie, Wjazd do Jerozolimy, Pasja, Wniebowstąpienie, Zesłanie Ducha Świętego*) oraz podobiznami Chrystusa i świętych. Powtarzający się w opisach zwrot *chrisoclabum* (lub *chrisoclavum*) wydaje się być używany w stosunku do kompozycji umieszczanych w ornamentalnych clipeusach, a być może także szczególnie cennych, haftowanych lub przędzonych złotem i purpurą aplikacji naszywanych na tkaniny.

Wolfgang F. Volbach już przed siedemdziesięciu pięciu laty podjął próbę identyfikacji dwóch fragmentów jedwabnego samitu ze scenami *Zwiastowania* i *Bożego Narodzenia* w zbiorach watykańskiego *Museo Sacro,* początkowo uchodzących za szóstowieczne wyroby aleksandryjskie, z papieskimi darami z przełomu VIII i IX w. Jego hipoteza, przyjęta przez większość badaczy, jest w ostatnich latach podważana przez Annę Muthesius, która uznała obie tkaniny za powstałe już po zakończeniu ikonoklazmu (843 r.). Dlatego konieczna stała się ponowna analiza i interpretacja obu scen w świetle współczesnej wiedzy na temat sztuki bizantyńskiej VIII i IX stuleci.