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**ORNAMENT IN PAINTING**  
OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE  
11<sup>TH</sup> - FIRST QUARTER OF THE  
12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Decorated with luxurious floral-and-petal ornament, the Ostromir Gospel (1056-1057) is the oldest codex that has survived from the era of Kievan Rus.

The mosaics of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery (ca. 1112) marked a new stage in the development of ornamental forms in monumental painting, a gradual departure from reproducing manuscript samples.

The ornament of the Mstislav Gospel (between ca. 1113 and 1117) is typologically close to the Ostromir Gospel design and shows new developments in manuscript ornamentation forms.

The ornamental painting of the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Novgorod (ca. 1120) features, along with traditional forms, new motifs, which were to become widespread subsequently.

Ornament played an exceptional role in the art of Kievan Rus, and its development during that period can hardly be differentiated depending on the type of artistic media—scholars noted that the ornamental repertoire of the 11th-12th-century masters of the Byzantine circle consisted of a small number of constantly recurring motifs and their combinations<sup>1</sup>, transferred from fabrics to stone carving, from manuscript sheets to metal wares and church walls.

The history of the development of ornament in the Russian art of the second half of the 11th—first quarter of the 12th century can be traced not only in monumental painting, as in the preceding period, but also in illuminated codices. Manuscripts that have come down to us from Kievan Rus' are ornamented with amazing luxury.

Some of them have architectural frontispieces—a kind of cross-sections of church models. Their design to some extent helps us to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of the ornamental decoration of buildings in the second half of the 11th—early 12th centuries, which has survived only in small fragments<sup>2</sup>.

The Ostromir Gospel (1056-1057), the oldest codex to have come down to us from Kievan Rus, is in many ways a milestone work. Its ornamentation comprises elements of the previous stage, the ornament of the Kievan St. Sophia, which, in turn, goes back to manuscript samples, and at the same time, shows the trends to be developed in the second half of the 11th century.

In addition to miniatures depicting evangelists in ornamental frames, and unique initials, the Ostromir Gospel has one large and eighteen small ornamental headpieces. Before examining them, let me make a few introductory remarks.

Starting with the 4th—5th centuries, when manuscript illumination practice came into being, and for the next few centuries, two basic elements, the headpiece and initial letters, were invariably part of Byzantine codex decoration, which was always strictly functional. The headpieces, usually of a strict geometrical form, served to highlight and, later, decorate the opening of the book and mark its constituent parts—separate texts, chapters or paragraphs. Initials—enlarged, and then ornamented letters—were used to designate the beginning of different sections<sup>3</sup>. Greek codices also often made use of miniature ornamental frames.

Apart from the purely functional and artistic role, the ornamental design of Byzantine manuscripts had a special meaning, creating a symbolical image of paradise, the Garden of Eden. An inscription on one of the headpieces of a Bulgarian Gospel of the first half of the 13th century, "Behold this is heaven called paradise"<sup>4</sup> confirms such an interpretation of the stylized floral ornament.

Nearly the entire ornament of the Ostromir Gospel is of luxurious floral and petal type, which appeared in the Byzantine codices, as mentioned in the previous chapter; in the second half of the 10th century and reigned supreme for centuries to come. However, methods of its usage and treatment in the Ostromir Gospel differ significantly from Byzantine manuscript design; the same is true of quatrefoil forms of unusual size (in miniatures depicting the evangelists St. John and St. Mark), reminiscent of octagonal building layouts. Actively interacting with the quatrefoil structure, the ornament emphasises its perception as a kind of architectural frame for the miniatures.

Particularly notable is the miniature depicting St. John the Evangelist, where the gold background in itself creates a special spatial environment. Multidirectional movement of floral motifs connected by finest tendril-like stems in the narrow border outlining the contour of the quatrefoil seems to create a sensation of whirling spherical shapes which is born in the Byzantine church interior<sup>5</sup>.

This feeling is enhanced by the slightly upset centricity of the quatrefoil structure and the enlargement of heart-shaped

forms filling the intervals between the semicircles in the left part. The static, unusually large and lush floral forms with elongated outer petals in these intervals, and smaller, more traditional motifs in the four corners of the border emphasise still more the whirling rhythm. We do not know any such examples in Greek manuscripts.

In their complex design and refined motifs, the decorative compositions between the rectangular ornamental frame and the quatrefoil in the Ostromir Gospel's miniature of St. Mark are in no way inferior to the works of the Constantinople masters of the 11th century<sup>6</sup>; in many respects they are much more sophisticated than the majority of their contemporary Byzantine models<sup>7</sup>. Thinned out stems connecting the floral and palmette shapes composed of petals form the design structure. Their curves make up a transparent graceful pattern, which is naturally set against the complex background with geometric precision. Such trends appear in Byzantine manuscripts not earlier than the second half of the 11th century<sup>8</sup>.

The spatial treatment of this miniature is, in its own way, no less unusual than on the sheet with St. John the Evangelist. It involves a much more complex set of ornamental forms. In addition to ornamental compositions in the corners, the motifs being similar in both miniatures, the sheet with St. Mark has a pattern in the outer rectangular frame (palmette forms in triangular margins formed by thin zigzag lines of a straightened stem); an ornamental pattern on a white background of stylised lilies in a fine rectangular grid along the entire surface of the quatrefoil, which is reminiscent of a tiled floor; and, finally, an ornament in the border emphasising the quatrefoil form as such. In the latter case, the nature of the composition, the type of motifs and methods of interpretation resemble stone carving, including church cornices. This association, which is most likely not random, brings to mind the general concept of miniature framing and its interpretation as a kind of projection of an architectural form. To be exact, this is an attempt to show several levels of its cross-section, from the bottom—something resembling a floor covered with patterned tiles, to the top—the cornice and pendentives (ornamental pattern in the corners) in the common traditional rectangular frame, accentuating the architectonics of the whole, like friezes and vertical band ornamental compositions in church decoration. The idea and its expressive implementation are not typical of Greek codices and attest to the highest workmanship of the Ostromir Gospel makers.

The ornament of the outer and inner borders of the Ostromir Gospel miniature of St. Mark is almost exactly reproduced in small headpieces, which deserve special mention. Just like the large one, they all have a gold background. They reflect the tendency towards more complex ornamental forms, while maintaining the composition field dense as was characteristic of the Greek manuscripts of the late 11th century. The large rectangular headpiece with the opening words of the Gospel of St. John.

Small headpieces are highly original in their colour scheme and composition. Three of them stand out for their complicated corner finials. Actually, they all play the role of big headpieces, being on the same page spread as the images of the evangelists.

The headpiece on p. 87, to the right of the miniature of St. Luke.

The remaining headpieces can be divided conventionally into several traditional groups, with a one-tier linear pattern of alternation—of *krinons* in medallions (sheets 164, 204 and 210), *krinons* without medallions, *krinons* branching from an undulating vine stem (sheets 239 and 243), where cherry and orange tones are actively introduced into the colour scheme, as if anticipating changes in the ornament palette which were to take place in the second half of the 11th—12th centuries.

The decoration of another extant manuscript—*Izbornik of Sviatoslav* (1073)—is no less unique. It includes architectural borders (filled with ornament) of four miniatures with images of saints in archways, as well as two large headpieces and initial letters.

The large headpieces of the *Izbornik of Sviatoslav* are placed at the beginning of the manuscript and before the second part. The first (p. 4) is a traditional rectangle resembling the large headpiece in the Ostromir Gospel. The second (p. 129), a square one, with a medallion in the centre assigned to the text, is quite unusual. What is quite rare for this type of headpieces is its composite nature, which is clearly defined, as if fixing the different zones, and the use of different kinds of ornament—two types of geometric (at the sides and in the centre) and a stylised (floral-and-petal in two versions)

1. Grabar, 1967, pp. 257-67.

2. A large part of the surviving fragments of paintings of that period are precisely ornamental compositions.

3. See, for example, Codex Alexandrinus, London, Brit. Libr. Royal I. D. VI. For details see Hutter, 1996, pp. 4-22.

4. Sofia, Cyril and Methodius National Library, No. 17, sheet 121.

5. The lion's posture in the upper part of the miniature emphasises this artistic effect. The energetic movement of its powerful paws seems to roll the semi-spherical shapes, pushing them into rotation.

6. Such as the manuscript of the Four Gospels from the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Holkham gr. 115, sheet 113, 179)

7. Only a few manuscripts, particularly the New Testament manuscript of 1072 from the MSU Libraries, 2, make a (special) attempt to fill the corners of a rectangular headpiece with smaller elements in intertwining stems.

8. With their fine stems and free background these compositions resemble individual works of Cologne enamel workshops, which, however, have come down to us from a later period (see: *Ornamenta Ecclesiac*, 1985. Bd. 2. F. 40, 41. S. 400).

9. Vikan, 1973, p. 130

10. Smirnova, 2005, p.30.

11. On the reverse of sheet 128, the *Izbornik of Sviatoslav* features the simplest arch construction, which is more or less common in Byzantine codices. In its lower part, as if in the doorway cutting through the central part of the wall, is a group of saints. On the front side of the same sheet 128 is a cross-section of a more complex architectural form with a rectangular lower part also cut through by the doorway with images of saints in it and a powerful domed structure above. In this case, the main outlines of the church coincide, as it were, with most of its layout. The ornament covering this architectural structure is larger and lapidary, dominated by geometric motifs and mostly the so-called stepped ornament that highlights the main contours in keeping with their geometric nature. Meanwhile the crowning part is aligned with the apse layout emphasised by a special type of ornament. The pattern resembling tiled floors also strengthens this impression. The third miniature depicting a church is on the reverse of sheet 3. The architectural structure is based on the same rectangular, in this case almost square shape cut through not by the arch of the doorway but a wide archway resembling a triumphal arch. Although it accommodates a larger number of images of saints, this form might have been dictated by other considerations and another scale, a smaller one, which, because of the distance, imparts greater monumentality to the construction. This is emphasised by the representation of three cupolas at the top. In this case the cupolas are placed behind an extended arcuate shape, which falls short of the foundation and in its turn resembles the apse outlines. The middle part of the frontispiece has a traditional Byzantine floral-and-petal ornament and an arcuate projection with a tile-like pattern at the top. This type of an architectural border marks a transition to the last, and in this manuscript first variant on sheet 3 of the *Izbornik*. It, too, represents a kind of cross-section of a many-domed church, but here the gables indicate its three-apsed structure connected with the rectangular middle part without any projections. The ornamental bands mark the spatial zones more clearly, separating the domes from the drums, etc.

12. *The Glory of Byzantium, 1997, p. 110.*

13. An example of this is a manuscript from the Royal Library in Brussels, second half of the 12th century (ms. 9823-98-240).

14. *Ornamenta Ecclesiae, 1985, Bd. 2, S. 314-323.*

15. See, for example, a 12th-century manuscript from Cologne, which is now in the Düsseldorf University library (ms., A.2) (*Vennebusch, 1976, S. XIX*). The Bible of the 12th century, the Madrid National Library (ms. 6, sheet 175), where the figure of John the Evangelist is inscribed in the initial letter.

16. See: Hutter, 1996, p. 4.

ornament in the borders of the medallion with the text in the centre. Its colour scheme is also unique – lighter and more transparent than in the traditional versions of the Byzantine ornament, in keeping with the palette of the *Izbornik* miniatures. It is dominated by grey-blue, dark blue, light green and orange tones. This headpiece is noteworthy for its simplified and flattened plant motifs. Lapidary, almost geometrically regular ornamental forms are outlined in solid white or yellow and have long paired diagonal lines instead of curved petals. Such elements appeared in stylised floral forms already in the big headpiece of the Ostromir Gospel, just as in the decoration of Byzantine manuscripts of the 11th century, but there the lines are shorter, they resemble stamens and do not have such pronounced geometry. This tendency is also to develop in the decades to come.

Filled with ornament, the architectural borders of the miniatures with images of saints (pp. 3, 3 rev., 128, 128 rev.) are the most interesting and unusual part of the *Izbornik's* decoration, a kind of church models. To understand their features, a little historical digression is necessary.

Individual elements of architectural structures, primarily arches, appeared in manuscripts beginning with the Rabula Gospels (586). Later on, ornamented arches as images of a church or church entrance, usually framed the Canon tables of the Gospels. Over the time, the shape of architectural borders gradually changed. Beginning from the second half of the 10th century a large semi-circular arch on Canon sheets became part of a rectangular composition filled with ornament – actually, a big headpiece, the lower part of which formed a kind of architrave. Thin columns became more massive, getting developed capitals and a powerful base. This kind of architectural borders deprived of small semi-circular arch forms over the “architrave”, has underneath not only the text, as, for example, in the Gospel of Trebizond, dating back to the mid-11th century (Canon table, sheet 10)<sup>9</sup>, but also images of the evangelists and some Gospel scenes. However, it was still the time of searching, when shapes of architectural borders in Greek manuscripts continued to evolve, to develop eventually into a kind of a cross-section of a domed church. To convey its internal space the artists reproduced the marble wall lining of real architectural structures, which was

combined with mosaics in the lunettes, and arches traditional for Byzantine church decoration. An illustration of this is the famous miniature of the Ascension in the church interior from the Constantinople manuscript of Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos, second quarter of the 12th century (Vat. gr. 1162, sheet 2 rev.).

Architectural frontispieces in Greek manuscripts could have appeared somewhat earlier, but for us miniature borders in the *Izbornik of Sviatoslav*, as

has already been noted, is the first example of the form they had taken by that time<sup>10</sup>. The techniques used to fill *Izbornik's* inner architectural forms are unique and can be said to reflect the formation of the national tradition as such. Ornamental friezes, horizontal band compositions and panels with various motifs cover all the surfaces of architectural forms, accentuating their spatial zones and bringing to mind the prototype of such decoration, first and foremost, the ensemble of the St. Sophia Cathedral of Kiev. The types of ornament used in this case are found in manuscripts and monumental painting, but the way they are used to highlight certain areas of the church are characteristic only of mural decoration. If we examine them separately, each of the ornamental themes of the architectural borders of the *Izbornik's* miniatures is typically Byzantine and is found both in manuscripts and monumental painting, but the fact that they are put in the same margin, as far as one can tell, is a feature of the local culture. The same is true of the range of colours, which is special in each of the miniatures. The ornamental world of St. Sophia's of Kiev, the main church in South Russian lands, is just as unusually plentiful and varied.

The most developed version of an architectural frontispiece is on sheet 3. Its consummate structure, diverse and thoroughly executed ornament, mainly of the floral-and-petal type characteristic of that time, are in keeping with the location of the miniature in the manuscript. In general, the changes in the form of the architectural borders of all the four *Izbornik* miniatures followed the traditional hierarchy of Byzantine-style manuscripts, with the initial “introductory” ornamentation elaborated in more detail than the rest in accordance with the most advanced artistic trends of the period. The manuscript demonstrates with utmost clarity,

if unintentionally, the evolution of the architectural form, which is traced in the *Izbornik* in reverse order, beginning with the last of these miniatures<sup>11</sup>.

Of course, there is more than one way of interpreting differences in the treatment of architectural form in the *Izbornik* miniatures. This chain should be regarded as evolutionary only hypothetically, although the miniature from the Constantinople manuscript of the Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos mentioned earlier can be one of its last links.

There was, perhaps, another way of forming architectural frontispieces, which is reflected in the no less well-known miniature of the Constantinople manuscript of Homilies of Gregory of Nazienzus, created circa 1150 (Sinai, gr. 339, sheet 4v) and considered tracing directly back to the aforementioned manuscript. However, in this case, the miniature presents not only the interior of the church, lined with marble and decorated with inlaid panels, and its upper multi-domed part, as in the manuscript of Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos, but also creates an image of the chosen city. This is evidenced by a fragment of the ramparts, the upper part of different buildings and the spatial structure of the upper part of the composition itself.

The mosaic image of a church on the western façade of St. Mark's in Venice (a repository of the Holy Blood since the 13th century). It is believed to have iconographic parallels with samples from South Italy<sup>12</sup>, which does not rule out its Byzantine origin, as many motifs were common throughout the medieval world. Another source that influenced the emergence of particular forms of frontispieces could be Latin manuscripts, including the so-called Collectars with original topographic maps of the Holy Land, comprising images of cities and churches<sup>13</sup>.

A miniature depicting a church and its ornament in Gertrude's Prayer Book, a manuscript commissioned by the Princess, executed in Kiev or nearby lands between 1078 and 1086 and bound to her Psalter (the so-called Trier or Egbert), an Ottonian manuscript of the late 10th century, typifies this trend combining Byzantine and Latin features.

As in the *Izbornik of Sviatoslav* miniatures, the surface of the walls of the church, including the Nativity composition from the Prayer Book manuscript (sheet 9 rev.) is completely covered by ornament – geometric (stepped) and floral-and-petal. Its diversity would have seemed superfluous – in this case, twelve variants of floral ornament alone were used – had it not been for the subtly harmonised range of colours against the gold background. As in the Nativity scene, the colour palette is made of orange and cherry tones, quite rare for Greek manuscripts, along with blue, green and pink. The interpretation of some motifs of the floral-and-petal ornament, to be exact, their amazing combination incorporating components of different types of ornament, the density of ornamental compositions and the fusion of its elements are also unusual for Byzantine manuscripts. This applies to the vertical ornamental bands in the middle of the small dome drums, the composition in the middle of the central dome drum.

Equally unusual is the interpretation of the floral-and-petal ornament on sheet 10, especially of the motifs framing the quatrefoil with the Crucifixion. The whole composition resembles manuscript covers or plates on the sides of Latin reliquaries<sup>14</sup>.

Gertrude's Prayer Book differs even more significantly from the Byzantine codices as regards the basic principles of decorative design. Above all this refers to the configuration and size of the first miniature depicting Apostle Peter and the family who commissioned it (sheet 5). It is not just that these images are inscribed in the form corresponding to the Latin initials “In”, which opens an important part of Gertrude's prayer, but the whole principle of the relationship between this initial and the text. It is typical of western manuscripts<sup>15</sup>, where the initials, which have a life of their own independent from the text, possess the main decorative energy. The place they take on manuscript pages exceeds the necessity, and in many cases they actually subordinate the whole text to their configuration<sup>16</sup>. We'd like to emphasise that here we are talking about the typology, but not about the style of the Apostle Peter miniature. The lower left corner of the miniature's borders (like the upper part which was cut off) finishes with an ornamental motive executed in gold, which can be traced to the initials of the Psalter bound together with the Prayer Book.

The ornament framing the Christ in Glory miniature on sheet 10 of Gertrude's Prayer Book is characteristic primarily of Latin artifacts, both typologically and in the way of its interpretation. The frame ornament is a complex type of a spatial representation of a meander resembling the one in miniature borders in the Ottonian part of the manuscript, for

example, on the reverse of sheet 20 and sheet 21. However, it is not an exact copy of this ornament. It is based on the principle of depicting a meander from different angles<sup>17</sup>, which requires sophisticated techniques, but the ornament components in the Prayer Book are larger and generally it is more monumental than the Psalter ornament, with the size of golden squares increased. These squares, which are not outlined in red, have almost covered the dark blue background present in the depths of a similar ornament of the Ottonian part of the manuscript, thus depriving it of spaciousness.

Over the corners and in the centre of the ornamental frame, as in the Crucifixion miniature, there are traditional Byzantine motifs correlated with the main pattern only in colour. But no elements traditional for Byzantine manuscripts can be seen in the corners of the ornamental frame of the Prayer Book last miniature on sheet 41 depicting the Virgin and Child Enthroned (located already within the structure of the Ottonian codex).

The frame of this miniature is filled with a crenate stepped ornament characteristic mostly of architectural frontispieces and monumental painting, which stresses the representative nature of the image. Yet, that pattern was most likely chosen due to the desire to connect the miniature with the preceding part of the Prayer Book, where the scene of the Nativity in the middle of the representation of the church on the reverse of sheet 9 frames the ornament of the same type. The image of the tiled floor at the Virgin's feet familiar to us from the Ostromir Gospel miniatures looks like a link between the miniature and the Kievan works of an earlier period.

In the last miniature of Gertrude's manuscript the ornament lost its strict geometric character and symmetry, and the size of its elements is not the same – in the upper part of the frame they are noticeably larger, while in the top and bottom right corners the ornament has “shifted” and is different from the left side. This ornament could have been made by another craftsman, just like the miniature itself as it has been described by scholars<sup>18</sup>.

Three small headpieces indirectly confirm this supposition. Executed on the reverse of sheet 13 and sheet 14 on the worn-out parts of the text, which in itself is evidence of the historical existence of the manuscript, they serve as a kind of bridge linking the first four miniatures and the last one commissioned by Gertrude.

Made in gold, the vine with palmette-shaped branches on the reverse of sheet 13 are typical of Byzantine manuscripts, the only difference being that the former usually has a frame, although there are variants of this kind, too, such as manuscripts of Homilies of St. John Chrysostom in the 11th century (Canon. gr. 76, sheet 229)<sup>19</sup>, whereas one of the basic principles of the Greek codex ornamentation, which had already formed by the time, was to highlight the beginning of the text, paragraph or chapter, but not their end<sup>20</sup>.

A synthesis of Byzantine and West European art and culture, the ornamentation of Gertrude's Prayer Book has remained a mystery. If it was executed by a Byzantine craftsman, some of its features can hardly be explained by the desire of the client or artist to copy or match the design of the oldest, Ottonian part of the codex. Some of the details, elements, and methods of decoration used are characteristic of Latin manuscripts that appeared later. It is hard to suppose, however, that to decorate the Prayer Book a Latin craftsman was specially brought, who would have had to emulate Byzantine samples<sup>21</sup>. The desire of the client to match the tastes of the milieu in which she found herself was quite understandable, but it would be right to assume that the milieu already contained a component of West European artistic culture. Individual features of the Ostromir Gospel ornamentation offer ample proof (see “Painting in the Second Half of the 11th – First Quarter of the 12th Century” in the present edition). The world of medieval Rus' was much more open and complex than is usually imagined. The ornament and miniatures of Gertrude's Prayer Book provide ample evidence to that effect.

Ornament, however, continued to develop in the tradition of the first Kievan churches, both as regards the use of Byzantine floral-and-petal motifs, and ribbon ornament on polychrome background. The proof of this is, primarily, fragments found during restoration work in the late 20th – early 21st centuries in the apse of St. Sophia's Cathedral in Polotsk. Parts of the frieze have survived. It was once under the Eucharist, a tiny fragment of which is extant now. Its composition was based on palmette-shaped forms made up of petal elements. They were placed in triangular margins and treated as mirror images of each other. The large width of the frieze and a huge ornament rapport reveal the loss of a striking sense of proportion so inherent in St.

Sophia's mosaic ornament. However, the high artistic level of the craftsmen can be seen in the ornamental motifs of the Polotsk St. Sophia, very gentle in colour (cold light-green and pink tones on intensive ochre background imitating gold smalt) with the signature triple lines of stamens and rounded nubs at the ends, well known from St. Sophia's frescoes and the Ostromir Gospel ornamentation. This painting may have appeared much later than the church and dates from the first decades of the 12th century, the time of St. Michael's mosaics, which will be discussed further on.

The remains of the ornament of the Church of St. Michael, Vyubichi Monastery (1090s), look different. Fragments of ornamental compositions are extant on the eastern and western slopes of the south and north windows in the choir, as well as on the arch projection under what is now the floor of the second tier. A part of the decorative panel covered with ornament has survived in the basement area of the north pylon<sup>22</sup>.

The window jambs carry a stylised floral ornament of white (unpainted gesso?) ribbon-like stems ending with palmettes or half-palmettes against the background of orange and warm light green tones. The edges of the white ribbon motifs are marked by a distinct, even a little rough, black outline, and in many places themselves tied up with annular forms of two parallel black lines.

Although ornamental bands on the windows jambs of the Vyubichi Monastery church resemble in many ways a similar ornament in St. Sophia of Kiev (e.g., framing compositions with a cherry-coloured stripe with a thin orange line running down the centre), they differ significantly in craftsmanship, and, what matters most, their interpretation. This manifests itself in the loss of proper structure and absence of a clear-cut design. A specific set of certain forms and elements is used, the combination of which sometimes looks random, and this impression has nothing to do with the poor survival of the fragments. The rounded ends of half-palmettes are disproportionately large and the ‘buds’ between the stems and branches look swollen. Also unusual are the bud-like growths on the white inner outline of ornamental bands, which seems to be introduced into the composition context. However, it is this last feature that is typical of the mosaic ornament on the central apse window jambs in the Kievan St. Sophia.

What is not typical of the St. Sophia is the coarse black contours outlining ornamental forms in the murals of the Church of St. Michael; neither are annular ligaments around stems. Such details are known to us from the remains of the Tithe Church ornament<sup>23</sup>, although they originally existed in the St. Sophia murals, too.

Fragments of ornamental compositions on the St. Michael Church window jambs show that church ornamentation in southern Rus' had an established tradition of its own. However, in this case we can speak only about common typology. Methods of executing ribbon motifs with coarse black outlines and red-ochre backgrounds are probably closer to later works, in particular, the decoration of the narthex of the St. Sophia in Ohrid (1037-1054).

In the same way, only typological affinity and similar ornamental repertoire of the murals of the St. Michael Church of the Vyubichi Monastery and the Kievan St. Sophia should be born in mind when examining the motif of the corrugated ornament, the remains of which have survived on the arch projection under what is now the floor of the second tier of the cathedral. As far as we can judge from the graphic reproduction available to us, the structure of this ornament was not quite well thought-out and, consequently, the result not flawless – the edges of the broken ribbon were not geometrically regular.

However, the ornamented panel, a fragment of which survived in the basement area of the north pylon of the St. Michael Church, allows us to suppose (judging by the tracings) a much higher level of craftsmanship. Its size (the original height was about 1.2 m), typology (imitation opus sectile) and the colour gamut (combination of light-pink and dark-green tones), as well as techniques and workmanship, are quite comparable with the decorative panels in the basement area of the Kievan St. Sophia. To judge by this fragment, the murals of the naos of the St. Michael Church, Vyubichi Monastery, could differ from the wall painting partially surviving in the narthex, and could have been made by different craftsmen at somewhat different periods of time.

What made frescoes of St. Michael's Church in Oster (“Yuri's prayer house”) different is that stable models of the floral-and-petal ornament and elements of ribbon ornament already traditional of the art of Kievan Rus were used in unusual combinations (as far as one can judge from scanty fragments, descriptions and photo materials). The frescoes were created, apparently, at the turn of the 12th century. For some time remnants

17. Left side – from above left, right side – from bottom right, topline – from above right, bottom side – from bottom left.

18. Smirnova, 2004/2, pp. 100-101.

19. Hutter, 1977, No. 13, pp. 74, 145.

20. Even if in some cases a small headpiece is at the bottom of the sheet, it does not finish anything, but introduces a certain section of the text, which also starts in the lower half of the sheet. There is an example like that in Ostromir Gospel on sheet 274.

21. Lazarev, 1978/2, p. 268.

22. Korenyuk, 2006, p. 27, ill. 4 and 6.

23. *Tserkva Bogoroditsi Desiatinna v Kievi* (The Tithe Church (of the Dormition) in Kiev, 1996, ill. 12, p. 144. This technique dates back to the manuscript ornament of a floral-and-petal type, where the stems sometimes have annular ligaments, which, in their turn, can be traced to monuments of Hellenistic culture.

of several variants of ornamental compositions continued to exist in the sanctuary part of that church.

The special nature and, generally, the use of one of them were to a certain extent due to the peculiarities of the architectural design of the eastern part of the Oster church, above all, a very narrow bema (about 0.9 m), which is a sort of recess in the western part of the apse. Invisible from the central part of the church, it was decorated with a vertical ornamental panel, reaching to the level of the vault.

However, its location cannot account for all the specifics of the design and the interpretation of the ornamental elements.

The ornamental band framing the sanctuary entrance was neatly inscribed in the allocated plane and organised with the help of a large grid of thin white ribbon motifs. Their intersections formed a chain of rhombi (placed one above the other with contiguous angles) and triangular planes on their sides. These forms were filled with the same white ribbon ornament of stem extensions with palmette-shaped branches. A combination of orange, dark-orange, brown and green formed the background of that ornamental band <sup>24</sup>.

Compared with similar motifs in the Kievan St. Sophia <sup>25</sup>, the murals of St. Michael's Church in Oster have a more minute ornament composition, its ribbon elements much thinner and executed in a more casual manner, and the whole scheme seems a little blurred. The curves of the stems, especially inside the rhombi, are done in an arbitrary fashion. These features, as well as the stretched-out composition, are not related to the size of the plane occupied by the ornamental band: it is not wider than the pier lesene projections in the naos of the Kievan St. Sophia. They resulted not only from the small scale of the building and, probably, the nature of its wall painting, but also from the general trends in the development of ornament in the late 11th – 12th centuries.

There is another variant of the Oster church ornament, which is closer to that of the Kievan St. Sophia and, evidently, the St. Sophia of Polotsk. It used to be on the inner west ledge of the south pier of the sanctuary arch. According to N. Makarenko, who examined the monument in the 1910s, a zigzag line broke the plane into triangular areas, which had their apexes facing different directions and which were filled with palmette-shaped offshoots <sup>26</sup>.

The similar inner ledge of the north sanctuary pier of the St. Michael Church, i.e. the place located symmetrically in relation to the previous, had another type of ornament – a vine, reminiscent of the ornament adorning the triumphal arch of the Kievan St. Sophia. It was done in greyish-green against reddish-brown with transitions to darker and lighter shades of essentially a polychrome background <sup>27</sup>. This kind of combination of two different types of ornament on symmetrical planes within the same spatial zone, especially of the sanctuary, does not seem to be justified from the point of view of the ornamental system as a whole.

The ornamental repertoire of the Oster church sanctuary apse included another traditional type of ornament that reflected a desire to adhere to a certain set of ornamental forms, despite the unusual location. In the depth of the bema vault above the pier abutment, on the ledge facing the inside of the apse, i.e. invisible from the naos, there was a floral-and-petal ornament of *krinons* in a heart-shaped frame facing upwards and placed in their plane in such a way that the highest figure was the largest, and each one following it smaller than the previous one. The composition ended with an open complex flower and a stem with a trefoil leaf at the end, which was at the same height as the abutment of the apse conch. The ornament had a light red background, its floral elements done in a blue, grey and green palette with a red core and framed with a blue stem <sup>28</sup>.

To judge by a sketch published by N. Makarenko, this mural ornament in the Oster church was executed more professionally than the others, i.e. the standards of ornament craftsmanship continued to be high. In any case, that was true about the floral-and-petal ornament, a hallmark of that time and evidence of the quality of ornamentation. At the same time this type of ornament can be seen as transitional to the ornament in the painting ensemble of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery in Kiev, created circa 1112. What makes them similar is their departure from the classical Byzantine ornament.

However, the situation is somewhat different as far as the frescoes of the Golden-Domed Monastery cathedral are concerned, judging by the fragments at our disposal (seventeen have survived, some of them are part of the same composition), which are of special historical and artistic value <sup>29</sup>.

The first thing that attracts one's attention in the ornamental repertoire of the monastery cathedral frescoes is the use of the

same basic types of ornament, which are known to us above all from the St. Sophia decoration – geometric (of the same type) and stylised plant (different variants of the floral-and-petal and ribbon ornament).

The geometric pattern in the surviving fragments of St. Michael's frescoes is represented by only one type – a stepped, crenate ornament (different shades of ochre and white) in its most common version, which appears both in manuscripts, in particular, Gertrude's Prayer Book, and monumental painting, including the Hosios Loukas Katholicon mosaics that have them in abundance. In the decoration of the Kievan St. Sophia, it exists in a different interpretation, on a much larger scale, and produces quite a different impression matching the nature of the grand ensemble.

The floral-and-petal polychrome ornament has come down to us in four variants. All of them are similar in their colour gamut of pale shades of green, grey and terracotta against an intensive ochre or greyish (plaster?) background. They include a vertical band (composition) of single-chain rhombi formed by thin as if broken stems, their apexes connected and edges touching the borders. Inside the rhombi there are compound *krinons*, whose forked stems rest on the lower parts of their sides. The triangular planes between rhombi sides have halves of the same *krinons*, cut off by the horizontal outlines and leaning on the rhombi sides with only one part of the stem. Actually, a composition like that can be extended endlessly on all sides.

Another variant of a polychrome floral-and-petal ornament has a somewhat different character, although the organising principle of the composition is quite similar to the previous one. Thin curves of a geometrised stem form its triangular margins. Inside are special kinds of palmettes, many elements of which are similar to *krinons* depicted as mirror images of each other. With its very finely nuanced different shades of green on a bright ochre (imitating gold) and pinkish background, this ornament is closest to the motifs and their interpretation in the frieze of the Cathedral of St. Sophia of Polotsk, which brings back the idea of a significant time gap between the construction of the cathedral and the creation of its murals. Similar typological variants are known from manuscript headpieces, including small headpieces in the Ostromir Gospel and the fresco ornament of the Kievan St. Sophia, in particular, the ornament on the octagonal piers in the cathedral choir.

Two similar variants of the extant polychrome floral-and-petal ornament of the Golden-Domed Monastery cathedral are a vertical one-member row of multi-petal *krinons*, their thin stems encircling them to form medallions and their forked stems resting on their lower parts. The medallions are arranged freely in the composition field without touching its sides, connected with them and between one another with ring-shaped elements. In one case graceful three-petal ornamental forms on slightly curved stems and a greyish background diverge symmetrically from the upper part of golden-based medallions on both sides on the north face of the west lesene of the southwest pier in the aisle leading to the south gallery, and a carpet-like decoration in the south-west staircase tower vault of the Kievan St. Sophia, which combines elements of a floral-and-petal and ribbon ornaments, and has different-size medallions with *krinons*.

For all its nuances, the floral-and-petal ornament of St. Michael's frescoes seems to come closest to the variants known to us from the Kievan St. Sophia's ornamental repertoire and, respectively, Greek manuscript ornamentation. Undoubtedly, it shows a prevalent tendency to reproduce models that were classical for that time. Judging by the barely discernible archival photographs, this type of ornament was located on the west sides of lesenes of triumphal arch piers, i.e. significant places well open to view, but its rapport was much smaller than in the St. Sophia Cathedral. Besides, the symmetric planes had ornament with several different compositional schemes. On the same plane, but at different levels, separated by slate slabs, there was both a floral-and-petal and a ribbon ornament – a combination possible for the Kievan St. Sophia frescoes, but impossible for its mosaics.

The extant ribbon ornament fragments of St. Michael's Cathedral display other tendencies, which do not seem to be so much influenced by the Kievan St. Sophia ornament. However, their distinctive feature – the white border on the inner edges of the compositions, which is as wide as the ribbon ornament elements and forms an integral part of its design – was also characteristic of the black-and-white ribbon type ornament in the Kievan St. Sophia sanctuary mosaics, especially on window jambs. Such a device has to do, as has already been mentioned, with

24. Makarenko, 1916, p. 400.

25. The ornamental repertoire of the Kievan St. Sophia frescoes, as a rule, relied on a simpler and larger-scale design (although rhomboid compositions are also encountered). A zigzag ribbon divided the plane of their ornamental band into large triangular segments. At the same time the ribbon is a kind of transformed stem, which has branches with palmette-shaped ends coming from the bud in the stem axil. Ornamental forms filled the triangular planes as symmetrical mirror images. Similarly, strict symmetry distinguishes the entire St. Sophia ornament.

26. Makarenko, 1916, p. 400.

27. Ibid.

28. Makarenko, 1916, p. 400.

29. Removed from the walls, isolated and for many years kept in the storerooms of different museums, fragments of ornamental compositions (the choice of which may have been purely accidental) have only in the last decade been gradually collected in the place of their creation (see: Kot, Korenyuk, 1999, pp. 76-9 and Korenyuk, Kot, 2007, pp. 23-45).

the origin of this type of ornament, which goes back to stone carving. However, the ribbon ornament elements of St. Michael's are much thinner and drier, the patterns significantly smaller and more complicated, while black contours of ornamental forms are not used at all.

There are five models of the ribbon type among fragments of ornamental compositions. They are, basically, variants of white ribbon motifs against polychrome backgrounds, mostly dirty pink ochre. The first variant is a vertical band composition (extant in two parts), consisting of a number of large medallions, which fill almost the entire background. Judging by the outline traces the geometrically clear-cut contours of medallions were made with the help of a rotating screen. The medallions are connected with one another and with the white outline by small rounded loops – a kind of vestige of carved stone interlacing – as well as by stems with small palmettes. Complex palmette variations fill the medallions, alternating in different combinations. In St. Michael's frescoes the palmettes in the intervals between the medallions are facing the centre of the composition, forming a closed pattern with very little visible background, which is much more densely covered with elements than most ornaments of a similar type in the Kievan St. Sophia. In large measure, the ornament has lost its monumental character and its monochrome nature due to an occasional inclusion of coloured background inside individual elements.

The same density and saturation of the ornamental field (as far as we can judge by a small rapport fragment) was characteristic of another ribbon ornament composition. It consists of elongated vertical oval shapes filled with the usual palmette variations. Long bifurcated “stems” formed their outer shape. The stems, interlocking in the intervals between the main shapes, had curved winding offshoots with palmette-shaped ends branching off on both sides. All the elements of this composition are known from the ornamentation of the Kievan St. Sophia, except for this pattern, which exists, though in a much more concise version, in the narthex frescoes of the St. Sophia of Ohrid.

The same features – the densely filled composition field, although of an entirely different nature, as well as the thinned out ribbon elements – also distinguish another type of fresco ornament of St. Michael's Cathedral. It is a border (only a small fragment has survived), which is divided by a fine grid of white narrow strips, forming rhomboid cells of indistinct configuration, with short white stem twigs with palmette-shaped ends casually painted inside<sup>30</sup>.

Finally, two more extant examples of St. Michael's fresco ornament feature a composition formed by a zigzag line dividing the field into triangular pieces with a variety of palmette shapes with diverging offshoots. In one case, the structure of the composition with forked palmettes can be seen very well, despite the multi-coloured background. The general design is one of the most traditional and actively used in the decoration of the Kievan St. Sophia. However, the power and energy of St. Sophia's ornament are essentially lost here. In this case we are dealing with the development of a trend seen in the Oster frescoes—smaller ornamental forms and departure from the principles of ornamental decoration of the Kievan St. Sophia, where the ornamentation reflected the powerful nature of architecture and was in line with the splendour of the wall painting décor of the grand duke's buildings.

Differences in the decorative programme of the Kievan St. Sophia and St. Michael's Cathedral also manifest themselves in a different approach to the

typology of ornament used in frescoes and mosaics. In the Kievan St. Sophia the fresco ornaments to a certain degree replicated those of the sanctuary mosaics. As for St. Michael's, they clearly followed different models and were most likely made by different craftsmen. However, this whole ensemble shows a tendency to leave behind manuscript models, which most influenced the mosaic ornaments.

Three versions of stylised plant ornament have survived of St. Michael's mosaics, all of them executed on a gold ground. We do not know whether a geometric ornament was ever used in the cathedral mosaics, in any case it did not appear in any Byzantine ensemble closest to it in time. However, it is the Daphni mosaic ornament (ca 1110), extant in the cathedral sanctuary, that is akin to one of the types of ornament of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery of Kiev, which is on a narrow vertical ledge of the south edge of the apse. Devoid of symmetry, the ornament composition, which seems free and natural, is formed by curves of a thin, barely visible green vine stem. Its rounded offshoots end with simple polychrome five- and three-petal floral motifs with a distinct white outline round the

edges. Their colour range combines shades of pink, and dark and light green. Placed one above the other, they differ in size and shape and vary in colour. Small three-petal motifs located on the sides of the main shapes with the same apparent ease complement the composition. In the main design, ease and elegance, general proportions, correlation and nature of motifs, this pattern is similar to Daphni's ornament, but it has more variations and mobility in St. Michael's mosaics. The same qualities distinguish this ornament from rather rare variants of this kind in Greek codices<sup>31</sup>. It seems to anticipate the development of this type of ornament as reflected in the mid-12th century mosaics of the Martorana in Palermo.

Characteristically, an ornament of quite a different type, which would be difficult to imagine in the Kievan St. Sophia mosaics, is on the opposite ledge of the north end of the apse. However, the combination of ornamental bands in the sanctuary of St. Michael's Church in Oster was just as unusual. The ornament consists of four-petal rosettes put in a row one above the other. Placed in the centre, they almost touch the thin strips of the border. In the intervals between large petals arranged crosswise, with distinct white outlines, there are small and short petal elements, which make the overall contours look almost rhomboid. Triangular planes on both sides of the rosettes have half-rosettes adjoining

the border frames. These motifs, of green, grey and pink colours, fill the entire composition field like an unbroken pattern, so that there is very little gold ground to be seen.

This type of ornament, the same as the quatrefoil motifs, goes back to ancient art and is found in 9th-century mosaics of the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople, the Nea Moni Monastery and the church of the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos (late 11th century).

The *krinon* frieze under the *Eucharist* is the most unusual in the mosaics of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery of Kiev. Devoid of rounded stem frames, which connect them through intermediate shapes and are traditional for the floral-and-petal ornament, the *krinons* occupy almost the entire field of the frieze. Massive and significant as a frieze composition basis, they are enhanced by the nature of the intermediate elements, which lack any semblance of natural forms, however fantastic. Next to them laconic *krinons* with a large three-part core and elongated lower petals seem even larger and more expressive, all the more so since they are painted in the “heavy” dark cherry and dark green colours.

The location of the floral-and-petal ornament in St. Michael's Church of Oster largely conditioned its interpretation tendencies (no medallion shapes; the use of isolated, independent floral motifs, not related, but barely touching each other; the completion of the ornamental row with motifs of a different shape and type, this time freely curved), which found greater reflection in St. Michael's mosaics.

There are typologically similar friezes in the Daphni narthex and naos mosaics. They feature small *krinon* shapes alternating with lotus flowers, their stems connected. Yet, in this case similar typology makes the difference in the interpretation of the ornament even more obvious. The intermediate floral shapes of St. Michael's mosaics are so stylised as to completely lose likeness with any natural prototype. At the same time, these elements visually make divergent *krinon* stems seem taller, as if fixing them in a certain position. Thus, visually, they lighten the *krinons*, which look as if suspended on them, partially offsetting their massiveness and depriving them of stable equilibrium. This combination of massiveness and soaring makes the frieze even more unique and at the same time accords with the interpretation of the figures of the apostles in the *Eucharist* composition above.

The *krinons* in the frieze have two most prominent central motifs, located directly under the throne and corresponding to the two-part division of the *Eucharist*. The sides of the *krinons* are so elongated that they turn inwards, ending in graceful half-palmettes. Both these ornamental shapes and other components of the frieze are so extraordinarily expressive that they seem almost animate.

In this case it is appropriate to recall the words of Cyril of Turov, a representative of 12th-century didactic literature whose works are considered one of the highest achievements of symbolic and allegorical exegesis<sup>32</sup>. He wrote about trees sending forth shoots and fragrant flowers of the “faith of Christ” in Russia and about righteous men who have “burgeoned with the flowers of virtue and expect through Christ a regeneration in heaven”<sup>33</sup>.

30. This ornament is comparable to the headpieces of the Greek Tetraevangelion of the second quarter of the 12th century (Roe 1, sheet 10,112) from Oxford (see Hutter, 1977, p. 91).

31. For example, in the headpiece of the Lectionary, second half of the 12th century, probably of metropolitan origin (see: Hutter, 1977, No. 45, Laud, Gr. 32, p. 195).

32. Podskalsky, 1996, p.167.

33. Yeryomin, 1957, p. 416-7.

This transformation of Byzantine ornamental shapes in the mosaic frieze of St. Michael's sanctuary hardly means the existence of some mannerist flavour, although many art processes were particularly poignant and expressive precisely in the regions of the Byzantine Empire. St. Michael's mosaics reflected trends characteristic of the mainstream development of ornamentation in Byzantine monumental painting. They are typical primarily of the Daphni mosaics, which clearly demonstrated a tendency to develop independently of contemporary manuscript ornamentation. If keeping as close as possible to manuscript ornamentation suggested a certain status and quality of painting (as was the case with the mosaics of the Kievan St. Sophia) in the art of the first half of the 11th century when floral-and-petal ornament in Byzantine art was at its peak, in the late 11th – early 12th centuries novelty, on the contrary, presupposed a departure from traditional forms replicated in manuscripts.

Let it be recalled, however, that affinity with illuminated codex ornamentation was characteristic, above all, of the ensemble of the St. Sophia of Kiev: the Hosios Loukas, Nea Moni and St. Sophia of Ohrid are phenomena of a somewhat different order, less dependent, as it seems, on Constantinople tastes. Now if the Kievan St. Sophia can be regarded as a monument where they manifested themselves most fully and clearly, the mosaics of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery of Kiev demonstrated the new trends more definitely and decisively than the Daphni mosaics.

During that period, a striving after immutability and repetition in the world of ornament gave way to fantasy and experiments with familiar shapes used in different combinations or separately. It was the beginning of a process that was to find the most graphic manifestation in the Byzantine art of the late 13th – early 14th centuries. Ornament in monumental painting increasingly gained ground as a phenomenon independent of other forms of artistic activity, and, primarily, of manuscript ornamentation, drawing somewhat closer to fabric ornament. As for manuscript ornamentation, it showed reverse dependence now and then, as exemplified by the Mstislav Gospel (1113-1117).

From the point of view of typology, the ornament used in this manuscript to frame the miniatures with the evangelists is very close to the Ostromir Gospel. However, its style had undergone changes similar to those in St. Michael's mosaic ornament, matching the general trends in the development of ornamental forms. This is especially noticeable when the miniature frames are compared with the representations of St. John and St. Mark inscribed in quatrefoils.

The fact that the creator of the Mstislav Gospel replicated and even enhanced the distinguishing features of the preceding codex is evidence that the latter served as reference. All the more noticeable are the attempts at independent solutions, especially in the St. Mark miniature. It reproduces the same quatrefoil aligned with a square inside a rectangle, which creates a complex octahedron contour enclosing the figure of the evangelist. But the seeming enlargement of the upper right part in the Ostromir Gospel miniature, because St. Mark's figure was shifted to the left, indeed causes a disproportion in the Mstislav Gospel. Mostly because of this, the middle parts of the ornamental border framing the quatrefoil in the Mstislav Gospel do not fit into the miniature's general contour. Everything in it is pointed, mobile and flexible, yet not exactly fitting into the occupied plane. The combination of similar variants of the same ornament here lacks the harmony of the St. John miniature, although it too has features derived from the preceding codex.

The St. John miniature is characterised by an uneven filling of intervals between the hemispherical quatrefoils, which merge with them to form a single contour. In the Ostromir Gospel the parts on the left are somewhat enlarged, which increases the feeling of the "whirling" movement of the entire structure in different planes at that. In the Mstislav Gospel, the shape filling the upper left interval is so much larger in relation to all the rest that it not only equals the quatrefoil arcs in size and configuration, but even goes beyond them. As a result the general outline of the miniature is less clear-cut, elaborate and decorative compared with the "original". It seems blurred and barely elaborated, including due to the straightening of small semi-circular intermediary elements between the quatrefoils proper and additional parts in the intervals between them.

Meanwhile, the feeling of whirling did not weaken in the Mstislav Gospel miniature, but became stronger, mainly due to the interpretation of ornamental motifs. The movement, as if given impetus by an external force, became internal. The border fram-

ing the quatrefoil hemispheres has ten floral-and-petal forms in the Ostromir Gospel, and seven in the Mstislav Gospel. Static and small in the Ostromir Gospel, they are larger here, elongated through their middle petal, freely positioned on the gold ground and subtly curved. Their multidirectional movement is clearly perceptible, despite the fact that the extremely thinned out stem connecting them looks more like tendrils. The small red petals connected with the main floral-and-petal border elements in the Ostromir Gospel broke away from them and seem to be soaring in the Mstislav Gospel.

The treatment of large *krinons* between the quatrefoil forms is also different. They are not so much bigger as more complex in their configuration, more flexible and generally far more expressive than similar elements in the Ostromir Gospel. Each of the four corner *krinons* is interpreted in a different way, but all of them are carefully elaborated and not treated as planar shapes. Their outer petals are not only extended, but also curved, adding to dynamic tension.

In the miniature borders everything is slightly shifted and exaggerated, the ornamental forms enlarged. They are imbued with tension and excitement that are inherent in the characters of this scene. Sophistication, complex pattern, flexibility, elegance of the overall ornamental composition and its individual components, general expressiveness and the emotional charge of the decoration stepping up the excitement and tension of the scene and transforming the ornament from the category of "accompaniment" and ornamentation to the category of interpretation of the inner state of the characters are the new qualities that distinguish the ornament of the Mstislav Gospel miniature from the preceding artifact (miniature borders with St. Matthew and St. Luke show more affinity with the Ostromir Gospel).

These features are also partly inherent in the mosaic ornament of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, which adds weight to the belief that Kiev craftsmen participated in the making of the manuscript. Moreover, the rarest methods of executing gold hatching in individual miniatures of the Mstislav Gospel – scratching through tempera paint to the gold ground underneath<sup>34</sup>, which produces a special effect reminiscent of mosaic – are also indicative of a certain link between the two monuments.

The ornamentation of the Mstislav Gospel's headpieces is of an entirely different nature, wonderful and extraordinary in its own way, especially in the large U-shaped headpiece on sheet 2. In all likelihood, they were made by another craftsman, as attested by the interpretation of the ornament, the colour palette and techniques of executing the gold background.

First of all, the ornamental forms change their nature here: they are not only more complicated, but become sort of detachable, consisting of a set of elements not always touching each other. Their "independence" is emphasised by colour. In traditional examples of the floral-and-petal ornament, the insides of the elements the complex *krinons* were made of were usually painted the same colour as the outer curving edges highlighted by a thin outline. The Mstislav Gospel headpiece has a different colour scheme with predominantly red and gold instead of deep blue, green and small specks of red. What is more important, the interaction of colours has changed – red petals have green, blue and black insides, and green and blue – red insides, outlined in white and yellow. It would be wrong to say that the colour palette of the Mstislav Gospel large headpiece is devoid of harmony, but, certainly, it has a different character; its motley colours showing a somewhat different taste, perhaps of the local, Novgorod milieu.

The five small headpieces are also original in their own way. Some of them are typologically close to the Ostromir Gospel ornament, and some – to the ornament in the window openings in the naos of the St. Nicholas Cathedral, also commissioned by Prince Mstislav circa 1120. The elements of one

of the headpieces, as well as the motifs of metal wares in general, which shows that ornamental forms passed on from one medium to another, a characteristic feature of the time.

No less unique features distinguished the ornament in the wall painting of the St. Sophia of Novgorod, the first stage of which dates from around 1109. Initially it did not cover all the surfaces in the church interior. Frescoes decorated the domical vault, the drum of the central dome, the vaults of the cross under the dome, wall arches, the upper parts of the walls (perhaps only the lunettes) and piers (fragments of wall painting have survived only on a couple of east piers). Light base paint covered the remaining surfaces (i.e. most of the surfaces inside the church). Its

34. Recent research made by E.I. Serebryakova and G.Z. Bykova has confirmed this observation made way back by Simoni (Simoni, 1904; Simoni, 1910 (introduction)).

bright graphic finish imitated quadra masonry alternating with plinthiform bricks, apparently similar to those used in church façade decoration.

Judging by descriptions, tracings and small surviving fragments, the wall painting ornament in the St. Sophia of Novgorod, just as that of St. Sophia of Kiev, adorned the drum window jambs, sides of wall arches, pier lesenes in the sanctuary and framed the sides of the synthronos. However, the complex and diverse decoration design of the basement of the Kiev cathedral, which made use of multiple versions of imitation opus sectile, was not used in the St. Sofia of Novgorod. The lower parts of the piers in the sanctuary area (at least the north side of the southeast pier between the diaconicon and outer south nave) had wavy stripes – a rather primitive reproduction of marble panels. It was not even an imitation of stone texture, but a kind of ornamental method. Painting imitating marble also adorned the doorways in the church sanctuary. In particular, the doorway of the diaconicon had an ornament “in the form of coloured vertical stripes of the same width”, with an alternation of white, red, yellow and green stripes<sup>35</sup>.

In any case, the eastern part of the church had ornament on such a scale and executed with such care that hardly presupposed its use in this spatial area alone, although, of course, initially there were instances when only the sanctuary of the church was decorated. The quantity, size and types of ornament, the very specifics of the decorative programme, even the way the wall above the synthronos was decorated, which can be traced to the decoration of the Kievan St. Sophia sanctuary, may indicate a more ambitious concept of wall painting in the St. Sophia of Novgorod, which for some reason was not implemented.

The ornament on the window jambs of the central dome drum (extant in fragments, as well as sketches and copies made by V.V. Suslov) at present gives the best idea of the ornament of St. Sophia in Novgorod. Considerably large in size according to the occupied planes (height 3.5 m, width about 0.7 m), it is of the stylised plant ribbon ornament type used in several variants. All of them are characterised by tight, dense and dynamic forms. The colour palette of the ornament on the window jambs of the drum, as far as one can judge, was polychrome with a pattern of white ribbons on blue ground and red and ochre tones inside the main elements.

Some of the ornament variants go back to the Kievan St. Sophia ornament. This refers to the vertical panels on the east window jambs of the drum. Their composition consists of a wavy vine stem, with massive offshoots in the axils curved backwards and ending in half-palmettes. This ornament is executed rather professionally, clearly and concisely, which is also true of all the other ones in the drum. The curves of the vines are less steep, but more distinct, dynamic and resilient than in many variants of the Kievan St. Sophia ornament, the scale is slightly larger and the stems are thicker, due to the location of the ornament, among other things. The vine stem in certain areas (before branching out) is highlighted by double annular ligaments as if fastened in the middle by a rod—a detail found in the decoration of the Church of St. Michael of the Vydubichi Monastery. The ring-shaped ligaments were also marked on the borders of the composition, which was not typical of earlier ornamentation. Significantly, that type of ornament was located on the east window of the drum.

The ornamental panels on the north and south window jambs of the drum are typologically homogeneous. Their composition is based on palmettes (presented as a mirror reflection), which are inscribed into triangles formed by a geometrised stem. This particular variant was used repeatedly in the ornamental repertoire of the Kievan St. Sophia. It is also characteristic of the ornamentation of headpieces and miniature borders, in particular, of the Mstislav Gospel.

The ornament on the west window jambs of the central dome drum also goes back to St. Sophia's decoration. Its composition is based on the alternation of bifurcated palmettes with their outer petals elongated and curved toward the center, a pointed core and a large ring-shaped ligament at the bottom. They are given vertically and presented as mirror images. Here, too, a wavy stem, its ligament marked by two parallel lines, serves as a connecting and organising motif. Similar elements exist on palmettes themselves and on the border strip. Such compositions, transformed from simpler horizontal models used in Greek manuscript headpieces, are quite frequent in St. Sophia's ornamental repertoire.

A slightly different variant of the same type is on the panels on the southwest window jambs and has lyre-shaped stems and branches ending in half-palmettes.

Conversely, the variant of the ornament on the northeast window jambs reproduces a somewhat simplified composition design of the frescoes of St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, derived from stone carving. They are medallions with palmettes inside connected by annular elements. In addition to simplifying and enlarging the constituent elements, the ornamentation of the St. Sophia of Novgorod has the same characteristic details – annular stem ligaments and border strips.

And finally, there is an unusual combination and a set of elements in the ornament on the southeast window jambs. It combines motifs interpreting elements of stone, wood or bark carving, and fresco ornament. In this case, border strips, as well as other ornamental elements with annular ligaments, are fully integrated into the overall composition because they turn into half-palmettes and curving loops.

The types of ornament decorating the window jambs of the drum were also reproduced elsewhere in the church. Judging by V.V. Suslov's sketch, on the west side of the southeast dome pier there was a pattern close to the ornament on the east window jambs of the central domical drum, and in some way to the ornament of St. Michael's Church of the Vydubichi Monastery.

Despite the obvious affinity with the ornamentation of the Kievan St. Sophia, the Novgorod cathedral ornament, to judge by the reviewed variants, had many original features. What they shared in common was the use of a stylised foliate ribbon ornament, similar overall composition schemes, polychrome background along with geometric patterns, as far as we can judge, of only one type – the so-called crenate, stepped ornament (a fragment has survived only on the west face of the pylon between the credence and the main altar). Also extant is the traditional image of a wavy vine of an “abstract type” on the sides of the wall arches.

But the floral-and-petal pattern, so significant in the ensemble of the Kievan St. Sophia, both in mosaics and in frescoes, apparently, was not part of the main ornamental repertoire of the St. Sophia of Novgorod. In this case it was probably due to both the general trends of church ornamentation development and practical considerations, that is, the difficulty of reproduction. A striving after integrity and uniformity was, apparently, also of certain importance. However, despite seeming typological uniformity, the themes of the ornamental repertoire of the St. Sophia of Novgorod reveal a wealth of sources. They offer evidence of not only continuity with the decoration of the Kievan St. Sophia, but also of a good command of ornamental resources of other ensembles of the second quarter of the 11th century, even more than of the monuments of the late 10th – early 12th centuries.

Given the indisputable typological affinity with the decoration of the Kievan St. Sophia, the ornamentation of the St. Sophia of Novgorod is much further away from the manuscript samples replicated in the mosaics of the Kiev cathedral and interpreted in its frescoes. It is not as refined, even though it is well thought-out and professionally executed. It has laconic design and absolute freedom in the treatment of motifs, leaving much room for improvisation. On the whole, its interpretation is consistent with another stage of artistic development.

The ornament in the wall painting of the Novgorod St. Nicholas Cathedral (ca 1120), commissioned by Prince Mstislav, is different. We do not know what role it played in the cathedral's overall ornamentation system, since only minor fragments have survived, mostly extant ornaments on the naos window jambs, the sanctuary apse, the central dome drum and the narthex. They are all of the same type of stylised foliate ribbon ornament, white on polychrome, usually bright terracotta and green ground. However, judging by the diversity of its variants, the ornament was of great importance in the cathedral's wall painting.

The variations of the ornament extant on drum window jambs are quite traditional. Basically, they are a curved vine stem with complex offshoots ending in half-palmettes in the northwest window; the simplest palmettes in triangular fields formed by the bends of a geometrised stem in the north window; tripartite palmettes in a heart-shaped frame fastened together by annular ligaments (going back to manuscript ornamentation) in the southeast window; complicated palmettes in the bends of the vine stem on the southwest window jambs.

Large-scale ornamental panels on window jambs of the sanctuary apse are equally traditional. They are, basically, vari-

35. Lifshits, Sarabianov, Tsarevskaya, 2004, p. 228.



ants of the vine, which are reminiscent, both typologically and stylistically, of fresco ornaments in the Kievan St. Sophia.

The most original ornamentation is on naos window jambs. In the western part of the south wall and the western part of the north wall.

The ornament on the west window jambs of the central part of the south wall.

However, the ornament of the St. Nicholas Cathedral – powerful, large-scale in the naos, sanctuary window jambs and, to a lesser degree, in the drum – seems to be deliberately unlike that of the Kievan St. Sophia. Its active, bright local colour palette devoid of tonal nuances and complex background is already a sign of a different epoch. This is clearly manifested in the extant fragments of the ornamental panels in the church narthex, resembling the ornament on the window jambs of the Church of St. Michael of the Vyduichi Monastery with its thin, dryish ribbon forms with characteristic annular ligaments outlined in black, and a bright background.

A different type of ornament has survived on the south side of the west lesene of the passage from the central nave to the narthex of the St. Nicholas Cathedral. This casually painted white vine with branches of different thickness and a blurred pattern on a turquoise background is like a kind of negative image or ill-thought out tracing. Familiar, for example, from the frescoes of the St. Sophia of Ohrid and other Byzantine monuments from the mid-11th century, this type of ornament was until then not encountered in Russia, but was to be used and developed in future Novgorod monuments and even to gain priority in some cases, for instance, in the frescoes in the church of the Antoniev (St. Anthony's) Monastery.

The same insight into the future can be observed in the decoration of the Yuriev Gospel made in the 1120s for the Novgorod Prince's Yuriev (St. George's) Monastery and commissioned by its hegumen (1119-1128). It consists of an architectural frontispiece, a large and several small headpieces and also includes 65 initials. All of them, just as the frontispiece, are traced in bright vermilion on white parchment, and are purely graphical in nature.

It is believed that this outline drawing was not meant to be coloured later, but was designed the way it is. One could agree with that as far as the initials are concerned, which are, typologically, extremely diverse. But it is difficult to accept this supposition about the frontispiece, although its bright local colours are in keeping with the general trends of ornament development. It is made in the same way as the frontispiece of *Izbornik of Sviatoslav* (see sheet 3), representing a kind of cross-section of the church, the only difference being the rectangular opening in the middle part intended for a miniature, instead of an arched one as in the *Izbornik*. The fact that this opening was not filled with an image, just as the narrow rectangular box underneath apparently reserved for the text, only goes to prove that the original idea (at least for this Gospel sheet) remained unfinished. Besides, the surface of the frontispiece, completely covered with a pattern (including over thirteen varieties of ornament), has a strip with a crenate ornament along the edge of the architectural form, reminding one of a frontispiece of the *Izbornik of Sviatoslav* (sheet 128); next to it is a band with a traditional floral-and-petal ornament. The medallions in it, unlike the polychrome *krinons* in the *Izbornik* frontispiece (sheet 3) typical of this type of ornament, remained unfilled clearly to be painted later. The difference in the ornament design is another proof of the preliminary nature of the drawing in the Yuriev Gospel frontispiece – the lower medallion in the right side is at a different level than the left one, which clearly upsets the whole system.

All the 65 initials of the Yuriev Gospel also outlined in vermilion are unusually diverse. They never repeat themselves and represent, as it were, a summary of all types of Byzantine initials, a sort of album of different examples of Byzantine style<sup>36</sup>. In addition to the execution technique, they differ from the preceding Russian manuscripts in the abundant use, along with plant motifs, of zoomorphic motifs, both recognizable and fantastic (leopards, horses, donkeys, dogs, bears, camels, unicorns, dragons, peacocks, pheasants, herons and others) and anthropomorphic (a hand with a branch, human figure, human head with a bird's torso, masks). The Yuriev Gospel also has initials which are actually illustrations to the text next to them<sup>37</sup>. At the same time there are initials with flexible loops tied in knots, with a serpentine creature at the end, and initials consisting of a broken guilloche, coupled with a *krinon*, which allows us to consider them as a sort of transitional forms, presaging the further development of ornamentation in old Russian manuscripts, which initially combined a Byzantine

initial with fantastic zoomorphic elements and guilloche and then became almost completely teratological.

To sum up, we can say that ornament samples introduced in Russia fell on extremely fertile ground. We do not know much about how the way was paved – an extraordinary interest in ornament and the flowering of ornamental culture in Byzantine art were not the only constituents of the process. What we do know for certain is that early Russian art did not experience such a boom in this sphere of artistic activity until the 16th - 17th centuries.

There are distinct trends in the development of ornamental forms in early Russian painting in the 11th - first quarter of the 12th century, despite the fact that many monuments were lost and only fragments of others have survived. In the first half of the 11th century one could speak of the purity of perception and exact reproduction of the most advanced and accomplished contemporary examples of Byzantine ornament. One should also mention the use of the ornamental repertoire of the pre-iconoclastic period, which was characteristic of Byzantine art, too, but clearly seen in the works created on the Russian soil. In the first decades of the 12th century ornament in monumental painting became more independent of manuscript samples, which followed the general development trend of Byzantine art. Along with that the ornamental decoration of early Russian painting demonstrated new features and a special colour palette, more vivid and laconic, which bespoke national characteristics per se as well as reflected a shift of focus onto another range of monuments.

36. Protasieva, 1974, p. 215.

37. For example, sheet 198 has the myrrh-bearers at the Holy Sepulchre, and sheet 144 a donkey covered with a cloth next to the description of the Entry into Jerusalem,

## Подписи к иллюстрациям

### р. 538

#### 513

Ostromir Gospel, 1056-1057, miniature with St. John the Evangelist and Prokhor. Detail of ornament. Russian National Library, Fn. I. 5. Sheet 1 (rev)

#### 514

Ostromir Gospel, miniature with St. Mark the Evangelist. Detail of ornament, sheet 126,

#### 515.

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 87

#### 516

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 127

#### 517.

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 58

#### 518.

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 239

#### 519

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 256

#### 520

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 281

#### 521.

Ostromir Gospel, ornamental headpiece, sheet 267

#### 522

Miniature of St. Mark the Evangelist, detail of ornament, sheet 126

### р. 540

#### 523.

*Izbornik of Sviatoslav*, miniature, sheet 128 rev.

#### 524

*Izbornik of Sviatoslav*, miniature, sheet, 128 rev.

### р. 541

#### 525

*Izbornik of Sviatoslav*, miniature, 1073, State Historical Museum (GIM), Sin. 1043, sheet 3 rev.

#### 526

*Izbornik of Sviatoslav*, miniature, sheet 3

### р. 542

#### 527

Gertrude's Codex, miniature of Nativity in church interior, 1078-1086, Cividale, National Archaeological Museum, ms. CXXXVI, sheet 9 rev.

#### 528.

Incense burner in the shape of a church, 12th century, forged and embossed gilt silver

#### 529.

Homilies of Gregory of Nazienzus, miniature, ca 1150, Sinai, gr. 339, sheet 4 rev.

#### 530

St. Mark's Basilica, mosaics on the west façade, image of a temple, Venice, 12th century

### р. 544

#### 531

Gertrude's Prayer Book, miniature of Nativity in church interior, detail of ornament, sheet 9 rev.

#### 532

St. Sophia Cathedral of Kiev, 1030s-1040s, ornamental panel, fresco

#### 533

Gertrude's Prayer Book, miniature of Crucifixion, sheet 10

#### 534

Gertrude's Prayer Book, miniature, Apostle Peter with portraits of donators, sheet 5 rev.

#### 535

Bible, 12th century, initial, Dusseldorf, University Library, ms. A. 2

#### 536.

Bible, 12th century, St. John the Evangelist, initial, Madrid, National Library, ms 6, sheet 175

### р. 546

#### 537

Gertrude's Prayer Book, headpiece, sheet 13 rev.

#### 538

Gertrude's Prayer Book, headpiece, sheet 14

#### 539 537

Gertrude's Prayer Book, headpiece, sheet 21 rev.

#### 540

St. Sophia Cathedral of Polotsk, late 11th – first decades of the 12th century, fragment of fresco ornament

#### 541.

Church of St. Michael of Vydbichy Monastery, Kiev, late 11th century, east jamb of the south window in the choir, fragment of fresco ornament

#### 542.

Church of St. Michael of Vydbichy Monastery, Kiev, west jamb of the south window in the choir, fragment of fresco ornament

#### 543

Church of St. Michael of Vydbichy Monastery, Kiev, east jamb of the north window in the choir, fragment of fresco ornament

#### 544

Church of St. Michael of Vydbichy Monastery, Kiev, basement of the narthex, fragment of ornamental fresco panel. Tracing by Y.A. Koreniuk

#### 545

Church of St Michael of Vydbichy Monastery, Kiev, west jamb of the north window in the choir, fragment of fresco ornament

#### 546

Church of St. Sophia of Ohrid, 1042-1055, ornamental fresco composition

### р. 548

#### 547

St. Michael's Church of Oster township, apse, detail of fresco ornament, sketch (after N. Makarenko)

#### 548

St. Michael's Church of Oster, 11th-12th centuries, apse, detail of fresco ornament

#### 549

St. Michael's Church of Oster, apse, detail of fresco ornament, watercolour (after N. Makarenko)

#### 550

- St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, 1112, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- p. 550**
- 551**  
St. Sophia Cathedral of Kiev, fragment of fresco ornament
- 552**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, ca 1112, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 553**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 554**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 555**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- p. 552**
- 556**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 557**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 558**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 559**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- 560**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental fresco composition
- p. 554**
- 561**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, ornamental mosaic composition
- 562**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, ornamental mosaic composition
- 563**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, fragment of ornamental frieze
- p. 556**
- 564**  
St. Michael's Cathedral of the Golden-Domed Monastery, Kiev, ornamental mosaic frieze
- p. 558**
- 565**  
Mstislav Gospel, between 1113 and 1117, miniature of St. Mark the Evangelist, detail of ornament, State Historical Museum (GIM), Sin. 1203, sheet 123 rev
- 566**  
Mstislav Gospel, miniature of St. John the Evangelist with Prokhor, detail of ornament, sheet 1 rev.
- 567**  
Mstislav Gospel, miniature of St. Mark the Evangelist, detail of ornament, sheet 123 rev.
- 568**  
Mstislav Gospel, ornamental headpiece
- 569**  
Mstislav Gospel, ornamental headpiece
- 570**  
Mstislav Gospel, ornamental headpiece
- p. 561**
- Cathedral of St. Sophia of Novgorod, 1109, ornamental fresco compositions, schemes (after Lifshits, Sarabianov, Tsarevskaja, 2004)
- 571**  
East window jamb of the central dome drum
- 572**  
North window jamb of the central dome drum
- 573**  
South window jamb of the central dome drum
- 574**  
West window jamb of the central dome drum
- 575**  
Southwest window jamb of the central dome drum
- 576**  
Northwest window jamb of the central dome drum
- 577**  
Northeast window jamb of the central dome drum
- 578**  
Southeast window jamb of the central dome drum
- 579**  
Cathedral of St. Sophia of Novgorod, west face of the southeast domical pier, fragment of ornamental composition. Copied by V.V. Suslov. Museum of the Academy of Fine Arts
- p. 562**
- 580**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral, naos, window soffit, western part of the north wall, ornamental fresco composition
- 581**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral of Novgorod, ca 1120, naos, right jamb of window, western part of the north wall, ornamental fresco composition
- 582**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral, naos, right jamb of window, western part of the south wall, ornamental fresco composition
- 583**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral, sanctuary apse, right jamb of south window, ornamental fresco composition
- 584**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral, naos, right jamb of west window, central part of the south wall, ornamental fresco composition
- 585**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral, sanctuary apse, north window jamb, ornamental fresco composition
- p. 565**
- 586**  
St. Nicholas Cathedral, narthex, south wall window jamb, ornamental fresco composition

**587**

St. Nicholas Cathedral, south side of lesene, passage from central nave to narthex, ornamental fresco composition

**p. 567**

**588**

Yuriev Gospel, 1119-1128, miniature frontispiece, State Historical Museum (GIM), Sin. 1003, sheet 1 rev.

**589**

Yuriev Gospel, initials (after the album: V.I. Butovsky, *History of the Russian Ornament of the 10th-16th Centuries*, Moscow, 1997, tables 19-21)