

ANCIENT RUTHENIAN ARTISTIC TRADITIONS OF KHOLM IN THE CULTURAL SPACE OF MEDIEVAL CENTRAL EUROPE

TRADIÇÕES ARTÍSTICAS RUTENIAS ANTIGAS DE KHOLM NO ESPAÇO CULTURAL DA EUROPA CENTRAL MEDIEVAL

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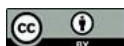
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Abstract

The publication is devoted to a cross-analysis of sources in which the ancient Ruthenian city of Kholm, now the county town of Chełm in the Lublin Voivodeship (Poland), appears as a prominent artistic center of medieval Ukraine-Rus at the intersection of Western European and Byzantine cultures. The relevance of the study is associated with the important task of defending cultural values that have long been eroded as inferior or insignificant, or demonstrated to the world only as a peripheral component of northeastern culture. New scientific research by Ukrainian experts in the fields of iconography, archeology, architecture, and art history is presented by the authors to strengthen and update the chronicle history of Princely Kholm and its temples. The authors highlight specific architectural and iconographic features of Kholm monuments and related details in the cities of Ukraine-Rus, Western Europe to illustrate the historical process of the middle of the 13th

Resumo

A publicação é dedicada a uma análise cruzada de fontes nas quais a antiga cidade rutena de Kholm, atualmente sede do município de Chełm, na voivódia de Lublin (Polônia), aparece como um importante centro artístico da Ucrânia-Rus medieval, na intersecção das culturas ocidental europeia e bizantina. A relevância do estudo está associada à importante tarefa de defender valores culturais que há muito tempo são menosprezados como inferiores ou insignificantes, ou apresentados ao mundo apenas como um componente periférico da cultura do nordeste. Novas pesquisas científicas realizadas por especialistas ucranianos nas áreas de iconografia, arqueologia, arquitetura e história da arte são apresentadas pelos autores para fortalecer e atualizar a história cronológica da princesa Kholm e seus templos. Os autores destacam características arquitetônicas e iconográficas específicas dos monumentos de Kholm e detalhes relacionados



century, and the little-known artistic life of that era. The article represents a deepening of studies in the domain of Ukrainian national historical and artistic heritage for an adequate understanding of the artistic issues of Princely Kholm of the 13th century in its own historical context.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage. Art. Icon Painting. Iconography. Architectural Monuments. Sacred Art. Décor. Byzantine Culture. Art of Medieval Europe. Kholm. Halych.

nas cidades da Ucrânia-Rus e da Europa Ocidental para ilustrar o processo histórico de meados do século XIII e a vida artística pouco conhecida daquela época. O artigo representa um aprofundamento dos estudos no domínio do patrimônio histórico e artístico nacional ucraniano para uma compreensão adequada das questões artísticas do Principado de Kholm do século XIII em seu próprio contexto histórico.

Palavras-chave: Patrimônio Cultural. Arte. Pintura de Ícones. Iconografia. Monumentos Arquitetônicos. Arte Sacra. Decoração. Cultura Bizantina. Arte da Europa Medieval. Kholm. Halych.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the first third of the 13th century, next to Halych, Kholm became a new powerful urban center of the Galicia-Volyn land. The architectural monuments of this city at one time aroused the admiration and amazement of the chronicler. Danylo Romanovych built several churches in Kholm in the first half of the 13th century, which burned down in the fire of 1259, that destroyed the rich city. Namely from the chronicle account of this fire, one can learn about the most significant temple buildings of the city. The spatial and artistic aspects of the furnishings of these temples, which had previously been studied only fragmentarily, will be outlined below. By correcting and supplementing knowledge about the chronicle and real Kholm as a cultural princely capital of the 13th century, the authors of this publication join a valuable discourse that requires longer and deeper interdisciplinary and international research based on a wider source base.

Culturological problems related to the princely city of Kholm were touched upon in their works by Ukrainian and foreign scholars. One of the first to turn to the historical and artistic achievements of ancient Kholm was the Ukrainian scholar Volodymyr Sichynskyi [1]. The history of the of Kholm founding and the genesis of its artistic monuments is considered to the works of Oleksandr Baran [2; 3]. Mykola Kotlyar's [4; 5; 6] research reveals the significance of the princely Kholm in the context of historical processes in Eastern Europe. The artistic heritage of the Galician land and Volyn, in particular, the city of Kholm of the princely period, became the subject of scientific

interest of art historian Volodymyr Aleksandrowicz [7-11]. Chronicle texts about Kholm were studied by the historian of medieval art Vasyl Putsko. He analyzed the architectural structures of the Kholm in princely era period, focusing on international artistic connections, evident in the example of Kholm architecture [12; 13]. Krakow researcher Malgorzata Smorag-Rozycka, studying the history of the Eastern European region, drew attention to the texts of the Galician-Volyn Chronicle with a description of Kholm architecture of the 13th century. To the analysis of the chronicle data, the researcher added the results of archaeological research conducted in the historical part of the city in the 20th century [14; 15].

In connection with the discovery of new painting monuments, particularly in the territory of Volyn, the cultural traditions of Kholm were analyzed in the studies of Vira Svetsitska [16], Volodymyr Ovsichuk [17; 18], Oleh Sydor [19], and other icon painting researchers and art historians [20; 21].

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main empirical basis of the study was the texts of the Ruthenian chronicles and the activities of modern Ukrainian and foreign researchers of medieval art, who to one degree or another touched on the issues of the cultural and artistic heritage of Kholm and other cities of the Galician-Volyn principality. Comparative analysis allowed considering sources from different areas of practical research. To solve the tasks, the method of systemic analysis, sampling of material for the study of texts and their classification, as well as the method of external interpretation were used. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the fact that, based on a comparison of chronicle sources about the construction of princely temples in the city of Kholm with the results of interdisciplinary research, we singled out local features of temple construction and iconography, typical for the medieval West and East, which were characteristic of Kholm during the period of the highest rise of Galician-Volyn statehood.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison and juxtaposition of all sources proves that the monuments

considered in this article belong to the characteristic examples of the art of Ukraine-Rus, demonstrate local characteristics of belonging through the monumentality of forms, linearity, coloristic restraint and laconic expression, despite some pro-European trends of the Romanesque and Gothic styles.

The city of Kholm of the princely period with its cultural and artistic achievements is indicative of the stylistic mutual influences and synthesis of Byzantine, Old Ruthenian, and Western European artistic traditions and their further translations in the architecture, icon painting, and decorative art of Ukraine-Rus.

In 1910–1912, researcher Petro Pokryshkin conducted archaeological excavations in the chronicle Kholm, discovering many architectural details that came from the once lavishly decorated temple. They look like processed blocks of glauconite limestone, known in the chronicle as the “green Kholm stone”. Most of the discovered details were fragments of bases, archivolt, portal jambs, and other parts of the architectural decoration of the sacred monument [22]. “The general nature of the profiling of the architectural details discovered during the excavations in Kholm,” notes archaeologist Pavlo Rappoport, “without a doubt indicates that they belong to the 13th century. These fragments have much in common with the architectural details of the monuments of Volodymir-Suzdal architecture of the 12th – early 13th centuries and even more so with the monuments of Halych”. The researcher considered the details of the Church of Panteleimon in Galicia (Ukraine) [22], which has been preserved almost entirely in its original form, to be particularly similar to the fragments of architectural decoration found in Kholm.

There is no doubt that the Kholm finds originate from stone pre-Mongol churches destroyed by fire during the attack on Kholm by the Tatar commander Kuremsa in 1259. The Galician-Volyn Chronicle provides a description of the city cathedral built in honor of Ivan Chrysostom. Its exterior and interior are described in detail: “And its structure was as follows: four vaults; from each corner - vaults, and they stood on four human heads, carved by one craftsman; three windows were decorated with Roman glass; at the entrance to the altar stood two pillars of solid stone, and vaults on them; and the top above was decorated with golden stars on azure; its inner platform was cast from copper and pure tin, so that it shone like a mirror. Its two doors were decorated with hewn stone – white Galician and green Kholm; carved by one craftsman, Obadiah, their carvings were

of all colors and gold; in front of them, on the back doors, the Savior was made, and on the northern ones, John Chrysostom, so that everyone who looked at them was amazed” [23]. The author of the chronicle in his story places the main emphasis on the original features of the church of St. John Chrysostom, which include elements of plastic decoration, primarily the capitals of the columns that supported the vaults, decorated with carved images of human heads. Art critic Mykola Makarenko rhetorically asked: “Who does not recognize in these short chronicles those typical arches that rest with their heels on carved pilaster capitals decorated with images of a man’s head. These are architectural details characteristic of the 13th century in Western European Romanesque architecture” [24].

Romanesque and Gothic sculpture is characterized by the use of artificial polychromy over stone carving. As a suitable example, one can cite the sculptures of the portals of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, recently discovered by French archaeologists, on which traces of paintings are visible [25].

The expression, which refers to the decoration of the doors, where “the Savior was made, and on the northern ones – Saint John” (Chrysostom), should be understood as an allusion to the reliefs characteristic of Romanesque art, which decorated the tympanums of the portals. It should be noted that carved portals were widespread not only in the decoration of Catholic cathedrals, but also in the architecture of the Eastern Christian tradition, in particular, they were used in the Serbian Studenica [26].

In Romanesque churches, a relief image of Christ the Judge was usually placed above the main portal. It is not entirely clear from the chronicle account whether this was an independent image of the Savior or part of a more extensive composition on the subject of the Last Judgment. There is a special study, the author of which believes that several iconographic schemes were used in the carving of Romanesque tympanums, among which the most popular was “Christ in Glory” [27]. In parallel with this iconographic type, Christ on the throne and the composition Deisis were also depicted. However, regardless of the chosen type, the composition always reinforced the idea of the Last Judgment, reflecting the apocalyptic mood of the Middle Ages. This statement probably applies to the western portal of the church of John Chrysostom in Kholm. In Serbian art history literature, there is a statement that the idea of the Last Judgment was also embodied in the art of the southern Slavs, in particular, in the Church of the Holy Savior

in Dečani (1328–1335) [26].

Interesting artistic parallels in Romanesque and Old Ruthenian art are the “three windows” of the Kholm sanctuary mentioned by the chronicler, which were “decorated with Roman glass”. Already at the end of the 12th century, the tradition of decorating the windows of sacred buildings with stained glass began in the West, which continued throughout the first half of the 12th century, enriching medieval interiors with stained glass compositions of both ornamental and thematic nature. There is evidence that stained glass was used in the construction of Old Ruthenian churches. For example, it is known about the use of colored glass in the cathedral of the Yelets Monastery in Chernihiv [28]. Architectural historian Ivan Mogytych proved that stained glass was part of the complex of artistic decoration of the Church of St. Panteleimon in Galicia [29]. Moreover, during the excavations of a rich boyar dwelling in the craft and trade post of Halych, archaeologist Volodymyr Goncharov managed to establish that colored glass was used in everyday life in the homes of Galicians in the 13th century [30].

We believe that it was not by chance that the author of the Galician-Volyn Chronicle drew attention to the floor of the Kholm Cathedral. The report of archaeologist Pokryshkin states that during the excavations in Kholm, “about 6 poods of an alloy of copper and tin...” were discovered [22].

From the materials of the excavations of the Assumption Cathedral of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery, it is known that in ancient Ruthenian construction the floor was paved with glazed ceramic tiles, and only in some churches mosaics and inlays with colored marble were used [31]. The appearance of the chronicle floor is given by the finds from Bogolyubov, where the floor consisted of polished plates of red copper, carefully soldered at the joints with tin [32].

The attention of many researchers was attracted by the chronicler’s focus on “two pillars of a single stone” at the entrance to the altar [23]. Professor Volodymyr Aleksandrowicz commented on these chronicle lines: “It follows that the church repeated the plan known only from the mentioned Volodymir temple near the rotunda of St. Basil the Great, that is, as one might guess, it was obviously created by the same craftsmen” [11]. In our opinion, a valid argument is given by V. Putsko, who believes that two pillars under the dome could not have been carved from one monolithic stone, but only two pillars of the pre-altar fence. In this case, the chronicler’s words “at the entrance to the

altar”, which meant “the doorpost of the altar entrance” become clear [13].

Pillars made of solid stone blocks were characteristic of Byzantine architecture. Vasyl Putsko has another important guess as a result of reading the chronicle account of the church of John Chrysostom in Kholm. Describing two monolithic stone pillars, the author focuses the reader’s attention on the features of the vault. Apparently, this was an unusual form of altar vault, where the architects used the constructive achievements of early Gothic architecture, as was done in the church of St. Panteleimon in Galicia [33].

Another chronicle description is dedicated to the church of Saints Kuzma and Demyan, built in Kholm by Danylo Romanovych: “It has four pillars, carved from a single stone, that hold up the top; the other pillars are also carved from the same stones; and in the altar in front of the side doors there is also a beautiful image of the Most Holy Dmitry of Thessalonica, brought from afar”. In the history of the sacred art of princely Ukraine-Rus, these lines represent the first documentary evidence of the installation of icons in altars.

The third Kholm temple of the princely foundation, the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, is described much more restrainedly than the previous two: “in size and beauty it is no less than those that were there before, and it was decorated with wonderful icons” [23].

For the visualization of this temple interior, the following message of the chronicler is of great importance: “He also brought a bowl from the land of Hungary made of crimson marble, carved with amazing skill – even snake heads were around it” [23]. The modern Hungarian popular writer and researcher György Rózsa undertook to clarify the place of manufacture of the bowl for water consecration, and this, in his opinion, is the city of Esztergom. As the main argument in favor of the Esztergom origin of the bowl, D. Rózsa considers the chronicle mention that it was made of “crimson marble”. Natural deposits of such stone in Hungary are only in the vicinity of Esztergom [34].

The above-mentioned medievalist Putsko expresses interesting thoughts about the marble baptismal font from the Kholm Cathedral, discussing the origin of the baptismal font namely from Hungary, with which Prince Danylo Romanovych really maintained interstate ties [24]. The researcher notes that among the known monuments of Romanesque sculpture of Hungarian origin, there is not a single similar artifact. Baptismal fonts from Poland, neighboring Ukraine, also do not have carvings of a

teratological nature. However, “snake heads” were a typical motif in the ornamental carving of Scandinavian cult objects. Putsko concludes: “It is difficult to determine how this motif ended up on the marble baptismal font from Hungary, however, taking into account the wide migration of medieval subjects, this case seems quite natural” [13].

Thanks to the chronicler’s precise description of the location of the Hungarian bowl in the interior of the church, we learn about another work of local decorative and applied art – “church doors, which are called royal” [23]. In addition, the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kholm had a baptistery, and therefore Bishop John ordered to make a beautiful wooden product with a gilded interior, in which researchers unanimously recognize the ciborium above the throne.

In describing the monumental construction of Kholm, the chronicler limited himself to describing only three churches. He also mentions the Kholm donjon: “And the tower stood in the middle of the city, high, so that it could be used to attack from all around the city. In the bottom part, it was built of stone fifteen cubits high, and itself was made of carved wood and whitened like cheese, it shone on all sides, near it there was a studenets, that is, a well, which was thirty-five fathoms deep” [23]. As it is known, the tradition of building defensive towers in cities, the so-called donjons, was initiated in Western European defensive art [35].

Having described the architectural monuments of the princely Kholm, the author of the Chronicle of Rus moves to the outskirts of the city, where he was fascinated by another structure – a stone pillar with a sculptural image of an eagle. Here is a description of a unique example of a separate monument in ancient Rus art: “Beyond the field from the Kholm city, there also stands a stone tower, and on it – a carved stone eagle; the height of the stone is ten cubits, and with the tops and bases – twelve cubits” [23].

In addition to the Kholm monument, only one example of the construction of a similar structure is known in Rus: in front of the palace temple in Bogolyubov, there also stood a pillar crowned with a four-headed capital. Art critic Georgy Wagner linked the appearance of such objects with the tradition of installing sacred monuments, which had developed in Byzantium back in the Justinian period [36]. It is obvious that the Kholm monument had a secular character, and its image expressed a certain heraldic idea. Makarenko argued that the heads with footrests from the temple of John Chrysostom, as well as the sculptural image of an eagle on a pillar, are typical of Romanesque art [25].

In ancient Rome, the eagle was considered a symbol of the god Jupiter, from where its symbolism and iconography were adopted by Christian art [37].

Ioannisyian believes that “the Kholm column reflects not the Eastern Christian tradition of erecting sacred monuments, but the Western one, associated with the idea of establishing power. In Romanesque art, this tradition took root back in the Carolingian era, a vivid example of which is the famous statues of Charlemagne and Otto. The closest analogy to the Kholm monument is considered to be a work of Romanesque art in Germany - a bronze lion, which was erected in 1166 by Duke Henry the Lion of Brunswick in front of the gates of his castle [25]. The image of an eagle on a tall pillar about 4 m high not only served as a heraldic emblem, but also emphasized the greatness of the new capital of Danylo of Galicia in Kholm.

The Mongol-Tatar invasion of Rus in the middle of the 13th century led to the collapse of economic relations and the almost complete loss of political independence of the Old Rus state. For some time, monumental church construction was stopped. A few decades after the tragic events of 1237–1241, it began to be restored, largely due to contacts with the world of European architecture. The active penetration of late Romanesque and early Gothic elements into the architecture of the Galicia-Volyn principality led to the use of a new material - block brick borrowed from the West. However, the Old Rus types and stylistics of the forms of new churches built at the turn of the 13th–14th centuries in Volyn in the cities of Volodymyr, Lyubomly, and Lutsk were preserved.

Icon painting of the Galician land and Volyn in the 12th–13th centuries developed in conditions of close contacts of the Galician princes with the rulers of many European countries, stylistic inspirations from the West, active patronage of individual nobles. The icon painting of this period preserves the ancient traditions of the art of Ukraine-Rus, and, therefore, of Byzantine prototypes with their defining feature - proximity to monumental painting in compositional order due to the clarity of contours, generalization of the silhouette and majestic staticity.

The Galician-Volynian chronicler indicated that in the Kholm church of St. John Chrysostom, the prince “decorated the icons brought from Kyiv with precious stones and golden beads, in particular, the icon of Savior, the Most Pure Theotokos, which his sister Theodore gave him from the Kyiv monastery of the saint” [23]. This happened in 1259,

and the following year the ruler of Galician-Volyn Rus “built...also a very large church in the town of Kholm in honor of the Most Holy Ever-Virgin Mary, no less in size and beauty than those that existed before, and decorated it with wonderful icons” [23].

Among the most famous icons of that time, there is the Kholm Virgin Mary - a Byzantine icon of the classical era, which became one of the revered shrines of the Galician-Volyn principality. In terms of the manner of writing, the icon of the Kholm Virgin Mary belongs to the masterpieces of the classical Byzantine style, as it preserves some features of the Hellenistic tradition that were cultivated in Byzantium.

According to art historian Lyudmila Milyaeva, the iconographic type of the Kholm Mother of God is very rare in East Slavic lands, but quite widespread in the Middle East, in particular, in Sinai, as well as on Athos and in Italy [38].

The ambiguity of the image lies primarily in the position of the Christ-child on Mary's arm. The Virgin Mary on the icon is perceived as a tabernacle, that is, a church in which Christ the priest prays and offers himself as a sacrifice. Lyudmila Milyaeva [39] believes that this iconographic type originates from a 7th-century icon, which is kept in Rome and, as it is known, was created in the pre-iconoclastic period. It is believed that the icon comes from the church of St. Mary of Antiquity and its creator was the evangelist Luke.

The iconographic type of the Virgin-Desiocrates, to which the Kholm icon belongs, according to the attribution of Nikodim Kondakov, originates from the Not-Made-by-Hands image of the Virgin Mary in the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos in Diaspolis (Lydda), near Jerusalem [40].

The spread of this iconographic type in the Balkans is associated with the activities of Sava of Serbia, as indicated by researcher O. Etingof. In her opinion, the image of the Kholm Mother of God has the greatest similarity precisely to the Serbian icons of the Virgin-Desiocrates of the 13th century [41]. In addition, the researcher drew attention to another close analogy – the icon “The Virgin and Child” from the Greek monastery of St. Neil of Rosa in Grottaferrata near Rome, created around 1200, probably at the same time as the Kholm icon. In terms of stylistic features, both icons gravitate towards Constantinople models, which came from the same artistic center [41].

Many icons of the 12th–13th centuries with such an iconographic scheme come from Sinai. In particular, the well-preserved Virgin Mary image from the Monastery of

St. Catherine dates back to the 13th century [42]. In addition, researchers point to another analogy to the icon of the Kholm Mother of God – this is an icon of the 12th–13th centuries from the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos [38]. The Venetian marble relief “Madonna del dacio” from the Cathedral of San Marco, dating back to the 13th century, should be included in the same circle of works on which the Virgin Mary holds the half-reclining Jesus on her left arm. This work stylistically echoes the sandstone relief found on the territory of the Tithe Church in Kyiv [43].

It is worth noting the scientific intuition of Putsko, who in 1994, when the original of the Kholm Mother of God was not yet known (this happened in the summer of 2000), using lithographs of the 19th century, demonstrated the absolute similarity of the iconographic image to the relief from the Tithe Church, and even more so to the image of the Virgin Mary with the Jesus Child on the famous Bilogorodsk gold hryvnia [12]. Thus, the scientist not only determined the date of the precious amulet - the 12th century, but also revealed the enormous popularity of the Kholm Mother of God icon among the ancient Ruthenian population of the region, because its image was reproduced both in sculpture and in decorative art.

We add that the version of the origin of the Kholm miraculous icon of the Mother of God from the Constantinople workshop of the highest artistic level is supported by art historian Volodymyr Aleksandrowicz [9].

One of the researchers of the Kholm Virgin Mary, Olena Romanyuk, attached special importance to the inscription found on the back of the icon. Here, in Greek letters, “KYTIAPICΣΘ” is displayed. The inscription was made later, by a statute common in the 17th century. It emphasizes the importance that was given to the cypress base as the material carrier of the image. Ukrainian researcher Romaniuk [44] notes that church figure, Greek Catholic bishop of Kholm Jacob Susha, in the middle of the 17th century noted that the icon, made on a cypress wood board, is a symbol of eternity. One should note that Jacob Susha left many valuable observations regarding the miraculous icon in the context of its Byzantine origin: since the icon is made on a cypress tree, it is authentic, because it comes from the south, therefore Jacob Susha makes the assumption that it could have been made by the holy apostle Luke himself, because “in Greece and Palestine, where Luke visited, as well as in other warm countries, this tree is in abundance”. In addition, the bishop notes that the image of the Virgin “Marieze Majoris” in Rome and

the Czestochowa Virgin are also made on a cypress base, and this is evidence of the same antiquity of the Kholm icon as the aforementioned shrines [39].

It should be noted that during the restoration work, gold and silver ornaments were discovered on the hands of the Virgin Mary in the form of three rectangular plates decorated with five-petal palmettes made in the technique of cloisonné enamel, and one round plate – a collar with the image of the tree of life, under the branches of which the figures of two birds are placed. Jewelry with closable enamels made in Byzantium and Russia date back to the 11th–12th centuries, so in modern domestic Ukrainian science the icon from Kholm is most often dated to the 12th–13th centuries, although there is earlier dating to the end of the 11th – the first half of the 12th centuries [45].

The influence of Byzantine masterpieces also affected the Volyn icon of the Virgin Mary from Dorogobuzh. Analogies among the monuments of painting of the metropolitan Constantinople school indicate the connections of this icon with the elite style of Byzantine painting of the Palaeologi era. Moreover, the Dorogobuzh icon is valuable evidence of poorly documented and therefore almost unknown Byzantine-Balkan-Rus contacts and the historical and cultural situation that developed on the lands of the Galician-Volyn principality in the 13th century after the Mongol-Tatar invasion. Here, unlike other territories, it was possible to preserve creative forces and continue artistic traditions.

Thus, highlighting cultural contacts that played an important role in the evolution of Ukrainian religious painting is one of the promising areas of modern culturological research.

4 CONCLUSION

The architecture of the Galician land and Volyn of the pre-Mongol period is one of the brightest pages in the history of medieval European architecture. Genetically connected with the architecture of Byzantium and the Kiev building school, it demonstrates a clearly expressed tendency for the independent development of original artistic techniques. Remaining in the vein of the Eastern Christian tradition, Galician architecture was not isolated from those processes that took place in the vein of the Central and Western European tradition.

However, it should be noted that the process of feudal fragmentation of the Old Rus state, which began in the second half of the 11th century, had a significant impact on the further development of monumental architecture. In the principalities that gained political independence, regional architectural schools began to form. Among them, in the 12th–13th centuries, one of the most distinctive, without a doubt, was the Galician architectural school, which cultivated the practice of using local building materials, took into account climatic conditions and took care of the training of workers for monumental construction. The activities of this school were evident in the temple buildings of Kholm.

The text of the Galician-Volyn Chronicle allows imagining the architectural features of the church of St. John Chrysostom in Kholm and some elements of its artistic decoration. The church building belonged to the dominant type of cross-domed structures in the practice of sacral construction at that time, which was formed on the basis of the established Byzantine-Kyiv tradition.

Nevertheless, this and other churches mentioned in the chronicle (Holy Trinity, Saints Kuzma and Demyan, and the Cathedral of the Assumption) belonged to the stone block masonry technique common in the lands of the Galician principality and in the territory of neighboring Hungary and Poland, and the vaults rested on four pillars crowned with carved anthropomorphic motifs are not recorded anywhere else in medieval Galician architecture. A distinctive feature of Kholm churches was the use of two monolithic pillars in the interior, which formed the basis of the structure of the pre-altar partition.

The long genesis of the construction of various cross-domed churches in Princely Galicia indicates that during this more than 150-year period there was a multi-artistic method of organizing monumental construction, which used various planning techniques and technologies for building churches. Monuments of the 12th–13th centuries on the territory of the Galician Principality (1141–1198), and later – the Galician-Volyn State (1199–1241) are characterized by a synthesis of Byzantine and Romanesque building traditions, reinterpreted on the basis of local experience and tastes. Religious buildings with various planning, spatial and constructive features are distinguished by aesthetic perfection and a high level of technological techniques against the background of the development of European medieval architecture.

In the icon painting of the Galician land and Volyn of the 12th–13th centuries, ancient artistic traditions inherited from Byzantine art with its Hellenistic foundation were

preserved. The defining feature of the icons created here is their close connection with monumental painting both in the iconographic aspect and in the compositional order, which is characterized by the clarity of contours and silhouettes, generalization and integrity of forms. An example is the miraculous icon of the Kholm Mother of God.

Despite close contacts with the countries of Western Europe and pro-European trends in the culture of Rus, the ancient Galician icon was distinguished by its majesty, solemnity, and unearthly spirituality. These features were subsequently preserved in Volynian icons, even in the post-Mongol period.

The monuments we have considered, with their often complex history, testify to fidelity to the pictorial principles of Rus, reverence for the monumentality of forms, linearity, coloristic restraint and laconicism of expression, despite some pro-European trends in the Romanesque and Gothic styles.

The city of Kholm of the princely period with its cultural and artistic acquisitions is indicative of the stylistic mutual influences and synthesis of Byzantine, Old Rus, and Western European artistic traditions, their further translations in architecture, icon painting, and decorative art of Ukraine-Rus.

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Authors’ Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study’s findings are fully available within the article.

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