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On the issue of shaping of the Chersonesos citizens`
world-view during the transformation from
an antique to Byzantine city (on the materials
of Chersonesos necropolis)

*Zagadnienie kształtowania się światopoglądu mieszkańców Chersonezu
w czasie transformacji miasta antycznego w bizantyjskie
(na podstawie nekropolii chersoneskiej)*

STRESZCZENIE:

Przegląd malowideł w grobowcach Chersonezu umożliwia prześledzenie procesu transformacji miasta antycznego w bizantyjskie. Chrześcijańska symbolika, oparta o sztukę pogańską, zaczyna wyrażać idee związane ze zbawieniem, zwłaszcza z rajem.

Słowa kluczowe: Chersonesz, chrześcijaństwo, freski, symbolika.

Chersonesos-Cherson is an unique historical and archeological monument. The city existed for more than 2000 years, survived many changes and preserved a great number of monuments related to different cultures, peoples and civilizations on its territory. Its medieval history is worthy of particular attention, also because of the insufficient research on the Byzantine provincial towns in general. The ancient city of Chersonese is situated inside the modern city of Sevastopol. This fact allows conducting the systematical research of its territory.

The specialists point to it repeatedly. Progress in modern Byzantine studies can't be reached without investigation of the archaeological monuments. Byzantine monuments have been investigated systematically only in the North Syria and in Chersonese¹. In this context Chersonese-Cherson

¹ C. Foss, *Archeology and the «Twenty Cities» of Byzantine Asia*, „American Journal

is unique, because the regular excavations on its territory have been conducted during more than 100 years and the material that has been collected needs procession, analyses and interpretation.

The period of particular interest is that of the 3 – 6 c. – the time of the transformation of the city from classical Antiquity to Byzantine. This complex process was connected with the transformations in political and economic life of the citizens and, the most important, with the changes in the perception of the surrounding world. The changes of the world-view were reflected in the monuments of the Chersonese necropolis. The perception of death and the attitude towards it are forming the attitude to life and affect consciousness and world-view of the people. Perception of death and the underworld is reflected in funerary traditions and ceremonies.

Questions concerning the late antique world-view found their reflection in the works of V. M. Zubar². S. B. Sorochan wrote about the medieval mentality of the people of Chersonese³. But unfortunately the issue of changing the mentality during the process of transformation of ancient Chersonese to Byzantine Cherson remains poorly discussed in publications.

During the 5th c. B.C. – 1st c. A.D. a traditional polis world-view was formed in Chersonese, which was reflected in the state cults and integral communal purchasing of the world⁴. At the beginning of the 1st c. Chersonese entered the sphere of interests of the Roman Empire⁵. Changes in city's political life, a loss of the role of polis community, the stationing of the Roman troops led to an ideological crisis. State cult lost their importance, legionaries had new religious worship. Religion ceases to be a matter of the urban community, faith becomes a matter of family⁶. In Chersonese

of Archeology", 81, 1977, p. 469–486; Ch. Bouras, *City and village: urban and architecture*, „Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik”, 31, 1981, 2, p. 616–627; А. И. Романчук, *Исследования Херсонеса–Херсона: раскопки. Гипотезы. Проблемы. Византийский город*, Екатеринбург 2007, p. 133–145.

² В. М. Зубарь, *Склепы з нішами-лежанками з некрополя Херсонеса*, „Археологія”, 28, 1978, p. 36–45; В. М. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I – IV вв. н.э.*, Киев 1982, p. 116–126.

³ С. Б. Сорочан, *Гробничное дело в византийском Херсоне (VI – X вв.)*, „Боспорские Исследования”, 9, 2005, p. 159–211.

⁴ More about Chersonesos religion: В. М. Зубарь, *Херсонес Таврический в третьей четверти VI – середине I вв. до н.э. Очерки истории и культуры*, Киев 2005, p. 345–347; В. М. Зубарь, *Боги и герои античного Херсонеса*, Киев 2005, p. 63.

⁵ More about the political situation in the first centuries in Chersonesos: В. М. Зубарь, *Северный Понт и Римская империя*, Киев 1998, p. 126–138; Idem, В. М. Зубарь, *Херсонес Таврический и Римская империя. Очерки военно-политической истории*, Киев 1994, p. 86–112.

⁶ В. М. Зубарь, А. И. Хворостяный, *От язычества к христианству. Начальный этап*

during 1 – 3 c. the Greek pantheon was preserved among the local population, that was formed as far back as in Hellenistic period⁷. But in the same time private cults spread and the individualization of the consciousness occurred⁸.

Together with Roman soldiers and sailors who were stationed in the city, penetrate new religious currents, including the eastern syncretic cults. This has found its reflection in the necropolis monuments.

The process of the individualization of the consciousness gets apparent also in the fact, that burial was deal of the family rather than society. The choice of the form depended on the world-view and traditions within the community⁹. Such phenomena can be traced on the territory of the whole late-antique world. That is demonstrated by the variety of the funeral cults, which can be retraced in necropolis monuments in Chersonese as well as in the other cities Black Sea region.

The usage of family funeral complex, which reflected the new perception of death and afterlife fate, spreads¹⁰. On the territory of the necropolis they began to build burial vaults with a niche – *loculus*¹¹. Such a burial vaults modeled *triclinium* – a room in a house where family gathered for a repast. This fact explains not only the architectural peculiarity of the construction, but also the elements of the interior decorations¹².

проникновения и утверждения христианства на юге Украины (вторая половина III – первая половина VI вв.), Киев 2000, р. 45-47; В. М. Зубарь, Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I - IV вв. н.э., Киев 1982, р. 116-126.

⁷ Э. И. Соломоник, *Из истории религиозной жизни в северопонтийских городах позднеантичного времени*, „Вестник Древней Истории”, 1, 1973, р. 57; В. М. Зубарь, А. И. Хворостяной, *От язычества к христианству. Начальный этап проникновения и утверждения христианства на юге Украины (вторая половина III – первая половина VI вв.)*, Киев, 2000, р. 45-47.

⁸ В. Ф. Мещеряков, *Про походження культу Діви у Херсонесі Таврійському*, „Вісник Харківського Державного Університету”, 118, 1975, р. 65-73; В. Ф. Мещеряков, *О культе Девы в Херсонесе Таврическом*, „Актуальные проблемы изучения истории религии и атеизма”, Ленинград 1978, р. 104-119; В. Ф. Мещеряков, *Державні культу Діви і Херсонас у Херсонесі Таврійському I-III ст.*, „Вісник Харківського Державного Університету”, 201, 1980, р.71.

⁹ В. М. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I - IV вв. н.э.*, Киев 1982, р.122-123.

¹⁰ В. М. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I - IV вв. н.э.*, Киев 1982, р. 120; А. А. Масленников, *Некоторые особенности некрополей городов Европейского Боспора первых веков н. э.*, „Советская Археология”, 1, 1982, р. 33.

¹¹ М. Парович-Пешикан, *Некрополь Ольвии эллинистического времени*, Киев 1974, р. 36-37; А. А. Масленников, *Некоторые особенности некрополей городов Европейского Боспора первых веков н. э.*, „Советская Археология”, 1, 1982, р. 33; В. М. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I - IV вв. н.э.*, Киев 1982, р. 26.

¹² E. Rohde, *Psyche: Seelenkult und Unsterblichkeit glaube der Griechen*, Bd 1, Freiburg-Leipzig-Tübingen 1898, р.227; A. Machatschek, *Die Nekropolen und Grabmäler im Gebiet von Elaiussa Sebaste und Korykos im Rauhen Kilikien*, Wien-Köln 1967, р. 17-18; М. И. Ростовцев,

This type of vaults emerged in the North Black Sea Coast under the influence of religious traditions brought from Asia Minor, where similar monuments from 6th c. B.C. are known¹³.

The spread of the new types of the funeral constructions indicates considerable changes in religious beliefs of the citizens. Together with the catacombs disseminated also another evidence of Middle East influence, in particular the gravestones with the scenes of the «afterlife meal». Such monuments are well known from materials of the necropolis of Palmyra and Edessa. Their collections are kept in the museums of Istanbul and Damascus. Considerable amount of such monuments was discovered also on the territory of the Chersonese necropolis¹⁴. Such gravestones characterize the perceptions about the fate after death as a kind of afterlife feast, where «the whole family is gathered». These perceptions have found their reflections also in the inventory inside of funeral buildings: growing amount of dishes as well as finds of remains of different foodstuffs¹⁵.

The construction of the funeral building reflected the perceptions about the place of stay of the soul after death¹⁶. In this case, funeral constructions were created in a close connection to the architecture of the living and cult buildings¹⁷.

In the 3rd – 4th c. the monuments connected with the beginning of the penetration of Christianity and the forming of the church community emerged¹⁸. This leads to general changes, which have also reflected in the funeral practice.

Античная декоративная живопись на юге России, Петроград 1914, р. 493; К. Миятевь, *Декоративна та живопись на Софийский некрополь*, София 1925, р. 75.

¹³ В. М. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I - IV вв. н.э.*, Киев 1982, р. 28; А. А. Масленников, *Некоторые особенности некрополей городов Европейского Боспора первых веков н. э.*, „Советская Археология”, 1, 1982, р. 37; J. C. Smith, *A Roman chamber tomb on the south-east slops on Monasteriakikcephala, Knossos*, „The Annual of the British School at Athens”, 77, 1982, р. 258-259.

¹⁴ F. Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman paganism*, New York 1959, р. 120; В. М. Зубарь, *О некоторых аспектах идеологической жизни населения Херсонеса Таврического*, „Обряды и верования древнего населения Украины”, Киев 1990, р. 64-65.

¹⁵ В. М. Зубарь, *О некоторых аспектах идеологической жизни населения Херсонеса Таврического*, „Обряды и верования древнего населения Украины”, Киев 1990, р. 64-65.

¹⁶ Е. Г. Кастанаян, *Обряд тризны в боспорских курганах*, „Советская Археология”, 14, 1950, р. 124.

¹⁷ Д. Томсон, *Исследования по истории древнегреческого общества*, Москва 1958, р. 228; Н. И. Сокольский, *Античные деревянные саркофаги Северного Причерноморья*, Москва 1969, р. 12; В. М. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического в I - IV вв. н.э.*, Киев 1982, р. 11.

¹⁸ М. В. Фомин, *К вопросу о формировании христианской общины в позднеантичном Херсонесе*, „Материалы по Археологии и Истории Античного и Средневекового Крыма”, 4, 2012, р. 69-77.

But it is necessary to notice that the idea of afterlife meal does not disappear with the spreading of Christianity. Concept gets a new meaning. In the text of the Gospel is mentioned «The Wedding Feast» as one of the images of «Paradise», «Last Supper» was also the embodiment of the idea «of the repast». Perception of the ancient underworld feast reinterpreted. It was replaced by a commemorative meal – Agape. They also found their implementation in the art.

The painted vaults of Chersonese preserved unique pieces of early Christian art, which were formed under the influence of the late antique art tradition. They carry the reflection of the perceptions of Paradise. They were created in the middle of the 4th c. and became a result of transformation of «afterlife meal» of the Hellenistic world to the Christian Eucharist¹⁹.

The vaults themselves do not differ from the pagan ones in their architecture. As a rule, they form a room – a funeral cell that is made in a rock, in which a small *dromos* leads to the narrow entrance. The main difference is the presence of the stone benches, which were made by builders. In the walls, as in pagan catacombs, there were niches-benches. In architectural sense they did not differ and represent the model of *triclinium*. But the meal itself was somehow different.

Twelve funeral constructions in the area of the Chersonese necropolis, which preserved early Christian paintings, were discovered. Their walls have been plastered and painted according to viewpoint of Paradise that was formulated in *Apocalypse of Peter* and the poem of Ephrem the Syrian *On Paradise*.

In three of the 12 crypts the traces of monogram of Christ on the ceiling (vaults № 2114/1904 (1853), № 2245/1907, «on the land of N. I. Tur») were preserved. In the painting of the plafond of the vault crypt «of the 1909's» year the diagonal garlands converging at the wreath in the center, but the image inside the wreath did not remain²⁰. The traces of the double circle, in which there might be the image of a wreath, and from which went the straight garlands, were noticed also in the crypt «of the 1905's»²¹. This image has a special, sacral meaning.

Early Christianity had not an icon in its traditional understanding. Discussions connected with the acceptance of the images led to discover-

¹⁹ М. В. Фомин, *Херсонесские раннехристианские катакомбы. К итогу изучения*, „Нартекс. *Vizantina Ukrainensis*”, 2, 2013, p. 358–368.

²⁰ М. И. Ростовцев, *Античная декоративная живопись на юге России*, Санкт-Петербург 1913, tab. CV, CV.1.

²¹ К. К. Косцюшко-Валюжинич, *Извлечение из раскопок в Херсонесе Таврическом в 1907 году*, „Известия Археологической Комиссии”, 42, 1911, p. 53; М. И. Ростовцев, *Античная декоративная живопись на юге России*, Петроград 1914, p. 453-454, 460, 465-466, 478.

ing a new art approach: «to depict without portraying». This led to creating of images depicting not the God Himself, but His manifestations. One of this symbols became the combination of letters χ , ρ (the Chi-Rho symbol).

The considerable amount of funeral monuments of the 4th – 5th c., whose paintings have Christian symbolic in the form of the Chi Rho and crosses was discovered²². In several of them, as a rule in the earliest ones, as well as in Chersonese vaults, Christian symbols are combined with traditional ancient motives (garlands, wreathes, flowers, birds), which are undoubtedly endowed with new Christinity content. Such combination of the old and new symbols is demonstrated, for example, in the funeral monuments of Serdica, Thessaloniki, Nicaea, Philippi²³.

The earliest images of the same Chi Rho are related to the end of the 3rd c.²⁴. After the Edict of Milan (313 year) this symbol was spreading. In the late period the Constantine monogram is forced out by the image of monogrammed cross (the vertical branch of the cross is the Greek letter with an elongated leg) and, what is especially important, by the middle of the 5th c. the Constantine Chi Rho gradually disappears²⁵.

The monogram of Christ` name in a wreath occurs in the funeral monuments of the 4th – beginning of the 5th c. in Rome, Spain, Gaul, Ravenna. The tombstone mosaics of North Africa relate to the same time, according to the texts, which allows us to date the interment quite precisely. The images of the Constantine Chi Rho are preserved also in the vaults of Sofia (Serdica), Thessaloniki, Syracuse, Nish, Sardis, at the same time the dating of these monuments on the 4th – 5th c. does not cause any doubts too²⁶.

²² И. А. Завадская, *Декоративно-символическая система росписи херсонесских христианских склепов*, „Материалы по Археологии, Истории, Этнографии Таврики“, 11, 2005, p. 258–288.

²³ К. Миятев, *Декоративната живопись на Софийский некропол*, София 1925, p. 25, il.9; И. А. Завадская, *Декоративно-символическая система росписи херсонесских христианских склепов*, „Материалы по Археологии, Истории, Этнографии Таврики“, 11, 2005, p. 258–288.

²⁴ А. П. Голубцов, *Из чтений по церковной археологии и литургике*, Санкт-Петербург 2006, p. 417–441; А. С. Уваров, *Христианская символика. Символика древнехристианского периода*, Москва 1908, p. 76; В. Ю. Юрочкин, *Древнейшее изображение Креста Господня*, „Православные древности Таврики. Сборник материалов по церковной археологии“, Киев 2002, p. 36–37.

²⁵ J. Laurent, *Delphes chrétiennes*, „Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique“, 23, 1899, p. 243–244; Е. Луковникова, *Древнехристианская изобразительная символика*, „Альфа и Омега“, 3, 1995, p. 38–40; Л. Г. Хрушкова, *О начале христианского Херсонеса Таврического: крестообразная церковь на главном кладбище*, „Сугдейский Сборник“, 2, 2005, p. 415.

²⁶ М. А. Alexander, *Mosaic Ateliers at Tabarka*, „Dumbarton Oaks Papers“, 41, 1987, p. 10; Л. Г. Хрушкова, *О начале христианского Херсонеса Таврического: крестообразная церковь на главном кладбище*, „Сугдейский Сборник“, 2, 2005, p. 416.

The image of Chi Rho is a peculiar symbol of God's presence. The burial chamber turns into a room, where the «Last Supper», Eucharist meal, in which the buried participate, is taking place.

Thus, on the example of necropolis in Chersonese at the beginning of Anno Domini it is possible to trace the changes in the world-view and religious perceptions of the citizens, which were taking place during the process of transformation of the city from antique to Byzantine.

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ABSTRACT:

A survey of monuments of Chersonesos necropolis allows us to trace the transformation of worldview of the inhabitants in the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. In the 4th century in the city Christianity spread. Christians used symbolic language of late antiquity for the creation of their art system, but they gave it a new meaning. Especially clear reflection of this process are Chersonesos crypts with Christian paintings. They illustrate a stage of forming of the early Christian idea of paradise.

Keywords: Chersonesos, early Christian art, crypts, burial, catacomb, fresco.