

**Alaverdi Gospel (A-484) and the artistic peculiarities
of the Black Mountain School of miniature painting of
the 11th century**

The paper focuses on the study of the artistic peculiarities of the manuscripts executed at Georgian Scriptoria of the Black Mountain. The paper is an attempt of studying the artistic-decorative and iconographic features of the Alaverdi Gospel (A-484), illustrated at Georgian Scriptorium of Kalipos Monastery (the Black Mountain, Antioch) in the middle of the 11th century. We also discuss other Georgian manuscripts from this provenance: A-845, S-962, K-76.

The aim of the paper is to survey the principles of illustrations of manuscripts in the framework of one artistic school; establishing the typical artistic features and iconographic program of detached schools of miniaturists will help us to reconstruct the process of evolution of Georgian book illumination.

While discussing miniatures of Alaverdi Gospel we face the unity of features far characteristic for the Black Mountain School in common. Decorative framing of Eusebius Letter and the Canon Table system reveal the Black Mountain's particular approaches to decoration. Triumphant arches with paired, double tiered colons carrying a rectangular entablature with censors hanging in the corners of the architrave are innovative for A-484, as well as a very rare artistic format with rectangular ornamental frame around the text which can be seen in K-76 and A-845. Main difference becomes clear in the number of the Canon Tables. Alaverdi Gospel, as well as A-845 has 14 pages of Tables. An increased number of the Canon tables and their structure should be considered as an essential characteristic and distinguishing feature of the Black Mountain artistic School.

This investigation leads to specific conclusions about the Black Mountain artistic school, which show different methods from Georgian Gospel illustrations. Innovations in the number of the Canon Tables, particular choice of the framed two-paged Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus, depiction of Crosses, Evangelists' portraits, Illustrations of Abgar's story, all these reflect an unusual approach of scribes and illustrators from the Black Mountain School as well as customers wish.

Only some of monuments of the Black Mountain manuscripts of the 11th century survived till today, but we can still discuss the achievements of this artistic school in developing manuscript decoration. Characteristic iconographic and stylistic quests prove that alongside with literary center, a strong artistic school had existed at Black Mountain in the 11th century.

One can find some imprints of this features in Greek and Georgian manuscript illuminations of following period (Sinai, Cod.158, I half of XIIc and Gelati Gospel of XII century) and indicate on artistic traditions of Black Mount's artistic school.

Manuscripts executed at the Georgian Scriptoria of the Black Mountain show those traditions, which caused their high level on the ascending political and cultural background.

Analysis of the miniatures made us to conclude, that they show the close connection not only with Byzantine artistic traditions, but east Christian samples as well.