

Research Type: Research Article
Received: November 1, 2023
Accepted: December 28, 2023
<https://doi.org/10.58642/kutbilim.1384706>

THE CROSS IN BYZANTINE ART: ICONOGRAPHY SYMBOLISM AND MEANING

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Abstract

Byzantine art is an artistic tradition that developed during the Middle Ages when the Eastern Roman Empire was dominant. The cross is a very important symbol in Byzantine art and has a deep meaning in terms of both iconography and symbolism. This study aims to analyse the iconographic and symbolic expressive power of the cross in Byzantine art. Iconographic representations of the cross in Byzantine art characterise the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his suffering. In iconography, there are various forms, depictions of the cross. These include various types such as the Latin cross, the Greek cross, the cross of Christ's crucifixion. Each type of cross carries different meanings and also symbolises different scriptures and figures. It also characterises concepts such as martyrdom, sacrifice, resistance and victory. The cross was used in icon, frescoes, mosaics and other works of art. For example, in Jesus iconography, the cross can be seen in Jesus' hand or on his throne. This article, which is structured with the method of literature review and document analysis, aims to illuminate the iconographic and symbolic meanings of the cross in Byzantine art. The cross is one of the sacred symbols of the Christian faith in Byzantine art.

Keywords: Art History, Byzantine Art, Cross, Iconography, Symbolism

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ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CROSS

Western languages have the words cross, croix and kreuz, which are based on the Latin root crux (Şakiroğlu, 1996: 22). The role played by the cross's potential for iconography and symbolism is one of the central themes of Byzantine art. Iconography can be conceived as a decisive means by which the meaning of a particular depiction of a character or symbol is communicated. Symbolism, on the other hand, is a form of expression that enables the expression of narrative through symbols. The cross stands out as a motif and object used intensively in Byzantine art in terms of iconography and symbolism. The intensity of the iconographic meaning of the cross is to depict the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and to reflect a central figure of the Christian faith. Iconographically, the cross appears in different forms and depictions (Taş and Özcan, 2015: 247). The most common are the Latin cross and the Greek cross. The Latin cross, with its one wide arm, represents the crucified Christ, while the Greek cross, with its four arms of equal length, expresses the universality of Jesus Christ and his message to all humanity. Iconographically, these different forms of the cross are different points of emphasis of the Christian faith used in various works of Byzantine art. The symbolism of the cross has a broader meaning. The cross symbolizes the fundamental concepts of the Christian faith, such as salvation, forgiveness, mercy, and rebirth. For believers, the cross represents a great sacrifice to save God's humanity. At the same time, the cross reminds believers of their relationship with God and Christian morality. It also symbolizes martyrdom, resistance and victory, giving strength and hope to believers. In Byzantine art, the cross can be used in icons, frescoes, mosaics and other works of art to impressively convey the meaning of the objects in these works. Consequently, the responsibility assumed by the iconographic and symbolism quality of the cross achieves a unique position as a fundamental mission of Byzantine art. Iconographically, it depicts the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the basic ritual of the Christian faith, while in terms of its symbolism it represents a deep sense of shame, salvation, forgiveness, mercy and hope. In Byzantine art, the cross has an important potential of faith as the means of visual expression.

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE CROSS IN BYZANTINE ART

1. Churches and Mosaics: In churches built during the Byzantine period, the cross was a frequently used decorative motif. Especially in the mosaics, wall paintings and frescoes in church interiors, the Cross can be seen frequently. This was used to decorate the interiors of churches as a central symbol of the Christian faith (Koçyiğit, 2020: 118).

2. Icons: Byzantine icons are paintings depicting Christian saints and holy figures such as Mary and Jesus. The cross was frequently included in these icons. The cross is an important visual element in the scenes where Jesus is crucified (Aydın, 2002).

3. Depictions of Christ Wearing a Crown: In Byzantine art, the Cross was frequently used in depictions of Jesus wearing a crown and sitting on a throne. In such depictions, the cross symbolizes the sovereignty and holiness of Jesus (Yıldız, 2019; Eser, 2020).

4. Cross-shaped Architectural Details: In Byzantine architecture, especially in the architecture of churches and basilicas, the cross form was frequently used. It is possible to see cross motifs in various architectural elements (arches, columns, windows).

The cross became a symbol deeply connected with Christianity in Byzantine art and became a frequently repeated motif in the artworks of this period.

DIFFERENT CROSS TYPES AND THEIR DEPICTIONS

It is generally accepted that Jesus' crucifixion vehicle or platform (known as crux in Latin and stauros in Greek) consisted of an upright wooden beam to which a transom was added thus

forming a "cruciform" or T-shaped structure (Sava, 1957: 343; Wilkinson, 1972:104) (Figure 1). The *crux immissa* (Latin cross) was the most common type of cross used in Byzantine art. It has a vertical bar that is longer than the horizontal bar and it is usually depicted with the crucified Jesus Christ on it. A Latin cross, or *crux immissa*, is a type of cross in which the vertical beam attaches above the cross beam, with the three upper arms of equal length, or with the uppermost vertical arm shorter than the two horizontal arms, and always with a much longer lower arm (Norris, 2002: 128; Stevens, 2015) (Figure 2). The *crux decussata* (Greek cross) has four equal arms and is often used to represent the four Gospels or the four elements (Figure 3). (Koçyiğit, 2020: 121). In later Western European religious history the cross has shown great diversity in its forms of expression, but two main types can be distinguished: Greek and Latin Crosses. The first has beams of equal length. In the second, the lower beam is elongated. Gregory of Nyssa represented the Eastern or Greek interpretation of the cross. He was born in Caesarea in Cappadocia in 331 AD and was the younger brother of St. Basil. 'Contra Eunomium' ('Against Eunomius', twelve book/four treatises), he envisioned a four-part cosmos (Ladner, 1955). The *crux patens* (open cross) has widely spread arms and is often used to represent the triumph of good over evil or the hope of salvation (Merete, 2019) (Figure 4). The monogrammatic cross, Tau-Rho, was used in the 4th century as a Christian symbol outside of its *nomen sacrum* function in biblical manuscripts, as a monogramma Christi alongside Chi-Rho and other variants spread throughout Western Europe in the 5th and 6th centuries (Redknap, 1991: 61). The staurogram, also monogrammatic cross or tau-rho, is a ligature formed by the superposition of the Greek letters tau (T) and rho (P) (Kovarik, 2023: 71) (Figure 5). A *crux gemmata* (jeweled cross) is a cross decorated with jewels or with other precious stones. It is often used as a symbol of imperial authority or wealth (Buettner, 2022) (Figure 6).

Different types of crosses and their depictions are important elements to distinguish the iconographic diversity of the cross in Byzantine art. The different forms of the cross carry various meanings as part of the language of iconography used in Byzantine art. Here are some different forms and depictions of the cross: The Latin Cross: The Latin cross is a type of cross depicted in Byzantine art. It consists of a spreading arm and a shorter upper arm. The upper arm symbolizes the head of the crucified Christ. The Latin cross represents the suffering and crucifixion of Christ (Taş and Özcan, 2015: 247). Greek Cross The most common type of cross in Byzantine art. The four equal-length arms fulfill the universality of Christ and his message to all humanity. In the tradition of Byzantine iconography, this type of cross often symbolizes the crucifixion of Christ. The Cross of Christ's Crucifixion: This type of cross depicts the moment of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus is depicted on the cross with his hands and feet secured with nails. In Byzantine art, this image symbolizes the abolition of execution and Jesus' suffering, sacrifice and faith in salvation. Triple Cross: Byzantine art presents a representation of the Holy Trinity itself. In this type of cross, there are two small crosses on a main cross. The main cross speaks of the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, while the smaller crosses express the individual persons of the Holy Trinity (Bayram, 2021: 89). Glorification Cross: In Byzantine art, it usually represents the ascension of Christ into heaven. In this type of cross, Jesus is depicted sitting on a throne on his cross, flanked by angels and saints. This depiction symbolizes the triumph of Jesus, his ascension and the union of the angelic saints. These different applications and depictions of the cross show the place of the Byzantine cross in the iconography of Byzantine cruciform art. Each type of cross has different theological, structural and religious meanings.

In the early Byzantine period, iconographic depictions of the cross were simpler and stylized. During this period, the Latin cross, usually represented by an expanding arm and a short upper arm, was common. This simple depiction of the cross was sufficient to understand the crucifixion of Christ and convey the basic message of the Christian faith. In the Middle

Byzantine period, iconographic depictions of the cross became more complex and elaborate. During this period, the Greek cross became more popular and various examples appeared. The arms of the cross became longer and more graceful. This development was intended to emphasize the universality of the cross and the fact that Christ provides salvation for all. In the Late Byzantine period, the iconographic depictions of the cross were further enriched and elaborated. During this period, various iconographic elements were added to the cross. The crucified body of Christ was depicted more realistically, and other symbols and figures on the cross became more important. For example, the triple cross presents a representation of the Holy Trinity, while the exaltation cross depicts the ascension of Jesus. These developments led to a richer and more varied iconographic use of the cross. The iconographic development of the cross, while encompassing the different styles and narratives of Byzantine art across periods, also became a means of expressing the depths of the Christian faith and its religious messages. The iconographic development of the cross provides an important clue to understanding the richness of Byzantine art and its interpretation across periods (Drewer, 1996).



Figure 1: *Göreme Dark Church Jesus on the Cross*, Fresco, end of 11th century Cappadocia/Neveşehir



Figure 2: *Crux immissa* (Latin cross) Byzantine period

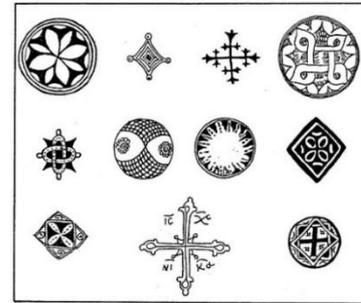


Figure 3: *Crux decussata* (Greek cross) Byzantine period.



Figure 4: *Crux patens* (open cross), Tønsberg cross. Silver and amethysts. Height 7.1 cm. In the center of the cross is a surviving piece of wood



Figure 5: *Monogrammatic cross*. Mosaic in the baptistry of S. John (V. century) near the Cathedral of Naples

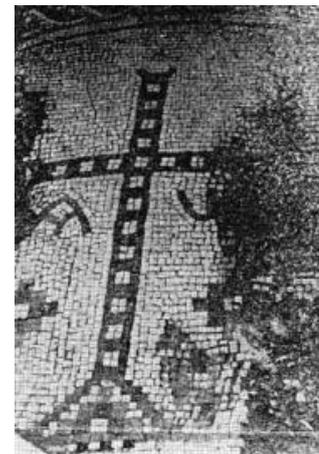


Figure 6: *Crux gemmata cross*. The church in Hufa al-Wastiyah (6th-7th century A.D.)

THE CROSS AS A SYMBOL OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

The symbolism of the cross represents various basic meanings that were acquired with Christianity. **Salvation and Forgiveness:** The cross is a symbol of salvation and forgiveness in the Christian faith. The cross symbolizes Jesus' sacrifice, compassion and struggle for humanity, giving believers hope for salvation and forgiveness. **Faith and Worship:** As to the Faith and Worship they are the means of the fundamental symbol of the Christian faith, the cross reminds believers of their faith in the church and in worship. Believers use the cross to pray, to build crosses in churches and to represent the purposes for which the cross is used (Schirmacher, 2018). The cross, as an expression of appreciation of faith, shows the Christian's devotion and faith in God. **Sacrifice and Love:** The cross symbolizes that Jesus symbolizes God's love for humanity and that he was crucified to save humanity at great sacrifice. The cross is a powerful symbol of love and sacrifice. Jesus' crucifixion conveys a message of great love and forgiveness for humanity, reminding believers of the call to love, tolerance and compassion (Özbek, 2011). **Resistance and Victory:** The cross was also used in Byzantine times as a symbol of resistance and victory in the regions. Believers use the cross to symbolize their stance in the face of difficulties, confrontations and suffering. The cross tries to give believers the understanding to be strong, to be courageous, to increase their motivation to resist and triumph against the life lines. **The Battle between Good and Evil:** The cross is the symbol of the battle between good and evil. The cross symbolizes people's loyalty to God and their attitude towards evil. The crucifixion of Jesus is a symbol of victory over evil and evil (Tunç, 2022: 207). The symbolism of the cross is impressively expressed in Byzantine art in different art creations of art and icons. By using the cross, believers discover a deep world of meaning and remember the fundamental messages of the Christian faith.

The cross has an important place in Byzantine art as a symbol of the crucifixion of Jesus. The crucifixion of Jesus is one of the fundamental events of the Christian faith and the cross symbolizes the act of salvation (Boys, 1994: 5). This unique meaning of the cross is expressed in Byzantine art in various forms and depictions (Benson, 2013). The use of the cross as a symbol of Christ's crucifixion reveals its importance in the Christian faith, characterizing heaven and forgiveness. According to the belief, Jesus was crucified for the redemption of humanity from its sins and the attainment of eternal life (Rutledge, 2015). The cross symbolizes this act of salvation, giving believers a message of hope and forgiveness. In Byzantine art, the crucifixion of Jesus is visually expressed through different technical descriptions and depictions of the cross. While Jesus is depicted on the cross, his hands and feet are fixed with nails and a crown is placed on his head. This depiction is meant to convey the evidence of Jesus' suffering and sacrifice, and to strengthen believers' faith in salvation. The symbolism of the cross also reminds believers of the resurrection of Jesus after his death. Also reminds us. According to the belief, Jesus rose on the third day, heralding the defeat of death and the salvation of humanity. Therefore, the cross is also a symbol of rebirth, and the resurrection of Christ is also depicted in Byzantine art. The symbolism of the cross has a strong connection with faith and worship in Byzantine art.

The cross is used in churches, icons and other religious artifacts. Believers prayed using the cross and tried to send a message by placing cross signs in many details of churches (Vladimirescu, 2010). As the most severe punishment that they keep vivid measurements of the cross symbolizing the crucifixion of Jesus, reminding them of the fundamental messages of the Christian faith. The symbolism of the cross expresses a deep religious meaning in Byzantine art, while at the same time offering believers hope, forgiveness and the good news of salvation. The cross, as the symbol of Christ's crucifixion, is an important element of Byzantine art and a powerful expression of the Christian faith.

THE CROSS REPRESENTS MERCY SALVATION AND REBIRTH

The cross has great significance in Byzantine art, symbolizing important concepts such as mercy, salvation and rebirth. These religious meanings are based on the central role of the cross in the Christian faith. **Mercy:** The cross is a symbol of mercy. According to the belief, the crucifixion of Jesus represents God's embrace of humanity with love and mercy. The cross is a symbol of God's great love for man and his desire to forgive (Kahveci, 2018: 115). Depictions of the cross tells us of God's mercy towards humanity, emphasizing Jesus' suffering and sacrifice. **Salvation** The cross is a symbol of salvation. Jesus' crucifixion and death are the means by which people can be cleansed of their sins and attain eternal life. The cross carries the good news of salvation and gives hope to believers. It emphasizes the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion, the salvation of humanity and God's love and forgiveness for humanity. **Rebirth** The cross is a symbol of rebirth. According to the belief, the resurrection of Jesus is an expression of overcoming death and evil. With the resurrection of Jesus after his death, the cross promises humanity new life, hope and rebirth (Alp, 2018: 198). Depictions of the cross reflect resurrection and rebirth, conveying a message of rebirth and hope to the faithful. The cross's representation of mercy, salvation and rebirth is visually expressed in different products of Byzantine art and icons. Icons with the cross encompass elaborate depictions that emphasize the drawing details of the crucifixion of Christ. By using the cross, believers remember God's mercy, maintain their faith in salvation and celebrate the good news of rebirth. The cross's symbolism of mercy, salvation and rebirth has a deep religious meaning in Byzantine art, while at the same time offering hope and peace to the faithful.

THE CROSS AS A RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEVERS AND MORAL MEANING

The cross has an important role in Byzantine art in terms of the relationship of beliefs and moral meaning. The meaning of the cross encourages believers to transcend their obligations to God, **and** to remember spiritual values and to act mercifully, justly and lovingly in their lives. **Relationship of Believers:** The cross creates a sense of unity and solidarity among the faithful. Believers come together for the worship of the cross, attend churches and glorify the cross in prayer. The cross unites believers in their faith in God and encourages them to act in unity and solidarity as a community. **Moral Meaning:** The cross represents spiritual values and encourages believers to live a just, loving and compassionate life. By recalling the wishes of the cross, believers uphold spiritual values such as love, tolerance, forgiveness and justice (Gül, 2018). The cross exalts the call for believers to resist evil, to be merciful, to help people and to defend justice. The moral meaning of the cross is kept alive in Byzantine art. Crusader icons and artworks remind the faithful of spiritual values and offer them the opportunity to practice them in their lives. In cruciform depictions, the crucifixion and sacrifice of Christ provide an example of devotion to God, living a life of love and service. The relationship of believers and the moral meaning of the cross is a central part of Byzantine art and the Christian faith. The cross unites believers in their common cause to God, while focusing on moral values, encouraging society to act in a more just, loving and merciful way. The creative power of the cross inspires the faithful and encourages them to live a moral life.

SYMBOLIC EXPRESSIONS OF THE CROSS

Christians have revered the cross as a symbol from the 4th century to the present day. Until the 4th century, they were cautious about using and carrying it. After the Byzantine Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the persecution and torture of Christians ended and the cross began to gain popularity as a religious symbol among the masses (Goring, 1995: 12). The formal expression of the cross manifests itself in Byzantine art in different combinations and depictions. It continues its widespread expression in architecture, showing the different types, ornaments and details of the cross.

The iconic cross is a form of expression used in depictions of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The iconic cross is usually depicted together with the figures of Jesus. When Jesus is depicted on the cross, his hands and feet are fixed with nails and his head is exalted with a crown. This depiction lifts the weight of the cross while telling the story of Jesus' suffering and sacrifice. Embroidered Cross Inlaid crosses are ornate crosses used in Byzantine art. These crosses are designs embroidered with gold or silver wires, with jewels or colored stones. Embroidered crosses emphasize the sacraments and principles nature of the cross and attract the attention of the faithful. Symbolic items on the cross: Crosses can also be enriched with different shapes and decorations. These decorations can include floral motifs at the ends of the cross, Christian symbols, angelic figures, Christ's creatures in the center of the cross, and other religious symbols. These symbols add depth by emphasizing the meaning of the cross. The technical structure and expressive power of the cross offer a visual narrative to believers in Byzantine art. This expressive structure, using different types, embroideries and details of the cross, conveys to the faithful the fundamental messages of the Christian faith and invites them to a broad religious experience. The ornamental expression of the cross contributes to the enrichment of the religious and aesthetic appearance of Byzantine art. In order to make the subject more understandable and to elaborate a little more, we can classify it as follows.

Divine Power and Holiness:

The cross is the central symbol of Christianity and is therefore frequently seen in Byzantine paintings and mosaics. The use of the cross emphasizes divine power, holiness and the central doctrines of the Christian faith (Benson,2013).

Salvation and Resurrection:

Crucifixes and crosses in resurrection scenes symbolize Jesus' redemption of humanity from sin and his resurrection. The cross is also seen as a symbol of the defeat of death and the promise of life after death (Malone,1997: 57).

Theological Depth:

Cross motifs point to the depths of Christian theology. Crosses with two arms can represent the two natures of Jesus (divine and human). Pearl and cross combinations can emphasize the connection between the holiness of God and the salvation of humanity (Guénon, 2001).

Churches and Places of Worship:

Cross motifs are often used in the interior decoration of churches, filling places of worship with holiness (Kilde, 2008). These motifs indicate that the church is a space dedicated to God.

Church Unity:

Greek crosses symbolize the spread of the church throughout the world and represent the unity of the Christian community. This type of cross can also represent the vast borders of the Byzantine Empire and the spread of Christianity (Dilasser, 1999).

Struggle and Victory:

Crucifixes symbolize the struggles in the lives of Christians and the triumph at the end of those struggles. Jesus' death on the cross represents the struggle against the sins of humanity (Bergen, 2000).

In the context in which they are used in Byzantine art, cross motifs often carry deep religious meaning, reminding viewers of the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

THE USE OF THE CROSS IN ICONS AND FRESCOES

Use in Icons

The use of the cross in icons has important religious and symbolic meanings in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Icons are sacred images, typically depicting Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints and biblical events. The cross is a common element in many icons, and its placement and design convey specific theological messages. Here are some aspects of the use of the cross in icons:

Christological Symbol: The cross is a central Christological symbol in icons, representing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Kenna, 1985: 345). It reminds the faithful of Christ's redemptive sacrifice and saving action for humanity.

Crucifixion Scenes: Icons often depict Crucifixion scenes depicting Jesus on the cross. The cross in these icons emphasizes Christ's suffering and ultimate sacrifice for the salvation of humanity.

The Cross of Golgotha The Cross of Golgotha is a common depiction in icons in which the cross is erected on a hill, representing Golgotha (the place of the skull) where Christ was crucified (Steffler, 2002: 67). At the base of this design is a skull and bones symbolizing victory over death.

The Four-Armed Cross: Icons may feature a four-armed cross, symbolizing the spread of Christianity around the world. Each arm may represent a cardinal direction, emphasizing the universal nature of Christ's message (Gauding, 2009: 98).

Deesis Composition: Typically featuring Christ seated on the throne, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, the cross may be held by Christ as a symbol of divine authority and judgment (Gouma, 1994: 331).

Pantocrator Icons: In Pantocrator or "Ruler of All" icons, Christ is usually depicted holding a Bible book in one hand and gesturing a blessing with the other. The cross in these icons signifies Christ's role as divine judge and savior (Duits, 2016: 197).

Icons of Saints: Icons of saints are often depicted holding a cross, symbolizing their martyrdom, their devotion to Christ, or their role in spreading the Christian faith (Lanzi-Lanzi, 2004).

Sign of Victory: The cross in icons is a symbol of victory over sin, death and evil. It represents the victory of Christ's resurrection and the hope of eternal life (Benson, 2013).

Liturgical and Devotional Use: The cross is also used in icons as the focal point of liturgical and devotional practices. Believers can venerate the cross in worship and use icons as aids in prayer and meditation.

Symbol of Faith: In many icons, the cross serves as a powerful symbol of the Christian faith (Williamson, 2004: 341). The presence of the cross reinforces the basic tenets of Christianity and serves as a visual reminder of core beliefs for believers. The cross was often depicted with Jesus Christ crucified on it and used to remind viewers of Christ's suffering and death (Figure 7).

Icon of Hodegetria: This icon, housed in the State Historical Museum in Moscow, Russia, depicts the Virgin Mary cradling the infant Jesus Christ. The cross is prominently displayed on the icon and is used to represent Christ's protection (Figure 8).

The use of the cross in icons contributes to the rich visual language of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, reinforcing theological concepts and facilitating spiritual contemplation for worshippers. Each nuance in the design and placement of the cross carries deep meaning in the context of the Christian narrative.



Figure 7: National Gallery, Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Athens
Caption: Andreas Pavias, Icon of the Crucifixion, Miniature from Byzantine Gospel Manuscript, 11th Century (Paris, Bibl.Nationale, gr. 74, fol. 208v). From H. A. Omont, *Evangelies avec Miniatures Byzantines de l'XIe Siecle* (Paris, 1908)



Figure 8: Icon of Panagia "Hodegetria" (Byzantine Museum, 15th century) Cappadocia

Use in Frescoes

The cross is often depicted as a symbol that Jesus holds in his hands, reminding believers of salvation and forgiveness itself. Frescoes are painted pictures on walls or ceiling surfaces. It is an art formula used in Byzantine churches and monasteries. The cross is a main theme used in frescoes. Especially in large frescoes in the apses or around the dome, there is the cross usually placed in a central place, reminding us that Christianity is a symbol of a central faith. The use of the cross in frescoes helps to envision the cross as the protector of the faith of the faithful and as an effective tool to convey the fundamental messages of the Christian faith. The use of the cross in frescoes again encourages believers to focus on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus and to think of it as the way of salvation and forgiveness. In addition, the cross was a way for the faithful to experience prayer, worship and communion in the church. Frescoes played an important role in the religious expression of Byzantine art and provided an effective platform for utilizing values for the purposes of the cross. These works narrate the foundations of the Christian faith, emphasizing the central role of the cross, while preserving the religious beliefs and faith of the faithful. The Crucifixion of Christ: This fresco in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem depicts the crucifixion of Jesus. The cross is the central focus of the frescoes and is used to represent the suffering and death of Jesus (Figure 9). Baptism of Christ: This fresco from the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem depicts the baptism of Jesus. The cross is prominently displayed in the fresco, used to represent the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Figure 10).

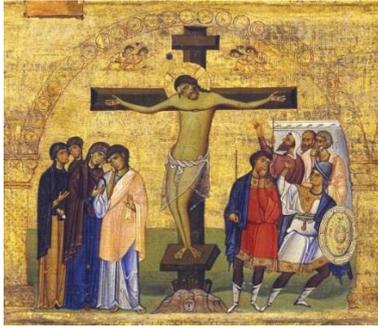


Figure 9: Crucifixion with twelve feast scenes from a templon beam, 12th century, Cyprus or Sinai, tempera and gold on panel on fine textile ground, 44.1 x 118.3 x 3.1 cm (Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt)



Figure 10: Baptism of Christ fresco in Byzantine fresco style 12th century, Elmalı Kilise Göreme

THE ROLE AND MEANING OF THE CROSS IN MOSAICS

The cross is placed in the apse or dome of a church or monastery building. Large and impressively depicted, the cross attracts the attention of the faithful and calls them to religious experience. Expressing the Basic Messages of the Christian Faith: The cross is used in mosaics to express the core messages of the Christian faith. The crucifixion of Jesus is depicted on the cross as a general symbol of the concepts of death, salvation and forgiveness. These images remind believers of God's love, the salvation and rebirth of humanity. The cross also encourages believers not to hide their faith in their obligations to God and to remember religious teachings. Embroidery and Details of the Cross: The embroidery and details of the cross also play an important role in mosaics. Crosses adorned with gold or colored stones present an impressive image with its visual expression. The symbols used in the decoration of the cross are the crowned head of Christ, angelic figures or other religious symbols. These techniques are used to show the outer details of the cross and to try to give a sense of depth. The role and meaning of the cross in mosaics is sought in the religious devotion of the faithful to the fundamental messages of the Christian faith. The position of the center of the cross and its expressive depictions call believers to celebrate their entrustment to God and to embrace the path of salvation and forgiveness. The embroidery and details of the cross make the visuals an immersive experience and reveal the details of the crosses. The mosaics emphasize the importance of the cross in the religious expression of Byzantine art, leading the faithful on a sad journey of religious meaning.

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ: This mosaic in Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey, depicts the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The cross is the central focal point of the mosaic and is used to represent Jesus' suffering and death (Figure 11). Transfiguration of Christ: This mosaic, found in the Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in Israel, depicts the transfiguration of Jesus. The cross is prominently displayed in the mosaic and is used to represent the glory of Christ (Figure 12).



Figure 11: Nevşehir Elmali Kilise, Mid-11th century-12th. Example of Early Century Fresco



Figure 12: Transfiguration of Jesus. Mosaik, 550-565, apse mosaic, Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai

CONCLUSION

Evaluation of the Findings: In this article, the concepts of iconography, symbolism and signification of the cross in Byzantine art have been analyzed. According to the findings, the importance of the cross in the Byzantine period is a clear fact. There are different depictions of the cross and its use on different techniques and materials. In terms of iconography and symbolism, it is clear that the cross stands out as a central symbol of belief in God. In addition to its use as one of the fundamental symbols of Christianity, this sacred symbol has an important role as a representation of salvation, power and holiness.

Cultural and Religious Context: The cross motifs analyzed in this article reflect the cultural and religious context of the Byzantine period. It has been observed how the cross is depicted in different works of art and how it touches upon the social and religious beliefs of different periods. In this sense, the study offers an important perspective on the cultural background of Christianity in the Byzantine Empire.

Other Artistic Interactions: It should be noted that the cross motif in Byzantine art was intertwined not only with Christianity but also with other cultures and art movements. Especially the interaction between Byzantine and Islamic art led to the emergence of different interpretations of the cross. In this context, the connection and interaction of Byzantine art with other cultures is an interesting and valuable topic.

Artistic Transformation and Change: The article discusses the evolution of art in the Byzantine period and the transformations in the depiction of the cross. These transformations are very important as they reflect the talents, beliefs and aesthetics of the society and artists.

This article aims to make a comprehensive contribution to the iconographic features and meanings of the cross. As such, it is an alternative source for a better understanding of the meaning and symbolism of Byzantine art and for future researchers.

The cross was used in church buildings, mosaics, frescoes and icons, paintings. The centrality of the cross in works of art encourages believers to focus on the core messages of Christianity and increase their religious knowledge. The cross symbolizes the crucifixion of Jesus. This refers to the death and resurrection of Jesus, a central element of the Christian faith. The cross is a reminder of this religious event and is intended to lead believers to fulfill their quest for salvation and forgiveness. The use of the cross in Byzantine art commemorates these sacred events and encourages the faithful to focus on Christ's sacrifice and mercy. As an expression of faith and spiritual commitment, the cross is used in Byzantine art to express the religious beliefs and spiritual devotion of the faithful. The use of the cross helps believers to

deepen in their religious life and encourages them to remember their religious teachings. The mosaics, frescoes and icons used are often ostentatious and striking. Using gold inlays, precious stones, jewels and colored paints, crosses are adorned and exalted as an expression of holiness. This visual appeal of the cross is a theme of the faithful who fulfill their religious obligations and admire the glory of God. The treatment of this frame offers a religious and cultural perspective.

The decorations, embroideries and details of the cross attempt to convey the details of the cross, providing an immersive visual experience. The use of the cross in Byzantine art encourages believers to deepen their religious experience and promotes Christian values.

The main source of iconographic analysis of Byzantine art is usually the sacred texts. This is because crosses were used in different ways, both technically and iconographically, in different cultures at different dates. Compared to previous studies on the cross, the iconographic evaluation in this study is relatively new. In the iconographic evaluation, the traditional attitude, social structure, belief style, etc. of the medieval Christian society were tried to be analyzed by blending them on the axis of their reflections on art.

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Figure References

Figure 1: Taş- Özcan 2015, 247.

Figure 3: Gül, 2018.

Figure 4: Merete, 2019.

Figure 5: Greene, 1974: 393.

Figure 6: Habaş, 2015: 33.

Figure 7: Mahr, 1943.

Figure 8: Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

Figure 9: Folda, 2021.

Figure 10: Stoykov, 2014: 65.

Figure 11: Kanmaz, 2022:165

Figure 12: ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Transfiguration-of-Christ-550-565-apse-mosaic-St-Catherines-Monastery-Sinai-photo_fig1_313745763

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Christians have revered the cross as a symbol from the 4th century to the present day. Until the 4th century, they were cautious about using and carrying it. After the Byzantine Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the persecution and torture of Christians ended and the cross began to gain popularity as a religious symbol among the masses. The formal expression of the cross appears in Byzantine art in different combinations and depictions. It continues its widespread expression in architecture, showing different types, ornaments and details of the cross.

The cross, whose iconography and symbolism aspects are discussed in this study, stands out as one of the main subjects of Byzantine art. While it is iconographically depicted as the basic figure of the Christian faith in terms of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, in terms of symbolism, virtues such as salvation, forgiveness, mercy and hope express a condemnation. In Byzantine art, the cross is frequently used as a means of visual expression.

The aim of this study is to analyze the Byzantine art's contact with the motif of the cross, how different forms and depictions of the cross were conceived and their iconographic reductive meanings. It also evaluates the position of the cross in icons, frescoes, mosaics and other works of art, which are the visual expression of the cross in Byzantine art. By emphasizing the importance of the representation of the cross in Byzantine art, this study aims to offer a new perspective on the motivation for its iconographic and symbolic use. While the cross fulfills the unique theological and religious beliefs of Byzantine art, it also functions as a symbol that strengthens the faith of believers and conveys the central messages of the Christian faith.

This study consists of chapters on the iconography of the cross, different types of crosses and their depictions, the symbolism of the cross, the cross as a symbol of the crucifixion of Jesus, the cross as a symbol of mercy, salvation and rebirth, the cross as the relationship of believers and moral meaning, symbolic expressions of the cross, the use of the cross in icons and frescoes, the role and meaning of the cross in mosaics, and an evaluation and conclusion.

The cross in Byzantine art: Iconography, symbolism and meaning have been discussed in Byzantine art in various periods. For believers, the cross is a reminder of devotion to God, Christian values and moral principles. The meaning of the cross guides believers in their religious life and encourages them to deepen their religious experience. In Byzantine art, the cross is communicated through its iconographic structure, its visual expression. The use of the cross as a central symbol calls believers to focus on their religious experience and emphasizes the core messages of the Christian faith. The decorations, embroideries and details of the cross try to convey the details of the cross by providing an immersive experience of the visual appearance. The cross in Byzantine art: Iconography, symbolism and meaning examines the value and management of the cross in Byzantine art. The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith with iconographic and symbolic meanings. Iconographically it represents the crucifixion of Christ, permanently it signifies salvation, mercy and hostility. The use of the cross in Byzantine art encourages believers to deepen their religious experience and upholds the values of Christians. The assessment of the iconography and meanings of the cross is of great detail in terms of taking into account the religious expression of Byzantine art and emphasizing important elements of the Christian faith