

# HADES AS THE RULER OF THE DAMNED IN THE MOSAIC COMPLEX ON THE WEST WALL OF BASILICA SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA IN TORCELLO, ITALY

ALEKSANDRA KRAUZE-KOŁODZIEJ

The aim of this article is to show the figure of the ancient god Hades as an important part of Byzantine symbolic representations of the Last Judgement, using the example of the mosaic from the west wall of Basilica Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello, Italy. The article is divided into three main parts. The first part briefly introduces the mosaic complex from Torcello, providing a description of the place, the Basilica, and the mosaic. In the second part, the author focuses on the fragment of the mosaic presenting the figure of Hades in hell. In an effort to show the iconographical and cultural continuity between ancient and early medieval representations, the author compares this figure to its ancient prototype. The last part of the article portrays the development of the motif of the Last Judgment by looking at other chosen representations. In conclusion, the author proposes a possible meaning of the presence of Hades in the mosaic of Torcello.

## Introduction

“There [in Hades] also among the dead, so men tell, another Zeus [Haides] holds a last judgment upon misdeeds” (Aeschyl. *Suppl.* 230).<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Greek tragedian describes one of the most mysterious and terrifying gods in the ancient world: Hades, the god of death. Although this mighty divinity already ruled the ancient Greek Underworld in the time of Homer (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 9,457; Hes. *Theog.* 455), he did not receive the power to judge the dead until the post-Homeric period (e.g. Aeschyl. *Eum.* 273sqq).<sup>2</sup> But why does the figure of this tremendous god appear so many centuries later, in Christian iconography? Was the impact of the idea of an

---

<sup>1</sup> Quotation after SMITH (1926).

<sup>2</sup> BREMMER (2004: 1076).

inevitable and powerful death so strong on the minds of the people that it survived despite the fall of antiquity?

This short article aims to present the figure of Hades (Pluto), a Hellenic-Roman god of the dead and ruler of the Underworld, as an important element of Byzantine symbolic representations of the Last Judgement.<sup>3</sup> The author would like to show this problem using the example of the early medieval representation of the Last Judgement on the west wall of Basilica Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello. The iconographic analysis and interpretation of this marvellous work of art will be the subject of the author's doctoral dissertation.

Studying the mosaic and the literature of the subject, the author got interested in the figure of Hades who is shown in the lower part of the mosaic as the ruler of the Underworld. The figure seems to play a significant role in the Christian representation of the Last Judgement and, in the author's opinion, has an important impact on the interpretation of the whole mosaic. However, despite extensive literature dedicated to the history of the Basilica and to the mosaic complex on its west wall,<sup>4</sup> the interpretation of the figure of a pagan god seems to be frequently omitted by the researchers interested in the representation from the Basilica in Torcello.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond all doubt, the author is aware of the complex character of this problem. The article is a part of a wider study of the conception of Damnation presented in the mosaic from the west wall of the Basilica in Torcello. The first attempt to interpret this elaborate subject matter has recently been published and is devoted to the representation of the bodies of the Damned in hell shown in the mosaic.<sup>6</sup> The author would now like to

---

<sup>3</sup> About Hades as a part of medieval and Byzantine iconography – see, e.g. LUCCHESI-PALLI (1970: 205–206); WESSEL (1971: 946–950); MIHÁLYI (1991: 145–148); SKRZYNIARZ (2002).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g. NIERO (s.d.), LORENZETTI (1939), DEMUS (1943), DEMUS (1944a), DEMUS (1944b), POLACCO (1984), FIOCCO (1965), ANDREESCU (1972), ANDREESCU (1976), VECCHI (1977), ANDREESCU–TARANTOLA (1984), POLACCO (1984), POLACCO (1999), CROUZET-PAVAN (2001), AGAZZI (2009), RIZZARDI (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Most researchers, especially in older publications, interpret this figure as Lucifer or Devil (among others: LORENZETTI (1939: 56), LORENZETTI (1956: 810), POLACCO (1984: 50, 67)). Some newer researchers see this figure as Hades (e.g. SKRZYNIARZ [2002: 167–168]). About the problem of misinterpretation of the figure of Hades in Byzantine and medieval iconography – see SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 8–9).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. KRAUZE-KOŁODZIEJ (2013).

focus on another part of this complex problem—the figure of the pagan god shown as the ruler of the Underworld.<sup>7</sup>

This article is divided into three main parts. The first part briefly introduces the mosaic complex from Torcello, providing a short description of the history of the place, the Basilica, and the mosaic. In the second part, the author focuses on the fragment of the mosaic that presents the figure of Hades in hell. In order to show the iconographical and cultural continuity between ancient and early medieval representations, the author compares this figure to its ancient prototype. The last part of the article is dedicated to the “Christianized” Hades in other selected representations of the Last Judgement.

### **Torcello and the mosaic complex from the west wall of the Basilica: A short description**

The scene presenting the figure of Hades is a part of an enormous representation of the Last Judgement that is situated on the west wall of the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello, on one of the islands in the region of the Venetian lagoon.

Currently, on the island of Torcello there is only a small country town with about eighteen inhabitants and several buildings: some houses, Santa Fosca Church, the remains of the baptistery of San Giovanni, the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, and two small fourteenth-century palaces containing the museum and the municipal archive. In the past, however, this island was an extremely important centre, influenced by, among others, the cultures of Rome, Byzantium, Ravenna, and Venice.<sup>8</sup>

Already in the period of the Roman Empire, according to archaeological excavations,<sup>9</sup> the island was inhabited by important dignitaries. Later on, in the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD, settlers from the mainland and from the Venetian lagoon arrived at the island escaping from the invasion of the barbarian tribes. In the next century, Torcello became the seat of the bishop and a part of the exarchate of Ravenna.<sup>10</sup> From this

---

<sup>7</sup> Some aspects of this problem have been presented on different occasions, e.g., at the International Conference in Athens “Wokół *Minosa i Meneksenosa* Platona (konteksty)” (21<sup>st</sup>–27<sup>th</sup> April 2013).

<sup>8</sup> About the history of Torcello – see, e.g. BATTAGLINI (1871), LORENZETTI (1939: 5–24), CROUZET-PAVAN (2001), ORTALLI (2009).

<sup>9</sup> About the excavations of the Roman remains – see, e.g. LECIEJEWICZ–TABACZYŃSKA–TABACZYŃSKI (1977).

<sup>10</sup> It is confirmed by the foundation inscription from Torcello – see note 11. About the inscription – see LAZZARINI (1969: 123–132); PERTUSI (1963–1964: 317–339).

period onward, the importance of Torcello grew dramatically. This growth was caused not only by intensive development of trade with Byzantium and other Adriatic Sea regions (especially from the 10<sup>th</sup> century) or the production of salt and wool, but also by the political independence of Torcello from nearby Venice. Unfortunately, when the lagoon gradually dried up, the island became an inaccessible swamp. Later, a malaria epidemic would come and bring the splendour of Torcello to an end. Most inhabitants moved to the nearby islands of Rialto, Burano, and Murano. The seat of the bishopric, moreover, was transferred to Murano island.

One of the buildings that can still be admired on the island of Torcello is Basilica Santa Maria Assunta (Basilica of the Assumption of Mary). According to the remains of the foundation inscription, its construction, founded by Isaac, the exarch of Ravenna, began in 639 AD under the emperor Heraclius.<sup>11</sup> Although the church has been rebuilt many times,<sup>12</sup> one can still see the outline of its original layout as a Roman basilica—a three-aisled building, without a transept, divided with columns, and having apses at the end of the nave and aisles.<sup>13</sup> The decoration of the interior of the church consists mainly of decorative sculptural elements and mosaics, which appeared in their final shape in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> The mosaic decorations of the Basilica include: the representation of Theotokos with twelve Apostles in the main apse; the scene of the Annunciation on the triumphal arch; and angels that support the Lamb of God together with Christ between archangels and saints in the right apse.

The most extended mosaic that occupies almost the whole west wall of the Basilica is the scene described commonly as the representation of the

---

<sup>11</sup> The foundation inscription (today situated on the left side of the altar in the Basilica):

*'[In nomine domi]NI DeI Nostri IHV XP. IMPerante DomiNo Nostro HERAclio  
[perpetuo] AVGVSto Anno XXVIII INdictione XIII FACTA  
... SancTe MARIE DeI GENETricis EX IVSSione PIO ET...  
DomiNo Nostro ISAACIO EXCELLentissimo ExarCho PATRICIO ET DeO  
VOLente  
... OEYSMER... ET... VS EXERC. HEC FABRIca EST...  
...M ÷ MA /.../ B.....\ GLORIOSVM MAGISTRO MILitum  
AR.....RES.....EI...EM IN HVNC LOCVM SVVM  
SIE..... SVIVS ECCLesiae.'*

(quotation after: LAZZARINI (1969: 124).

<sup>12</sup> About alterations of the Basilica – see among others: VECCHI (1977), ANDREESCU–TARANTOLA (1984), VECCHI (1985), POLACCO (1999).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g. POLACCO (1984: 12–13).

<sup>14</sup> About sculptural decoration – see, e.g. POLACCO (1976), POLACCO (1984: 27–37). About mosaic decoration – see, e.g. POLACCO (1984: 47–104).

Last Judgement (Fig. 1). The date of erection of this mosaic complex provoked many discussions among different scholars.<sup>15</sup> According to the most recent research, the mosaic was built most likely as a result of the reconstruction of the Basilica, which occurred at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of the family Orseolo in Torcello.<sup>16</sup> From this period comes the larger part the mosaic (the lower part in the middle in the stripe with representation of the *Anastasis*, *Deesis* scene together with the young men in the background and the lower part of the representation with the Apostles sitting on the left side, the other lower parts of the complex mosaic with the exception of the fragment above the main entrance to the Basilica and the scene of the Resurrection of the dead from the seas on the right side of the fourth stripe).<sup>17</sup> The rest of the mosaic complex comes from the period of its first restoration, which was prompted by damages caused by the earthquake that affected the Lagoon in 1117.<sup>18</sup> To the half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century dates the fragment with the scene of *Psychostasis* and the representation of Mary-the-Orant above the main entrance to the Basilica, together with the fragment of the scene showing the Resurrection of the dead on the right side of the fourth stripe.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Scholars provide various dates for the mosaic depending on different criteria. Most of them gave the date of the erection of the mosaic decoration basing on stylistic and iconographic comparisons. The literature of the subject, especially older publications, give various dates. For instance, Venturi dates the whole composition to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (VENTURI [1902: 492]), Conton introduces the division of the composition into two parts (four lower stripes dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and two higher stripes dating to the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century) (CONTON [1927: 6–7]), Lorenzetti dates the entire mosaic to the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century (LORENZETTI (1956: 809)) and according to Musolino four lower stripes come from the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century and the rest of the complex comes from the 13<sup>th</sup> century (MUSOLINO [1964: 17]).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. ANDREESCU (1976: 260sqq).

<sup>17</sup> RIZZARDI (2009: 62sqq).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g. POLACCO (1984: 26); ANDREESCU (1976).

<sup>19</sup> ANDREESCU (1976: 250–252, fig. 8); RIZZARDI (2009: 67).



Fig. 1. The mosaic complex from the west wall of Basilica Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello. CHRISTE (2000: fig. 11)

Although the representation has deteriorated over time and has been the subject of several restoration and conservation processes,<sup>20</sup> its iconographic programme probably remained unchanged. The composition is divided into six stripes presenting different scenes. Overlooking the whole mosaic, in the centre there is the Crucifixion of Christ with Mary and Saint John on either side. The scene dominates the entire mosaic. Under this representation there is the scene of *Anastasis* (the Resurrection of Christ), between two archangels, Michael and Gabriel. The stripe below shows, in the centre, Christ in the oval frame with Mary and Saint John the Baptist. They are surrounded by twelve Apostles and saints (the scene of *Deesis*). Below, in the centre of the following stripe, there is *Etimasia* (the preparation of the Throne for Christ for the Last Judgement), with angels blowing the trumpet and the Resurrection of the dead from lands and seas on either side. Below, under the Throne, there is *Psychostasis* (the archangel Michael and the Devil weighing human souls). On Michael's

---

<sup>20</sup> On the restoration of the mosaic decoration in the Basilica of Torcello – see, e.g. POLACCO (1984: 105–119).

## Hades as the ruler of the Damned

side there is the representation of the Blessed in Paradise. The scene of the Damned is depicted on the other side, cracked down by two angels to hell. In the centre of the lowest stripe that surrounds the door, Mary is shown in the pose of Orant. The following figures appear on the left, beneath the Blessed: Abraham accepting souls, Mary, the Good Scoundrel, the Gates of Paradise, and Saint Peter. On the right, meanwhile, there is the scene showing six different parts of hell with disarticulated corpses of the Condemned suffering for their sins.

### Hades on the throne: A brief study of the motif

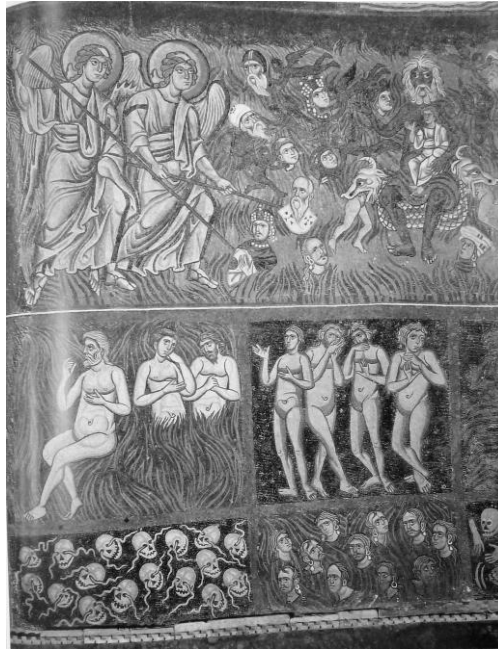


Fig. 2. The representation of hell from the mosaic complex in Torcello.  
BASCHET (1996: 353)

This article focuses on the scene on the right in the penultimate stripe from below, depicting the first part of hell, in which two angels whip the Condemned to flames (Fig. 2).<sup>21</sup> These flames come from the oval frame of Christ, shown in the scene above. The Christian Underworld is shown

---

<sup>21</sup> The scene below showing other parts of hell and its interpretation has been analysed on another occasion – see KRAUZE-KOŁODZIEJ (2013).

here as a place filled with tongues of fire between which there are heads of rich sinners—kings (crowns and jewellery), popes (*pallium*), Eastern dignitaries (turbans), monks (hood), etc.—and flying, winged, blue-skinned demons. The whole right part of the scene is occupied by the figure of Hades sitting *en trois quarts* on the throne. He is shown in the iconographical type of an old man with long, white hair, white beard, and moustache. His body, covered with dark blue, inhuman skin, has distinctly outlined strong muscles. He is nude, wearing just a brown loincloth. His sitting position emphasizes the roundness of his stomach. He has long, pointed, white nails on both his hands and his feet. His facial expression is stern, underlined by prominent cheekbones, a long slender nose, and ominous eyes looking in both sides and with which he can see everything and everyone.

Hades here is shown as the ruler of the Underworld who sits on the throne made of two antithetical goat heads swallowing bodies of the Damned. The goat heads serve as armrests and are joined by the trunk of a snake or dragon, which forms the throne's seat.

Hades holds on his lap a young, barefooted man wearing a long tunic and *pallium*. Some researchers interpret the figure as the Antichrist,<sup>22</sup> while others see a wealthy man from the evangelical parables about Saint Lazarus (Lc 16,19–31).<sup>23</sup> Both characters make the same ominous gesture: raising their right hands high towards the Condemned. This redoubling emphasizes the strong meaning of the gesture and makes it even more significant.

Some researchers, especially in older publications, describe the figure on the throne as Lucifer or the Devil. Most of the newest research, however, recognizes the figure as Hades, albeit without providing a wider interpretation.<sup>24</sup> The strongest argument for this identification is the comparison with ancient Greco-Roman culture and the manner in which Hades was represented in it.

In antiquity, Hades (Αἰδης Ἄδης, Αἰδης Αἰδωνεύς)<sup>25</sup> was the King of the Underworld, the god of death and the dead, described variously as “Zeus of the nether world” (Hom. *Il.* 9,457),<sup>26</sup> “Haides, pitiless in heart, who dwells under the earth” (Hes. *Theog.* 455),<sup>27</sup> “Lord of the dead”

---

<sup>22</sup> Cf. e.g. POLACCO (1984: 50, 67).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 174).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. note 5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. BREMMER (2004: 1076). Etymology of the name of Hades and further bibliography – see SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 15–16).

<sup>26</sup> Translation after MURRAY (1924).

<sup>27</sup> Translation after EVELYN-WHITE (1914).



## Hades as the ruler of the Damned

(Aeschyl. *Pers.* 629),<sup>28</sup> or “the god below” (Soph. *Aj.* 571).<sup>29</sup> He was featured in many Greek myths, including the fight with Cronus and the abduction of Persephone, to name a few examples.<sup>30</sup>

His function as the ruler of the dead was mentioned by many ancient Greek and Roman authors: Hesiod (*Theog.* 850: “Hades trembled where he rules over the dead below”),<sup>31</sup> Aeschylus (*Eu.* 273sq: “For Haides is mighty in holding mortals to account under the earth, and he observes all things and within his mind inscribes them”),<sup>32</sup> and Seneca (*Her. F.* 707sq: “What of him who holds sway over the dark realm? Where sits he, governing his flitting tribes? (...) A plain lies round about this where sits the god [Haides], where with haughty mien his awful majesty assorts the new-arriving souls. Lowering is his brow, yet such as wears the aspect of his brothers and his high race; his countenance is that of Jove, but Jove the thunderer; chief part of that realm’s grimness is its own lord, whose aspect whate’er is dreaded dreads”).<sup>33</sup>

Although Hades was honoured during funeral ceremonies, few actual temples or shrines were dedicated to him in the ancient world.<sup>34</sup> This is perhaps due to the great fear that this god—who was also associated with his Kingdom and with the horrible fate of the dead—evoked in Greeks and Romans alike.<sup>35</sup>

In ancient iconography, Hades was represented as a mature, or even old, man with a long beard and moustache, standing or sitting on a throne

---

<sup>28</sup> Translation after SMITH (1926).

<sup>29</sup> Translation after JEBB (1893).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. detailed description SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 16–31).

<sup>31</sup> Translation after EVELYN-WHITE (1914).

<sup>32</sup> Translation after SMITH (1926).

<sup>33</sup> Translation after MILLER (1917).

<sup>34</sup> Pausanias writes about the temple dedicated to Hades in Eleusis: Paus. 6, 25, 2: “The sacred enclosure of Hades and its temple (for the Eleans have these among their possessions) are opened once every year, but not even on this occasion is anybody permitted to enter except the priest. The following is the reason why the Eleans worship Hades; they are the only men we know of so to do. It is said that, when Heracles was leading an expedition against Pylus in Elis, Athena was one of his allies. Now among those who came to fight on the side of the Pylians was Hades, who was the foe of Heracles but was worshipped at Pylus” – translation after JONES–ORMEROD 1918.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Str. 8, 3, 14. BREMMER claims that Hades had almost no cult because he was a divinity that was difficult to understand and took on many functions – cf. BREMMER (2004: 1076).

(Fig. 3–4). Frequently, he was shown in different mythological scenes connected with this character, e.g., the abduction of Persephone.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 3. Hades on the throne, volute krater, ca 330–310 BC, Antikensammlungen, Munich. (<http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/K14.1C.html>)

---

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the ancient iconography of Hades – see, e.g., SOPHULIS (1884); ARIAS (1960: 1081–1082); SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 31–34).



Fig. 4. Hades on the throne with Cerberus, statue, Hellenistic period, Archaeological Museum, Pammukale. SKRZYNIARZ (2002: fig.

### Iconographical comparisons

Hades (Pluto), the Hellenic-Roman god of the dead and ruler of the Underworld, like many other motifs (e.g., Good Shepherd, Orant), was brought from the ancient world to the Christian world. These examples show the iconographical and cultural continuity between ancient and early Christian tradition, illustrating the connection between pagan spirituality and the new era, influenced by Christian religion, that wanted to take advantage of well-known ancient motifs.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, Hades is present in early medieval art. This figure appears firstly in the representations of the Harrowing to Hell (*Anastasis*) and then in the scenes of the Last Judgement. Sławomir Skrzyniarz analysed more than 100 examples of these motifs in his important monograph. Indeed, Skrzyniarz “offers a characterisation of the various types of the image,

---

<sup>37</sup> Basic bibliography, apart from publications devoted to separate motives, dedicated to this phenomenon – see SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 7, note 1).

traces their origins, and attempts a chronological reconstruction of the image's reception and its changing functions in Byzantine art."<sup>38</sup>

In this short article, the author presents the scene of Hades as the ruler of the Condemned in hell shown on the west wall of Basilica in Torcello. The correct recognition and the interpretation of the figure, based on its ancient prototype, seems extremely significant for the understanding of the whole mosaic. Even though the scene from Torcello is in every respect unique—due to its theological and iconographical programme expanding upon the complex meaning of Hades—it is just one example of the presence of this figure in early medieval art. Indeed, other works of art, although less complex, depict a similar motif.

Likely the earliest known example of the Scene of the Last Judgement with Hades on the throne shown as the ruler of the Condemned comes from the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 5).<sup>39</sup> It is an ivory plaquette from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The scene presenting Hades is nearly identical to the later motif from Torcello. They differ in two details, however. The young man on the lap of the pagan god here is nude, and the throne appears to be composed of four dragon heads swallowing different parts of the bodies of the Damned. The similarity of the two representations is so apparent that researchers believe that the authors of the Torcello mosaic were familiar with its plaquette prototype.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 232).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 167).

<sup>40</sup> SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 168).



Fig. 5. Fragment of the ivory relief presenting the Last Judgement, mid-10<sup>th</sup> century, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. SKRZYNIARZ (2002: fig. 81 - fragment)

Another example of the same scene comes from an 11<sup>th</sup> century manuscript, now kept in National Library in Paris (Ms. Grec. 74 fol. 51<sup>v</sup>) (Fig. 6).<sup>41</sup> This time, however, the representations are not so alike—Hades does not make any gesture, he sits on the throne made of a one-headed dragon (?) with the tail of a fish, and the young man on his lap is sitting centrally.

---

<sup>41</sup> SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 168).



Fig. 6. Fragment of the miniature presenting the Last Judgement, Graec. 74, fol. 51v, 11<sup>th</sup> century, Paris. SKRZYNIARZ (2002: fig. 82 – fragment)

Finally, the author would like to discuss the image of Hades depicted on one of two icons with the scene of the Last Judgement from Saint Catherine's monastery (Sinai), dated to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 7).<sup>42</sup> Due to the poor state of preservation, the scene is quite difficult to describe and interpret. What one can recognize for certain is that the figure of Hades was present in the upper part of the representation of hell, similar to the other works of art, mentioned above. This time again, as on the manuscript kept in Paris, the pagan god of the dead is shown sitting on a one-headed dragon with his skin covered with scales. Hades does not

---

<sup>42</sup> PACE (2006: 58).

## Hades as the ruler of the Damned

make any gesture. He holds the figure of a young man (just two legs of the figure are visible) on his lap.

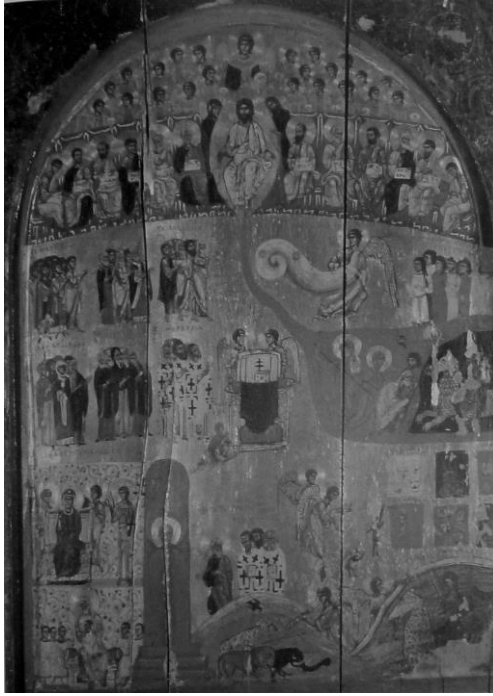


Fig. 7. Icon with the scene of the Last Judgement, St. Catherine monastery (Sinai), 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. PACE (2006: 59)

Other examples of the described motif that come from the same period are very similar to the works of art mentioned above.<sup>43</sup> It seems clear, however, that the figure of Hades in the Torcello mosaic is more complex than the other examples. The iconography of the pagan god in the Basilica Santa Maria Assunta is not only the most developed and clearly comparable to the ancient prototype of the motif (iconographic type of an old man sitting on the throne), but it has also become an essential element of the whole programme of the mosaic. It is perhaps true that the presence of Hades as the ruler of hell might be explained by the need to fill the throne of the “ruler of the Christian Underworld.” In this way, Hades’ presence is due to a simple transfer of the ancient motif with an obvious change of meaning. Nevertheless, the fact that the same figure of Hades

---

<sup>43</sup> Cf. SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 168–169).

was repeated one more time in the scene of *Anastasis*, above, substantially expands its new Christian significance presented in Torcello (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Fragment of the mosaic complex from Torcello showing Hades defeated under the feet of Christ in the scene of *Anastasis*. POLACCO (1984: 84)

The same figure of the pagan god, shown as an old man with long white hair, a white beard, and a moustache, with his body covered with dark blue, inhumane skin, appears in the representation of *Anastasis* where he lies under the feet of Christ who defeats him, treading on him and hurling him to hell. In the perspective of this scene, the representation of Hades as the ruler of the Dead in hell below acquires a much stronger significance. The pagan god appears here as a completely defeated ruler of the Damned, symbolizing the final failure of Evil and, as Skrzyniarz says, “becoming [himself] identified with the eschatological hell.”<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

In this article, the author presented the figure of Hades as a motif that has been transferred from ancient to early medieval iconography. It played an especially significant role in the representation of the Last Judgement. One of the most extended examples of this theme is the scene showing Hades as a ruler of the Damned in the mosaic complex from the west wall of the

---

<sup>44</sup> SKRZYNIARZ (2002: 234).



Basilica in Torcello. This figure of the pagan god was presented—without doubt intentionally—on the right side of the lower part of the mosaic, in the place that was clearly visible to the faithful every time they exited the Basilica. Even though the full analysis of this complex problem requires further, more detailed research, one can suppose that the presence of Hades sitting on his throne in hell emphasizes, in the author's opinion, the real subject of the enormous mosaic on the west wall. The mosaic portrays the idea of the final overcoming of Death, Sin, and Evil, thanks to God's love and the greatest sacrifice that He could have given to His people—the death and Resurrection of His Son.

## References

- AGAZZI 2009 = M. AGAZZI: *L'architettura della Basilica alla svolta del 1008*. In: G. Gentili (ed.): *Torcello alle origini di Venezia tra Occidente e Oriente*. Venezia 2009, 50–59.
- ANDREESCU 1972 = I. ANDREESCU: *Torcello I, II*. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972) 183–223.
- . 1976 = I. ANDREESCU: *Torcello III*. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 30 (1976) 246–341.
- . 1984 = I. ANDREESCU – B. TARANTOLA: *Modifiche alla Cattedrale di Torcello nel restauro del 1854–58*. *BdA* 69 (1984) 89–122.
- ARIAS 1960 = P. E. ARIAS: *Hades*. In: *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica – classica e orientale*. v. 3. Roma 1960, 1081–1082.
- BATTAGLINI 1871 = N. BATTAGLINI: *Torcello antica e moderna*. Venezia 1871.
- BREMMER 2004 = J. N. BREMMER: *Hades*. In: H. Cancik – H. Schneider (ed.): *Brill's New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*. v. 5. Leiden–Boston 2004, 1076–1077.
- CHRISTE 2000 = Y. CHRISTE: *Il Giudizio universale nell'arte del Medioevo*. Milano 2000.
- CONTON 1927 = L. CONTON: *Il grande mosaico di Torcello*. Venezia 1927.
- CROUZET-PAVAN 2001 = E. CROUZET-PAVAN: *Torcello: storia di una città scomparsa*. Roma 2001.
- DEMUS 1943 = O. DEMUS: *Studies among the Torcello Mosaics – I*, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 82/483 (1943), 132, 136, 138–141.
- . 1944a = O. DEMUS: *Studies among the Torcello Mosaics – II*, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 84/491 (1944), 41–45.
- . 1944b = O. DEMUS: *Studies among the Torcello Mosaics – III*, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 85/497 (1944) 195–200.

- EVELYN-WHITE 1914 = H. G. EVELYN-WHITE: *Hesiod. The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Theogony*. Cambridge–London 1914.
- FIOCCO 1965 = G. FIOCCO: *L'arte a Torcello e a Venezia*. In: *La Venezia del mille*. Firenze 1965, 203–221.
- JEBB 1893 = R. JEBB: *Sophocles. The Ajax of Sophocles*. Edited with introduction and notes by Sir Richard Jebb. Cambridge 1893.
- JONES–ORMEROD 1918 = W. H. S. JONES – H. A. ORMEROD: *Pausanias. Pausanias Description of Greece with an English Translation by W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H. A. Ormerod, M.A., in 4 Volumes*. Cambridge–London 1918.
- KRAUZE-KOŁODZIEJ 2013 = A. KRAUZE-KOŁODZIEJ: *Corpi dei Dannati all'Inferno sulla base della rappresentazione dalla Basilica di Torcello*. In: U. M. Mazurczak (ed.): *Studia Anthropologica. The borderlands of art history and culture*. Lublin 2013, 197–208.
- LAZZARINI 1969 = V. LAZZARINI: *Un'iscrizione torcellana del sec. VII*. In: V. Lazzarini: *Scritti di paleografia e diplomatica*. Padova 1969, 123–132.
- LECIEJEWICZ–TABACZYŃSKA–TABACZYŃSKI 1977 = L. LECIEJEWICZ – E. TABACZYŃSKA – S. TABACZYŃSKI: *Torcello. Scavi 1961–1962*. Roma 1977.
- LORENZETTI 1939 = G. LORENZETTI: *Torcello: la sua storia, i suoi monumenti*. Venezia 1939.
- , 1956 = G. LORENZETTI: *Venezia e il suo estuario: guida storico-artistica*. Roma 1956.
- LUCCHESI-PALLI 1970 = E. LUCCHESI-PALLI: *Hades*. In: *LchI*. v. 2. Rom–Freiburg–Basel–Wien 1970, 205–206.
- MIHÁLYI 1991 = M. MIHÁLYI: *Ade*. In: *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*. v. 1. Roma 1991–<2002>, 145–148.
- MILLER 1917 = F. J. MILLER: *Seneca. Tragedies*. Translated by Miller, Frank Justus. Loeb Classical Library Volumes. Cambridge–London 1917.
- MURRAY 1924 = A. T. MURRAY: *Homer. The Iliad with an English Translation by A. T. Murray, Ph.D. in two volumes*. Cambridge–London 1924.
- MUSOLINO 1964 = G. MUSOLINO: *Torcello, la perla della laguna*. Venezia 1964.
- NIERO s.d. = A. NIERO: *La Basilica di Torcello e Santa Fosca*. Venezia (s.d.).
- ORTALLI 2009 = G. ORTALLI: *Torcello e la genesi di Venezia*. In: G. Caputo – G. Gentili (ed.): *Torcello alle origini di Venezia tra Occidente e Oriente*. Venezia 2009, 24–31.

## Hades as the ruler of the Damned

- PACE 2006 = V. PACE (ed.): *Alfa e Omega: il giudizio universale tra Oriente e Occidente*. Castle Bolognese 2006.
- PERTUSI 1963–1964 = A. PERTUSI: *L'iscrizione torcellana dei tempi di Eraclio*. In: F. Barišć (ed.): *Mélanges Georges Ostrogorsky* 2 (1963–1964), 317–339.
- POLACCO 1976 = R. POLACCO: *Sculture paleocristiane e altomedievali di Torcello*. Treviso 1976.
- . 1984 = R. POLACCO: *La cattedrale di Torcello*. Venezia 1984.
- . 1999 = R. POLACCO: *Note sulla recreatio orseoliana della cattedrale di Torcello*, Venezia *Arti* 13(1999), 111–114.
- RIZZARDI 2009 = C. RIZZARDI: *La decorazione musiva: Torcello e la cultura artistica mediobizantina*. In G. Caputo – G. Gentili (ed.): *Torcello alle origini di Venezia tra Occidente e Oriente*. Venezia 2009, 60–85.
- SKRZYNIARZ 2002 = S. SKRZYNIARZ: *Hades. Recepcja, sens ideowy i przemiany obrazu pogańskiego boga w sztuce bizantyńskiej*. Kraków 2002.
- SMITH 1926 = H. W. SMITH: *Aeschylus. Aeschylus, with an English translation by Herbert Weir Smyth. Ph. D. in two volumes*. Cambridge 1926.
- SOPHULIS 1884 = T. P. SOPHULIS: *Hades in der antiken Kunst*. Würzburg 1884.
- WESSEL 1971 = K. WESSEL: *Hades*. In: *RBK*. v. 2. Stuttgart 1971, 946–950.
- VECCHI 1977 = M. VECCHI: *Santa Maria Assunta di Torcello un importante rifacimento posteriore al 1008*. *Aquileia Nostra* 47(1977) 290–295.
- . 1985 = M. VECCHI: *Modifiche alla Cattedrale di Torcello nel restauro del 1854–1858*. *RArch* 9(1985) 46–55.
- VENTURI 1902 = A. VENTURI: *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. II. *Dall'arte barbarica alla romanica*. Milano 1902.