7 Decorated Liturgical Majuscule

In a study dedicated to Byzantine majuscules used as display scripts published in 1977, Herbert Hunger distinguished three different types of Auszeichnungsmajuskel: Alexandrinische, Konstantinopolitanische and Epigraphische.480 In the first two types, Hunger identified the underlying structures of Alexandrian majuscule and Biblical majuscule respectively but as far as the graphic structure of the third type was concerned he invoked a majuscule found in epigraphy which, although it had never achieved canonical status, was easily recognisable as a distinct style. In the same year Hunger published an article entirely dedicated to the Epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel, distinguishing its various manifestations on the basis of the degree of ornamentation found in the letters.481 In this article he remarked how in the titles and initial letters found in certain manuscripts, above all theological and liturgical ones, from the tenth and the eleventh centuries, a new type of script appeared (which he called generically Schnörkelschrift), the basic structure of which was formed by so-called liturgical majuscule and which was characterised by an especially noteworthy use of decorative elements, each letter being accompanied by flourishes, curls, bows, leaves and crosses.482 Hunger identified the substantive difference between this majuscule and the more ornate manifestations of Epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel in the perfectly rounded forms—flawless circles which could have been drawn with a compass—of epsilon, theta, omicron, sigma, phi and omega, which are found in Schnörkelschrift but are unknown in the epigraphic display majuscule.483

Before Hunger, Kurt Weitzmann had shown interest in this display script, though only in passing. In connection with the initial letters found in the codices Vat. gr. 1613 (Synaxarion; end of tenth century.) and Vat. Urb. gr. 20 (John Chrysostom, Homilies on St Matthew’s Gospel; copied by the monk Gregory in the year 992 CE), he used the term Silhouetten-Ornamentik, characterised by simple lines.

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480 Hunger 1977a.
482 Hunger cites the following manuscripts as examples of the script: Berol. Phillipps 1538; Marc. gr. I 8; Athon. Dionysiou 34; Baltimore W 526; Oxon. Canon. gr. 110; Paris. gr. 70; Kalabryta i; Sin. gr. 204; Vindob. Suppl. gr. 50* and Theol. gr. 240.
483 According to Hunger 1977b, 200 n. 25, single round letters, drawn according to Schnörkelschrift, can be found in a number of codices, even though the display majuscules found in these follow different styles: for instance omicron in codex Athon. Dionysiou 588 (Pelekanidis / Christou / Tsoumis / Kadas 1974, fig. 281), or epsilon in manuscripts Vindob. Suppl. gr. 52, f. 76r (Buberl / Gerstinger 1938, pl. XXVI, 2) and Paris. gr. 230 (Weitzmann 1935, fig. 216).
pearl motifs and arabesques.\textsuperscript{484} Weitzmann traced the origins of this graphic type back to the beginning of the tenth century and singled out as the earliest example of the type the codex Mosq. GIM Vlad. 98 (Savva 96) (John Chrysostom, \textit{Homilies on the Letter of St Paul to the Romans}, copied by the monk Nicholas in the year 917 CE).\textsuperscript{485} Weitzmann also used the term \textit{Perlschnur muster}, in connection with other important manuscripts from the tenth century, indicating an evolution of this style of ornamentation with the addition of other vegetal elements as well as motifs in the form of chalices and hearts, modelled on the style of \textit{Blütenblatt-Ornamentik}.\textsuperscript{486}

Following Weitzmann, both Suzy Dufrenne\textsuperscript{487} and Axinia Džurova\textsuperscript{488} have used the expression \textit{Perlschnur-Initialen} to refer to this \textit{Auszeichnungsmajuskel}, distinguishing—in various manuscripts written in minuscule in the tenth century—different types on the basis of different combinations of the ornamental elements.\textsuperscript{489}

This particular display majuscule has been, as this bibliographical survey shows, the one most frequently referred to both by historians of Byzantine illumination and Greek palaeographers, and in most cases the references have consisted in the identification of the majuscule in individual manuscripts or in groups of manuscripts which are more or less uniform in the style of writing or decoration (or both).

However, before examining the characteristics of the script, two preliminary comments are in order. First, the corpus of manuscripts which have been investigated consists of about fifty codices, identified from bibliographies. Thus an ex-


\textsuperscript{485} Weitzmann 1935, 32. See Amfilokhij 1879, pls XII–XIII; Cereteli / Sobolevski 1911, pl. IV; Lefort / Cochez 1932, pl. 21; Lake VI (1936), no. 216, pls 377–378. See also Vogel / Gardthausen 1909, 361.

\textsuperscript{486} Weitzmann 1935, 14, 16–18, mentions the following manuscripts: Berol. Phillipps 1538; Paris. gr. 70; Paris. gr. 139 and Oxon. Canon. gr. 110.

\textsuperscript{487} Dufrenne 1981, 459; Dufrenne 1987, 47 n. 23, 55.

\textsuperscript{488} Džurova 2001, 72, 282.

\textsuperscript{489} The typologies identified by Dufrenne 1981, 459, and Džurova 2001, 72, are as follows: initials with stems and knots (Vat. gr. 73 and Marc. gr. Z. 53); initials with pearl strings or \textit{Perlschnur-Initialen} (Paris. gr. 146, Paris. gr. 1419 and Vat. gr. 1615); initials with pearl strings with floral motifs or \textit{blütenartige Perlschnur-Initialen} (Vat. gr. 364); initials with foliate motifs, such as palmettes together with braids or strings of pearls (Paris. gr. 629).
haustive census of all the available examples is not the aim of this present study. Secondly, the reasons which have led me to adopt the term ‘decorated liturgical’ for this display majuscule, in preference to the terms used by Hunger (Schnörkelschrift) and by Weitzmann (Silhouetten- and Perlschnur-Initialen). As Hunger pointed out, liturgical majuscule is the script which underlies this display majuscule but the crucially distinguishing criterion for identification is the greatly enhanced decorative element. As we shall see, in contrast to a generic use of liturgical majuscule as display script, in this particular majuscule the set of ornamental elements used for each single letter is very highly developed. Furthermore, and again in contrast to liturgical majuscule, this ‘decorated’ variant appears to have been used exclusively as a display script to indicate separate sections of the text, so for titles, initial letters and incipits. The exceptions to this rule consist of a handful of manuscripts in which single letters of decorated liturgical majuscule are inserted, irregularly, into the liturgical majuscule used for the text: this is the case for example in several pages of the manuscripts Oxon. Bodl. Canon. gr. 92 (Gospel lectionary, eleventh century); Vindob. Suppl. gr. 122 (Gospel lectionary, eleventh century); Paris. Coislin 31 (Gospel lectionary, tenth–eleventh centuries). These characteristics suggest that a new name for this script would express more accurately than Weitzmann and Hunger’s terminology, exclusively focused on ornamentation, does the correct relationship from a palaeographical point of view between this script and the liturgical majuscule which underlies it while at the same time clarifying the structural and functional differences between the two.

Let us now look at the characteristics by describing above all the different manifestations which have so far been identified. These can be roughly grouped into three branches, corresponding to the main categories of liturgical majuscule:

490 On liturgical majuscule used as a display script, see Orsini 2013, 44–52, and paragraph 6.3 of the Liturgical Majuscule chapter in this volume.
492 Buberl / Gerstinger 1938, 110 and pl. XLVI, 3; Hunger / Hannick 1994, 209.
493 Omont 1892, pl. 22; Hatch 1939, pl. 76; Cavallo 1967a, 123–124; Cavallo 1977a, 108 and pl. 45; Devreesse 1945, 26; Devreesse 1954, 29. In the first two manuscripts the text was copied in a liturgical majuscule the structure of which was based on pointed forms and with a conspicuous, if irregular, introduction of some letters (epsilon, theta, omicron, sigma, omega) of round design within a square module; in the third manuscript the text was copied in a monumental liturgical majuscule with contrasting modules and enlarged round letters. Unlike the two other manuscripts, in Paris. Coislin 31 the ornate liturgical majuscule is used as a display script.
494 On the different categories of liturgical majuscule, see Orsini 2013, 40–41, and paragraph 6.2.4 of the Liturgical Majuscule chapter in this volume.
A. modular contrasts (square module: epsilons, thetas, mus, nus, omicrons, sigmas, omegas, with possible enlargement of the forms; rectangular module, with the base shorter than the height: alphas, betas, gammas, deltas, etas, kappas, lambdas, pis, upsiylons); examples are Marc. gr. I 8 (Four Gospels; ninth–tenth centuries),\(^{495}\) Marc. gr. I 18 (Four Gospels; tenth century),\(^{496}\) and Oxon. Bodl. Auct. T. inf. II. 6 (Gospel lectionary; tenth century; Fig. 80);\(^{497}\)

B. unimodular, with letters all written within a rectangular module, including epsilons, thetas, omicrons, sigmas, omegas, which, even though they are laterally compressed, still preserve a rounded design; see Messin. F.V. 18 (Four Gospels; ninth–tenth centuries);\(^{498}\) Baltimore W 520 (Gospel lectionary; tenth century);\(^{499}\) Hierosol. Μεγάλη Παναγία 1 (Gospel lectionary; 1060–1061 CE);\(^{500}\)

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**Fig. 80:** Oxon. BL Auct. T. inf. II. 6, f. 73r.

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\(^{495}\) Weitzmann 1935, 15–16, figs 92–94; Nordenfalk 1938, pls 8–10; Hatch 1939, pl. LXII; Cavallo 1977a, pl. 33; Mioni 1967, 13–14; Gentile 1998, 137.

\(^{496}\) Weitzmann 1935, 8, figs 39–41; Mioni 1967, 24–25; Mioni / Formentin 1975, pls XXXIII, 2; Furlan 1978, figs 20–23, pl. 3; Agati 1992, 134–144, pl. 95.

\(^{497}\) Weitzmann 1996, 80, fig. 633; Hutter 1977, 8–9, no. 4, figs 27–30.

\(^{498}\) Fraccaroli 1897, 334–335; Vogel / Gardthausen 1909, 111; Mioni 1965, 143; Perria / Iacobini 1994; Iacobini / Perria 1998, pl. XXIII; Iacobini / Perria 2000; Orsini 2005b, 273–275. Three scribes collaborated in the production of this codex. Scribe A: ff. 10v, 14r–v, 80v lines 18–19 (a minuscule script, squarish in form), 81v, 126v (a minuscule similar to bouletée), 2r–10r, 12r–13v, 82r/v [Alexandrian majuscule and Biblical majuscule]; scribe B: ff. 15r–80v line 17, 83bisr–122v (calligraphic minuscule, slightly sloping to the left and of roundish design); scribe C: ff. 83r–v, 123r (oblong minuscule), 123v–125v (upright pointed majuscule). The display majuscule is only found on ff. 14r (scribe A) and 83r (scribe C), containing the titles to the Gospels.

\(^{499}\) Clark 1937, 347–348, pls LII, LXXI; Hatch 1939, pl. 68; Spatharakis 1981, 73, no. 301, pl. 528; Džurova 2001, 75.

\(^{500}\) Vogel / Gardthausen, 211; Lake V (1936), ms. 213, pl. 367; Spatharakis 1976, 57–59, fig. 26; Hunger 1977b, fig. 12; Galavaris 1979, fig. 102; Spatharakis 1981, no. 72, figs 127–129; Panayotis 2002, 24–27, no. 1 with pl. at page 27.
C. hypertrophic ornament and monumental design, occasionally enhanced by the enlargement of letters in a square module and rounded design (epsilon, theta, omicron, sigma, omega); examples are Berol. Phillipps 1538 (Hippiastrica, tenth century; Fig. 81–82);\textsuperscript{501} Vat. gr. 1613; Oxon. Canon. gr. 110 (Acts and Epistles; tenth century).\textsuperscript{502}

\textbf{Fig. 81:} Berol. Phillipps 1538, f. 39r.

\textbf{Fig. 82:} Berol. Phillipps 1538, f. 327r.

\textsuperscript{501} Studemund / Cohn 1892, 55; Cohn 1900, 158–160; Kirchner 1926, 16; Weitzmann 1935, 16–18, figs 104–115, and Weitzmann 1996, 28; Irigoin 1959b, 180–181; Weitzmann 1971, 194–195, fig. 176; Galavaris 1989, 334–335, fig. 2; McCabe 2007, 23–27, pls 3–5.

On occasion more than one of these tendencies can be found in a single manuscript: one of numerous examples of this combination is Paris. gr. 70 (Four Gospels; tenth century),\textsuperscript{503} which includes titles written in B (f. 9r) and C (f. 191r).

The chiaroscural contrast is contrived and at times highly accentuated, though there exist examples in which the pen strokes are thin or barely contrasted (see, for example, Berol. Phillipps 1538; Marc. gr. Z. 360 (Menologion; tenth century; Fig. 83–84);\textsuperscript{504} Vindob. Theol. gr. 240 (Four Gospels; end of tenth century.);\textsuperscript{505} Sin. gr. 204 (Gospel lectionary; tenth to eleventh centuries);\textsuperscript{506} Athen. gr. 57 (Four Gospels; second half of tenth century)).\textsuperscript{507} Sometimes the solemnity of the graphic design is emphasised with the use of coloured or gold ink.

\textsuperscript{503} Ebersolt 1926, pls 38.2–3, 40.1; Weitzmann 1935, 14–15, figs 78–84, 87–88; Spatharakis 1981, pl. 41; Agati 1992, 118–119, pls 3, 72; Džurova 2001, 69, 72, 73, 74, 78.
\textsuperscript{504} Agati 1992, 219, pl. 12.
\textsuperscript{507} Marava-Chatzinicolaou / Toufexi-Paschou 1978, 108–117, figs 217–231; Džurova 2001, 83, 87, fig. 94.
The really distinctive feature of this script, however, as has been pointed out, is the whole repertoire of decorative, geometric and non-figurative elements taken as a whole, used in varying proportions and amalgamations and continuously modified: small buttons and pearls, short thin horizontal strokes (on vertical strokes) or oblique strokes (both on oblique strokes drawn in the opposite direction and horizontal strokes), curls and hooks (especially on letters with curved strokes); to these can be added various vegetal elements, such as heart-shaped leaves (at the lower ends of certain letters) or trilobate terminations. At times these ornaments are not simple additions to the letters but form part of the strokes which compose them in terms of their structure (see for example the already cited manuscripts Vat. gr. 1613 and Athen. gr. 57). The way in which these elements are organised in each letter, however, changes not only from one manuscript to another but also from one letter to another within the same manuscript: buttons and pearls alternate with short thin lines and/or symmetrically arranged double hooks; curls and hooks, sometimes doubled, extend from the upper and lower curves of the letters epsilon, theta and omicron. These morphological variants found in each letter are so numerous that it is difficult to classify them as part of a fixed scheme.

As this is a display majuscule, it is important to pay attention to the scripts used for copying the texts in which it is found. As an indication of prevailing patterns, we can say that bouletée minuscule is the script which is predominantly found, in both its ‘canonical’ versions élancée and italique.\textsuperscript{508} However, other minuscules can also be found, such as rotonde\textsuperscript{509} and oblunga,\textsuperscript{510} Perlschrift\textsuperscript{511} and informal minuscule.\textsuperscript{512}

\textsuperscript{508} In various parts of her monograph on bouletée minuscule (Agati 1992, 117–125, 143–144, 201–214, 219), Maria Luisa Agati describes display majuscule. It can be found in the titles and initials of some manuscripts written in so-called ‘canonical’ bouletée (Oxon. Canon. gr. 110; Paris. gr. 70; Paris. gr. 139; Paris. gr. 676 and Marc. gr. I 18); in the production of bouletée élancée, in all those manuscripts attributable to scribe A (Athon. Vatopediou 108; Vat. Barb. gr. 310; Kalabryta 1; Leukos. 25; Mosq. GIM Vlad. 99 [Savva 99]; Paris. gr. 480; Paris. gr. 713 + Paris. Suppl. gr. 240, ff. 238r–241v; Patm. 43 and 44); in some manuscripts produced by scribe B, such as Marc. gr. Z. 360; Vat. Ottob. gr. 4 and Paris. Coislin 46, which—unlike the other codices produced by this scribe, which are written in Alexandrinische Auszeichnungsmajuskel—show this typical round majuscule with decorative pearls or curls: in the Marciana manuscript the display majuscule was used to write the titles, whereas in the Ottobonian and the Coislinian manuscripts it was used for the small initials. With regard to bouletée italique, display majuscule is found in the titles of Oxon. Auct. T. inf. II. 6, a manuscript not discussed in Agati 1992.

\textsuperscript{509} For instance in Mosq. GIM Vlad. 185 (Savva 313), 992 CE: Amfilokhij 1879, pl. XXI–XXIII; Vogel / Gardthausen 1909, 431; Cereteli / Sobolevski 1911, pl. X; Lefort / Cochez 1932, pl. 64; Lake VI (1936), no. 221, pl. 391.

\textsuperscript{510} For instance in Mosq. GIM Vlad. 98 (Savva 96), 917 CE.
even though, at least in the light of the present state of research, they appear to play a minor role. It is rarer to find this display script associated with texts written in majuscules; there are only a few cases where it is used with upright and sloping pointed majuscule, Biblical majuscule, and liturgical majuscule.

As for the textual content of the manuscripts, this majuscule was almost exclusively used for codices of the New Testament (Four Gospels and lectionaries); it is found in a few manuscripts containing the Old Testament or homilies and only very sporadically in secular texts.

This palaeographical and textual information reveals an important aspect of decorated liturgical majuscule: employed specifically to highlight titles, incipits, and selected portions of the text, it was devised for a purely symbolic role, almost as if its allotted task was to translate into visible form, in the graphic architecture of the page and with the support of the decorative elements in the strict sense, the manifestation of the divine. Its symbolic role was in effect the same as that of public and monumental writing—as seen on mosaics and in the frescoes of churches, in the silver and ivory objects used in the liturgy, and in icons, from at least the sixth century—which can be seen (as far as the development of certain ornamental forms, the taste for rounded designs and the decorative elaboration of the letters are concerned) one of the models which inspired the creation of liturgical majuscule in general, in the context of which the display decorated variant emerged.

511 For instance in codices Athen. gr. 94, tenth century: Marava-Chatzinikolaou / Toufexi-Paschou 1978, figs 44–48; Athon. Koutloumousiou 61, second half of the eleventh century: Spatharakis 1981, no. 88, pl. 156; Vat. gr. 1613, end of the tenth century.
513 Among other manuscripts, see Baltimore W 520, tenth century: Hatch 1939, pl. 68; Spatharakis 1981, pl. 528; Džurova 2001, 75; Paris. gr. 280, end of the tenth century: Omont 1892, pl. XIX; Hatch 1939, pl. LXXIII; Cavallo 1977a, pl. 25; Crisci 1985, 123 n. 60, 124, pl. 5b.
515 Marc. gr. 18, ninth/tenth centuries.
517 Orsini 2012b.
In this connection, it should be pointed out that isolated individual elements characteristic of decorated liturgical majuscule in its earliest phase can be found in this wider context of graphic production, beyond scribal culture: for example, in several sixth and seventh-century mosaics in Jordan we find the motifs of pearls and small buttons attached to the letter-strokes, for instance *nu* in the Church of the Apostles in Madaba (578 CE; Fig. 85)\(^ {518}\) and the crypt of St Elianus (595/596 CE)\(^ {519}\) (*nu, kappa, tau, upsilon, epsilon, eta*), or St George’s Church in Khirbat Al-Samra near Bostra (seventh century)\(^ {520}\) (*nu*).

\(^{518}\) Piccirillo 1993, 96–108, figs 78, 80.

\(^{519}\) Piccirillo 1993, 124–125, figs 124, 125, 131, 133.

What we find in the ivory staurotheke attributed to the tenth century (probably before 963–969 CE)\(^{521}\) kept in the treasury of San Francesco in Cortona is different (Fig. 86): on the back of the reliquary panel two inscriptions remain (one in the form of a cross in the centre of the panel and the other on the borders) inscribed with all the characteristics of decorated liturgical majuscule. This is a singular example of a precise correspondence between the manuscript and non-manuscript manifestations of this display script, which can be attributed to a cultural climate in which there was a conscious exchange of ideas between the two spheres.

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Fig. 86: Cortona, Church of San Francesco, ivory staurotheke, verso.

In the eleventh century there are two more examples, in both of which—as in the earliest period—only single forms of decorated liturgical majuscule are found: the mosaic depiction of St John Chrysostom in the *katholikon* of St Luke’s Monastery in Phocis (*omega*)\(^{522}\) and the fresco of St Zosimus in the Church of Panagia Phorbiotissa in Asinou on Cyprus (*zeta* and *omega*).\(^{523}\)

In conclusion, we should examine briefly the chronology of the manuscripts used for the study of decorated liturgical majuscule. The manuscripts of certain date are Mosq. GIM Vlad. 98 (Savva 96) (917 CE); Oxon. Bodl. Auct. E. 2. 12 (St Basil, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 953 CE); Mosq. GIM Vlad. 185 (Savva 313) (John Climacus; 992 CE); Escorial. T.III.3 (gr. 163) (John Damascene, *Life of Barlaam and Josaphat*; 1057 CE); Hierosol. Μεγάλη Παναγία 1 (1060/61 CE); Lond. Lambeth Palace Library MS. 1214 (*Ottoteuch*; 1103 CE).\(^{526}\) For the initial period, however, two manuscripts can be cited which are attributable on palaeographical evidence to the period between the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth century, Marc. gr. I 8 and codex 18 of the ‘Fondo Vecchio’ of the Biblioteca Regionale Universitaria in Messina: the text of the first is written in a late artificial Biblical majuscule, while the second was copied by three scribes in a minuscule which oscillates between square and rounded and, on two pages, is close to *bouletée*. For the later period there is Vat. gr. 1231 (*Job*),\(^{527}\) attributable to the first half of the twelfth century, the text of which was copied by the scribe John Tarsites and commissioned by Leo Nikerites, *protonobelisimos, megas doux* and *anagrapheus* of Cyprus,\(^{528}\) and which can be seen as a late example of this display majuscule, even though sporadic and isolated revivals can be identified in later centuries (such as, for example, some initials in Paris. gr. 134 [*Catena on Job*], from the thirteenth century).\(^{529}\) Nevertheless, although this

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522 Cutler / Spieser 1996, 40, fig. 20. No record relating to the foundation of the *katholikon* survives: see ODB II (1991), 949–950 (with essential bibliography).

523 Cutler / Spieser 1996, 289, fig. 232. According to the dedicatory inscription by *magistros* Nikephoros Ischyrios (d. 1115 CE), the church of Panagia Phorbiotissa was founded in 1105/1106 CE: see ODB I (1991), 207–208 (with essential bibliography).

524 Lefort / Cochez 1932, pl. 32; Lake II (1934), no. 54, pls 98–99; Weitzmann 1935, 44, fig. 297; Hutter 1977, 14–15, no. 9, figs 54–56.

525 Vogel / Gardthausen 1909, 123; Graux / Martin 1891, 30–31, pl. IX.


528 Leo Nikerites was also the patron of Lond. Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 1214, mentioned above.

529 Parani 2002, pl. 194.
script can be seen as lasting from the end of the ninth century to the twelfth century, its period of flourishing must be limited to the tenth century, when the majority of the most representative manuscripts containing the script were produced such as Berol. Phillipps 1538, Marc. gr. I 18, Oxon. Canon. gr. 110, Paris. gr. 70, Paris. gr. 139 (*Psalterium*; tenth century),\(^5\) Marc. gr. Z. 360, Vindob. Theol. gr. 240. Most of these belong to different trends in illumination during the period of the so-called Macedonian Renaissance, with links to production in Constantinople and regions of western Asia Minor such as Bithynia.

Finally, when we consider the dated manuscripts listed above, it is clear that there is no line of specific development in the sense of progressively developing forms, structures and graphic organization, nor could there be given the atemporal iconic values the script embodies. Neither do the richness and complexity of the ornamentation lend themselves to being used as criteria for the dating of manuscripts: instances of now sober and now elaborate decoration can be found all through the period in which display majuscule was used. It should however be noted that manuscripts from the late eleventh century onwards show, at a general level, a predilection for laterally compressed modules, pointed rather than round designs, and for the addition of ornamental vegetal motifs at the lower ends of certain letter strokes.

\(^5\) Weitzmann 1929; Dufrenne 1991, 307, 317, 318, pl. 12; Agati 1992, 120–121, pl. 73.