



Summary :

The wall paintings in the church of Kiliçlar is the work of a local workshop and of good quality in general. Its iconographic program belongs to the "archaic group" of decorative programs with a significantly wide cycle of Infancy and Passion of Christ. However, a number of innovative elements point towards a late date of the church, in the final stages of this group, that is to the second quarter or the middle of the 10th century.

Date

First half of 10th c. (main phase of the wall paintings) / first half of 11th c. (portraits of the donors of the main church, wall-paintings of the chapel)

Geographical Location

Cappadocia, Göreme valley, mod. Göreme Vadisi, central Turkey

1. Layers of decoration– State of preservation

The majority of the wall paintings of [the church of Kiliçlar](#) belong to the same fresco layer, with the exception of two donors' portraits which were added later. The frescoes of the **domes**, of the central apse and mainly of the southern apse have been destroyed to a large extent. The frescoes on the walls of the church are also damaged. The wall paintings of the **narthex** have not been preserved, except of one scene, and in the lateral chapel only a few scenes remain.

2. Iconographic program, description of the frescoes

In the church Göreme 29 (Kiliçlar kilisesi or Ayneli kilise) at [Göreme](#) of [Cappadocia](#), the wall paintings cover the tripartite **bema** (triple-apsed Sanctuary), the nave, the narthex and the [lateral chapel no. 29a](#).

2.1. Sanctuary

In the central apse of the bema, the wall-paintings are preserved in the apex of the **barrel-vault** and on both sides of the apse. In the **semi-dome** of the central apse a **Majestas Domini** is depicted, with Christ enthroned among the Angelic Forces. The fragmentarily preserved inscription «κ[αί] λ[ό]γοντα» to the left allows us to reconstruct the **four symbols of the Evangelists** around the throne. Fiery wheels, cherubims, seraphims and archangels are depicted around the **mandorla**. In the apex of the barrel-vault there are two medallions with the personifications of the Sun to the north and of the Moon to the south. At the ends of the semicircular part of the apse some figures of Church Fathers are preserved; they are the Saints Athanasios, Blasios, Leontios, [Gregory of Nyssa](#) and [Gregory of Nazianzos](#). [Basil](#) and [John Chrysostom](#) were probably portrayed in the centre.¹ On the **soffit** of the **triumphal arch**, a cross inside a medallion is depicted in the apex and further lower, St Hypatios of [Gangra](#) is portrayed to the north and St Spyridon of Trimitheus to the south.

In the inner face of the pilasters of the main apse two military saints are depicted, of which only St George is still preserved on the northern pilaster; maybe on the southern one St Theodore was depicted. The front of the apse is occupied by a bust of Christ between two angels and beneath them the Saints Procopios, Orestes, Cyricus and perhaps his mother Julitta.² On the pilaster that separates the central apse from the **prothesis** stands Virgin Mary, turned towards the apse in a gesture of entreaty. Probably the corresponding position, i.e. the pilaster between the central apse and the **diakonikon**, would have been occupied by either Christ or John Prodromos.³ In the apse conch of the northern apse there are some traces of the figure of Virgin Mary holding Christ Child, framed by four saints, among which only the two southernmost are still preserved. They were probably Zachariah, John Prodromos' father, and Prodromos himself or Isaiah. St Theodote occupies the end of the apse conch to the south. In the semi-cylinder of the apse, the southern part of the **Communion of the Apostles** scene is still preserved. The southern apse decoration has been almost entirely destroyed. In the semi-cylinder of the apse, traces of martyrs are discerned.



2.2. Main church

In the nave there are scenes from the **Christological cycle**, with emphasis put upon the Infancy, as much as to the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ. In the central dome the Ascension is depicted, and on the **pendentives** the four Evangelists. Busts of Christ adorn the small domes of the eastern **corner bays**, while the vaults of the western ones feature the busts of archangels Michael and Gabriel in medallions. In the rest of the church (on the **barrel-vaults** of the eastern, northern and southern cross arm and in the apex of their **lunettes**) are depicted scenes of the Infancy of Christ: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Trial by Water, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Dream of Joseph, the Flight into Egypt and the **Presentation of Christ in the Temple**.

On the southern wall scenes from the baptismal cycle are painted; more precisely, the Angel appearing to John the Baptist, John the Baptist Greeting Christ, the Baptism, as well as some scenes from the Miracles: the Healing of the Blind Man and the Raising of Lazarus. The cycle of Passion is quite wide and covers parts of the southern, the western and the northern wall. The following scenes are depicted: Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Betrayal by Judas, Christ before the High Priests, Peter's Denial, Washing of the Feet, Christ before Pilate, Way of the Cross, Crucifixion, Deposition from the Cross, Entombment, Myrophores (Marys at the Tomb) and Resurrection. The narrative scenes are complete with the Blessing of the Apostles, the Pentecost and the Dormition of the Virgin.

Figures of prophets in medallions occupy the soffits of the dome-bearing arches, to the east and to the west. On the eastern arch, from north to south, the prophets Joel, Habakkuk, Amos, Hosea, Nahum, Micah, Malachi and Haggai are portrayed. On the western arch, from north to south, Sophonias, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Obadiah have been identified. On the rest of the arches, between the columns and the walls, are depicted the prophets Ezekiel, David and Solomon and the Saints Proclus, Ignatios, Photios, Aniketos, Theodotos, Plato, Polykarpos, Ktemon, Kallinikos, Tarasios, Kyprianos, Nikephoros. At the foot of the barrel-vaults are pictured Saints Mamas, Justos, Helpidios, Meletios, Alexander, Trypho, Kapito, Niketas, Phokas and Sisinius. On the soffit of the southern blind arch of the southwestern lateral compartment the Saints Sergios and Bakchos are depicted, and on the pilasters of the walls the martyrs Epimachos and Theophilos. To the south of the entrance St Eustathios is depicted. In the lower register of the northern and southern wall, two **portraits of donors** were added at a later phase.

2.3. Narthex

In the narthex, on the entrance lunette, Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child is portrayed. It is worth mentioning that this depiction has been painted directly upon the rock.

2.4. Chapel 29a

In the chapel 29a the scene of **Deesis** is preserved in the apse conch with Christ, Virgin Mary and Prodomos, and the scene of Nativity on the lunette of the southern arm. Furthermore, some figures of saints are preserved, as well as two representations of donors on the pilasters of the apse. Next to the figure of one of them there is the following fragmentary invocative inscription: «Κ(ύριε / βο/[ή]θη...».

3. Iconographic remarks

The wall paintings of Kılıçlar Kilisesi belongs to the "archaic group" of decorative programs, though its imagery presents certain peculiarities. This is partly due to the application of such an "archaic" program in an architectural type, the **cross-in-square** type, not similar to the one for which the program was initially conceived, i.e. the single-aisled church. At the same time, innovative iconographic elements are attested, setting apart the program of this church from the "archaic" group. The representation of the enthroned Christ among the angelic forces in the central apse and the development of the Christological cycle with emphasis upon the Infancy and the Passion of Christ are in accordance with the "archaic" imagery.

On the other hand, there are some elements marking a further step to the evolution beyond the "archaic" group. What is interesting for the succession of the events, which dominates the "archaic" iconographic programs in general, is that it gives way on certain occasions, to theological or liturgical questions, as can be noticed in the cycle of Passion. The strong influence from the liturgy is also



obvious in the decoration of the prothesis with the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child and with the Communion of the Apostles. Let us mention that the representation of the Communion of the Apostles in the church of Kiliçlar is one of the oldest surviving monumental depictions of this theme, which is rarely presented in side apses and is not quite frequent in Cappadocian churches. The representations of Virgin Mary on the pilaster between central apse and *prothesis* and the presumably corresponding Christ or Prodromos between central apse and *diakonikon*, two monumental compositions framing the entrance to the sanctuary form an early example on the evolution of the **templon barrier**; the type appears almost at the same time or a little later in the church of the Virgin in the monastery of Hosios Lukas (Phokis). Finally, the depiction of the Dormition of the Virgin, located on the southern wall of the church of Kiliçlar, is generally absent from the “archaic” iconographic programs.

4. Stylistic remarks

The frescoes of the church of Kiliçlar differ considerably from the decoration of the rest of the churches of the “archaic group”, but quite often these differences are a matter of quality. The decoration of Kiliçlar must be a product of a local artist that had worked in Cappadocia. Most of the depicted figures have short and bulky proportions, whereas any slender figures are sporadically met. The quality of the painted decoration of Kiliçlar is believed to be generally higher than the rest of the churches of the “archaic group”. Similarities with the style of the wall-paintings of Kiliçlar have been noticed in the miniature illuminations of the codex Paris. gr. 510. As far as the donors’ representations of the church of Kiliçlar and of the frescoes of the chapel 29a are concerned, it is believed that they bear stylistic affinities with [Kiliçlar kusluk](#) (Göreme 33)⁴; it has been suggested that the wall paintings of the chapel must be the work of the painter of Kiliçlar kusluk.⁵

5. Date

The main layer of frescoes is dated by some scholars, based mainly on stylistic standards, around 900.⁶ Cave and Jolivet-Lévy date the decoration a little later, to the second quarter of the 10th century until the middle of this century, because on the innovative elements that are present in the iconographic program of the church, such as the intense influence from liturgy as well as the depictions that form an early example on the evolution of the templon barrier.⁷ Jerphanion had ascribed the painted decoration in the end of the 10th century, mainly because of the architectural type of the church.⁸ The donors’ portraits of the main church belong to a later period, to the first half of the 11th century.⁹ Finally, [the wall-paintings of the chapel 29a](#) are chronologically placed in the 11th century in general¹⁰ or more specifically in the first half of this century,¹¹ according to the stylistic rendering of the scenes, which bears affinities with the one of [Kiliçlar kusluk](#) (first quarter of 11th c.). It’s worth mentioning that the chapel was cut in the rock later than the church.

1. According to Jolivet-Lévy, C., *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l’abside et de ses abords* (Paris 1991), p. 138.

2. See Jolivet-Lévy, C., *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l’abside et de ses abords* (Paris 1991), p. 139.

3. According to Jolivet-Lévy, C., *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l’abside et de ses abords* (Paris 1991), p. 139.

4. Wharton-Epstein, A., “The Problem of Provincialism: Byzantine Monasteries in Cappadocia and Monks in South Italy”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979), p. 30, note 6.

5. Rodley, L., *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (Cambridge 1985), p. 43.

6. Cormack, R., “Byzantine Cappadocia. The Archaic Group of Wall-Paintings”, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 30 (1967), p. 33 ff; Wharton-Epstein, A., “The Problem of Provincialism: Byzantine Monasteries in Cappadocia and Monks in South Italy”, *Journal of the Warburg and*



Courtauld Institutes 42 (1979), p. 30, note 6.

7. Cave, J., *The Byzantine Wall Paintings of Kiliçlar Kilise: Aspects of Monumental Decoration in Cappadocia* (Ph.D. Diss., Pennsylvania State University 1984), p. 249 ff; Jolivet-Lévy, C., *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris 1991), p. 141.

8. Jerphanion, G. de, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords 2* (Paris 1942), p. 418.

9. Wharton-Epstein, A., "The Problem of Provincialism: Byzantine Monasteries in Cappadocia and Monks in South Italy", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979), p. 30, note 6. Wharton-Epstein believes that the representation of the Dormition of the Virgin was added later, at the same time with the donors' portraits, an opinion that is not adopted by Jolivet-Lévy, C., *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris 1991), p. 137, note 417, who considers the Dormition scene to be contemporary to the main phase of the wall paintings.

10. Rodley, L., *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (Cambridge 1985), p. 43.

11. Wharton-Epstein, A., "The Problem of Provincialism: Byzantine Monasteries in Cappadocia and Monks in South Italy", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979), p. 30, note 6.

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Κιλιτσλάρ Κίλισεσί

<http://www.cappadociaonline.com/kiliclartr.html>

Glossary :

barrel-vault

vaulted, semi-cylindrical construction used often as roof.

bema

The area at east end of the naos in Byzantine churches, containing the altar, also referred to as the presbetry or hierateion (sanctuary). In these area take place the Holy Eucharist.

Christ in Glory (Majestas Domini)

Συμπληρώστε την περιγραφή στην γλώσσα μετάφρασης

christological cycle

In the iconographic programme of a church, the scenes inspired from the life of Christ, starting with the Annunciation and concluding with the Ascension.

Communion of the Apostles

Representation depicted usually in the cylindrical section of the apse of the Bema, where Christ distributes bread and wine to his disciples.

corner bays

In a cross-in-square church, they are the four compartements between the arms of the cross, that make inscribe the central cross into a square. They were usually covered with cross-or domical vaults.

cross-in-square church

Type of church in which four barrel-vaulted bays form a greek cross; the central square of their intersection is domed. The cross is inscribed into the square ground plan by means of four corner bays.

Deesis

Iconographic theme, an image of intercession for the salvation of the human race, which represents Jesus as the central figure, between the Virgin and St. John the Baptist

diakonikon

An auxiliary chamber of the church, also known in early years as *skeuophylakion*, which could be a separate building attached to the church. There were kept the sacred vessels but sometimes also the offerings of the faithful, the archive or library. In Byzantine churches the diakonikon becomes the sacristy to the south of the Bema, corresponding to the prothesis to the north, and forming along with them the triple sanctuary. It usually has an apse projecting to the east.

dome

A characteristic element of Byzantine architecture. The dome is a hemispherical vault on a circular wall (drum) usually pierced by windows. The domed church emerges in the Early Byzantine years and its various types gradually prevail, while they are expanded in the Balkans and in Russia.

donor's image

The representation of the church's donors, usually depicted along with a holy figure. The representations are frequently accompanied by inscriptions mentioning the names of the donors.

Hypapante (Presentation of Christ)

Christian feast which celebrated the presentation of Christ Child in the Temple by Virgin Mary (February 2). In the representations there are always depicted Virgin, the Child, Joseph and the Elder Simeon, and often attends the Anna alter Lucas (2.22-38)

intrados, soffit

The internal surface of an arch or barrel-vault.








mandorla (doxa)

(and mandrole) A round, elliptical or rhomboid bright aureole that encloses the whole figure of Christ, or more rarely the figure of the Virgin, in some representations

narthex

A portico or a rectangular entrance-hall, parallel with the west end of an early Christian basilica or church.



	pendentive
Triangular surface used for the transition from the square base of the church to the hemispheric dome.	
	prothesis
In ecclesiastical architecture, the sacristy to the north of the sanctuary. Usually it has an apse projecting to the east. It is the chamber where the eucharistic elements were prepared (<i>Proskomide</i>) before the Communion.	
	semi-dome
The vaulted crown of an apsed niche. The semi-dome of the apse of the Bema may be also called a conch.	
	symbols of the four Evangelists
The four parts of the Tetramorph in Ezekiel's vision, that is, an angel, a lion, an eagle and an ox, each associated with one of the four Gospels from the 2nd century onwards and at some point considered as the symbols of the four Evangelists (Matthew - Angel; Mark - Lion; Luke - Ox; John - Eagle).	
	templon or iconostasis
A structure separating the sanctuary from the main church. At first, it simply divided the nave from the presbytery, but later it became higher, with small columns and an epistyle. From the 11 th century onwards, icons were placed between the templon columns and, somewhat later, icons were also placed above the epistyle, thus forming the iconostasis. The templon were originally from marble. Wooden iconostases appeared from the 13 th century.	
	triumphal arch
(Rom. :) A structure in the shape of a monumental archway, built to celebrate the victory of a Roman general or Emperor. (Byz. Archit.) The arch formed above the Horaia Pyle (Royal Door), which frames the curve of the conch of the apse and separates the bema from the nave.	
	tympanum (lunette)
(Rom., Byz.) The arched panel (lunette) inside an arch or an arcossolium.	