

JELENA ANDELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

EMILIJA NIKOLIĆ, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

DRAGANA ROGIĆ, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

## “TOMB WITH CUPIDS” FROM VIMINACIUM: A CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH OF CONSTRUCTION, ICONOGRAPHY AND STYLE

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e-mail: jelenandjelkovic@gmail.com

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*Abstract.* – The tomb G–160, known as the “Tomb with Cupids”, was discovered in 2003, during the excavations at the Pirivoj – Viminacium necropolis. The tomb has a trapezoidal section, characteristic for Viminacium tombs of the late antique period, and its interior was painted using the fresco technique. Scenes and motives are set on all four walls of the tomb. Since the western wall is damaged, the tomb is named after the depiction of cupids on the eastern wall. The wealth of the iconographic repertoire, together with an analysis of the geometry and symmetry, allowed the reconstruction of the conceptual context and it can be concluded that the tomb was dedicated to Venus, or Dionysus. The tomb painting could be dated to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, owing to the analysis of the style, which combines an eclectic Eastern expressionism, classicism and illusionism of the Constantine era.

*Key words.* – Viminacium, late antiquity, tomb, trapezium, golden section, construction, geometry, symmetry, fresco, painting, Cupids, iconography, style.

Twenty-nine fresco painted tombs of late antique and the early Christian period were discovered in the territory of the Viminacium necropolises.<sup>1</sup> The first data on these cemeteries were left to us by Mihailo Valtrović, who determined that “south of the town lies a large cemetery.”<sup>2</sup> The southern Viminacium necropolises were excavated in the period between 1977 and 1997.<sup>3</sup> Since 2000, necropolises that extend on the eastern side of the military camp have been excavated.<sup>4</sup>

The tombs with painted decoration mainly belong to the late antique period<sup>5</sup> and have been excavated in the late Roman necropolises layer, independently or on the spot within, or near, the memorial buildings.<sup>6</sup> The Viminacium paintings are materialised with the fresco

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<sup>1</sup> Of twenty-nine fresco painted tombs which have been published, twenty-five were discovered at the site “Pećine”, three on the site “Više Burdelja” and one (G–160) on the “Pirivoj” site. Korać 2007, 247–261.

<sup>2</sup> Валтровић 1884а, 4. Later he determined that there were graves on the northern and eastern side, as well as traces which indicated that the cemetery covered the western side of town too. Валтровић 1884, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Зотовић 1986, 41–60.

<sup>4</sup> Vogdanović 2010, 83–99; Голубовић 2008, 46–51; Реџић 2008, 59–61. During the excavations of the southern and eastern necropolises, more than 14,500 graves have been excavated, together with the remains from cremations or inhumations and diverse grave goods.

<sup>5</sup> Exceptions are two tombs from the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Korać 2007, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Korać 2007, 9.

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Fig. 1. Tomb G-160 during the excavations in 2003 (photo documentation from the archive of The Institute of Archaeology)

Сл. 1. Гробница G-160 приликом ископавања 2003. године (фото-документација архиве Археолошкој институцији)

technique. The interior walls of the Viminacium tombs were mostly rendered with three layers of plaster. In some cases, hydraulic plaster was set as the first layer and it contained small amounts of sand and grit, slaked lime, as well as crushed or ground brick.<sup>7</sup> This layer was the thickest, since the walls were levelled with it. The second layer, *arriccio*, was thinner than the previous one and contained lime, together with an aggregate of smaller granules. The third, and final, layer, *intonaco*, was the thinnest and was polished.

Most of the tombs have been damaged over time, and the frescoes in them are fragmented. Looting, which was common in Viminacium, even in the ancient time, is the reason for such a condition.<sup>8</sup> However, frescoes from some of the painted tombs are well preserved, including the frescoes of the “Tomb with Cupids” (G-160), discovered in 2003 at the site “Pirivoj”.<sup>9</sup>

#### Conservation and presentation of the “Tomb with Cupids” – G-160<sup>10</sup>

A common conservation procedure, applied in some of the Viminacium tombs,<sup>11</sup> is the so called *di stacco*. This involves the removal of the frescoes from the walls, followed by their relocation, conservation, and

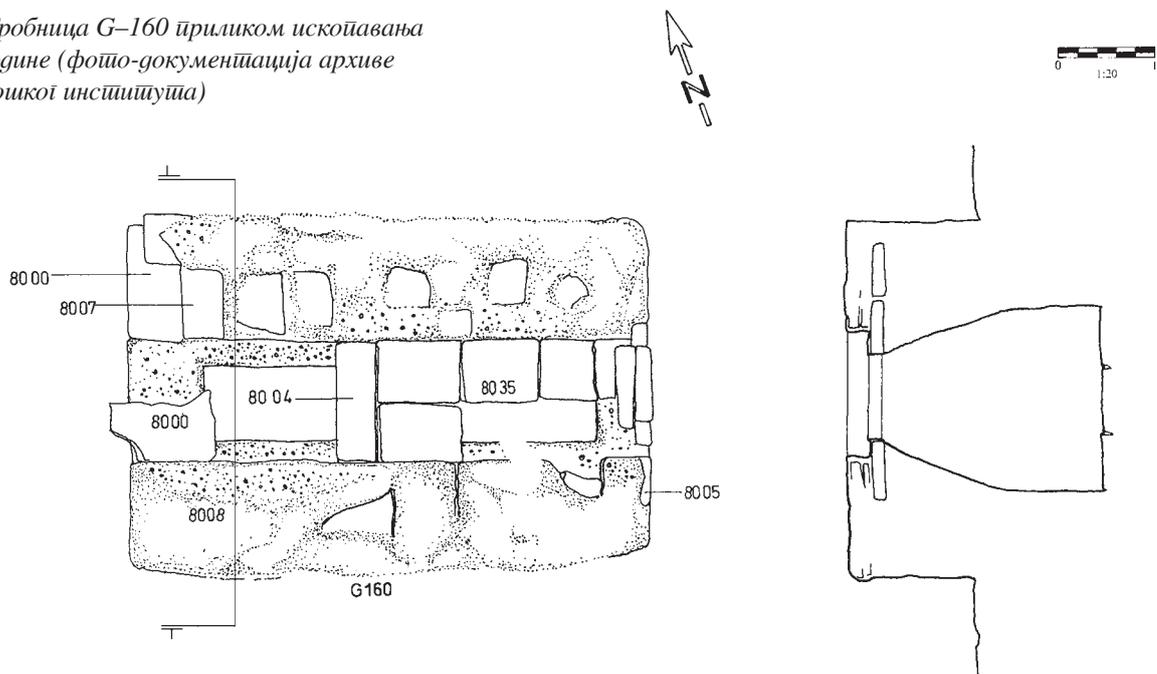


Fig. 2. Tomb G-160 – tomb’s scheme (the archive of The Institute of Archaeology)

Сл. 2. Гробница G-160 – скица гробнице (архива Археолошкој институцији)

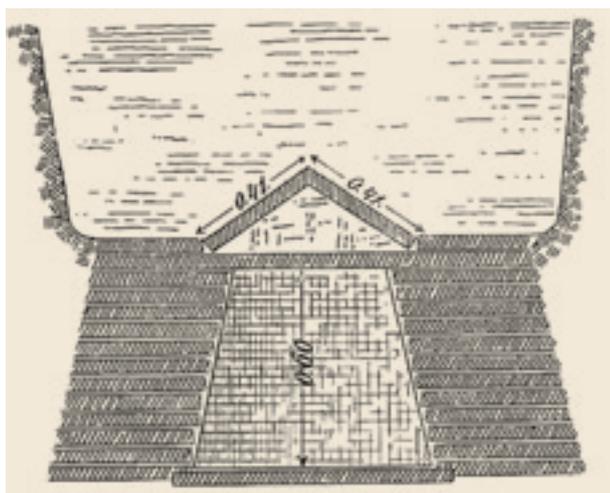
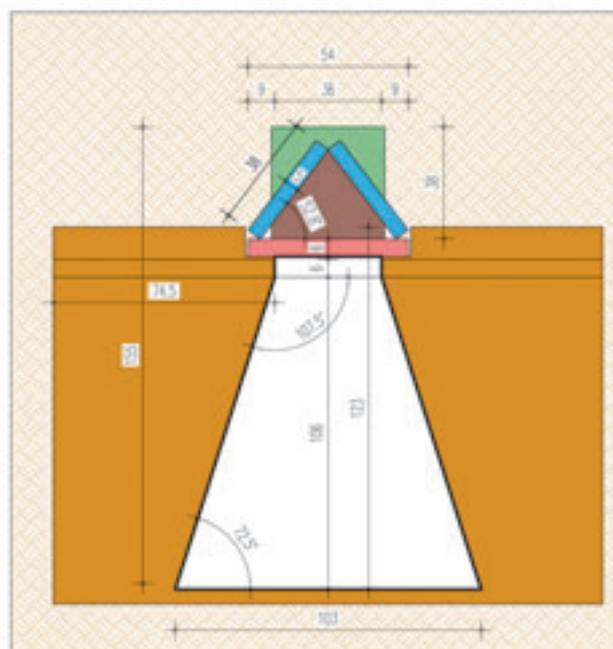


Fig. 3. Tomb with the trapezoidal section which was excavated by M. Valtrović (according to Валтровић 1984b, Tab. 1)

Fig. 4. Cross section of the tomb G-160 with the dimensions and construction elements (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić, according to schemes and field diary of the tomb excavation, from the archive of The Institute of Archaeology)

Сл. 3. Гробница трапезног пресека коју је истражио М. Валтровић (према Валтровић 1984b, Таб. I)  
 Сл. 4. Пресек гробнице G-160 са димензијама и елементима конструкције (цртеж: Емилија Николић, према скицама и дневнику ископавања гробнице, из архиве Археолошког института)



construction of the tomb G-160 – section with elements

- tomb masonry structure
- tomb's space
- covering bricks – “poklopnice”
- earth fill
- gabled roof
- a brick that closes the gable
- surrounding soil

then their presentation as exhibits.<sup>12</sup> The “Tomb with Cupids”, G-160, is the first of the Viminacium tombs where the conservation of frescoes has been accomplished *in situ*.<sup>13</sup> Since this conservation procedure has not led to the destruction of the tomb construction, an insight into the context of its decoration is enabled for the contemporary visitor. Within the tomb space, the fresco compositions are at the observer’s eye level (Fig. 11). In these circumstances, the admiration of this art is reinforced with an insight into the possibilities of the master – painter, which were very reduced, due to the fact that he worked in a very limited physical space.

### ANALYSIS OF THE “TOMB WITH CUPIDS” – G-160

#### Construction, geometry and symmetry

According to Miloje Vasić’s typology,<sup>14</sup> the tomb G-160 (Fig. 1, 2) with its trapezoidal section<sup>15</sup>, belongs to

<sup>7</sup> Since the physico-chemical analysis of the fresco plaster from Viminacium is still in progress, this paper summarises the experiences and observations of the conservator Miroslav Stanojlović, published in the paper: Станојловић 1992, 56–59.

<sup>8</sup> About looting of graves from Viminacium, first was written by Mihailo Valtrović. Валтровић 1884a, 3–14. See reference 12 in: Golubović 2008, 13.

<sup>9</sup> According to the diary of field excavations, at least two persons were buried in this tomb and the bones were fragmented and dislocated. Grave goods were not found. Korać 2007, 125–140. This tomb, together with the preserved frescoes in it, is preserved *in situ* within the Archaeological Park of Viminacium.

<sup>10</sup> About the benefits of the conservation of frescoes *in situ* and on their presentation to the public in: Anđelković 2012, 1–7; Nikolić, Anđelković, Rogić 2011, 259–268.

<sup>11</sup> This is the case with the “Pagan tomb” G-2624 and the “Tomb with the Christ monogram” G-5517.

<sup>12</sup> On this and all possible presentations within the tomb context, in: Станојловић 1997, 59–60.

<sup>13</sup> About the conservation practice applied in the “Tomb with Cupids”, M. Stanojlović gave a report in: Станојловић 2006, 143–145.

<sup>14</sup> In 1907, Miloje Vasić made a typology of previously known Viminacium masonry burial constructions (Vasić 1907, 83–91).

the second type of Viminacium’s “masonry sepulchral structures” (Fig. 3). Within the tombs, the formation of the trapezoidal section, and the narrowing of the upper part of the tomb’s space, is achieved by creating a salience of a few centimetres toward the inside of tomb’s space between each of the upper row of bricks in relation to the row below, in order to bridge the tomb’s opening with a single brick (covering brick),<sup>16</sup> on top of which a gabled roof was sometimes placed. In the case of the tomb G–160, the load of the soil which covered the tomb was transferred to the gabled roof and then through the walls to the surrounding ground where the construction was set so that it did not reach the covering bricks (Fig. 4). Also, the soil which filled the space between the covering and roof bricks gave support to the latter. Vasić assumes this method of building tomb constructions to be specific to Viminacium and justifies it by quoting another author,<sup>17</sup> where the graves and tombstones can be classified according to the areas in which they are located, but also depending on the will of the individual and the “fashion”.<sup>18</sup>

In the typology of “masonry tombs” from the Balkans,<sup>19</sup> some of Viminacium’s tombs, including those with a trapezoidal cross section, have been classified by Srđan Đurić as the second, i.e. Pannonian–Moesian type, according to the large prevalence of this type in these two provinces of the Empire. He writes that the tombs from the Balkans freely received influences from different sources, so that “they do not represent any separate entity within the late antique or early Byzantine architecture”, or that “they are characterised by some specific features, based on which the tradition of early Byzantine architecture in the Balkans has been developing”.<sup>20</sup>

Ljubica Zotović appointed a typology of the Viminacium’s “tomb’s forms”, where “masonry graves with trapezoidal section, designed for the burial of more decedents”<sup>21</sup> represent the fifth type.

Of the twenty-nine published fresco painted tombs<sup>22</sup>, seventeen of them have a trapezoidal cross-section.<sup>23</sup> In this paper we will illustratively represent two preserved tombs in order to make possible conclusions about the geometry of one of them – the tomb G–160. These conclusions may provide a motive for future reconstructions of those tombs which are not preserved in their entirety.

The tomb G–160, with its dimensions, represents the smallest, so far explored, fresco painted Viminacium tomb.<sup>24</sup> The outer dimensions of the tomb are 2.80 m x 1.85 m x 1.40 m. The dimensions of the opening are 2.07 m x 0.36 m, and the depth of the burial space is

1.23 m, measured from the upper point of the masonry construction up to the floor of the tomb. The tomb is oriented in a west–east direction, with a deviation, on the west side, of 6° to the north.<sup>25</sup> In this tomb, the

<sup>15</sup> Here it must have been mentioned the frequent use of the term “trapezoidal” when this type of section is described in our literature. The definitions of geometric terms “trapezium” and “trapezoid” originate from the interpretation of Euclid, Archimedes, and Proclus. Until the eighteenth century, the prevailing interpretation was that the trapezium is the quadrilateral with two parallel sides, and that the trapezoid has no mutually parallel sides. After that, an opposite interpretation was created, and this was accepted into the terminology of American English, while British English kept the old one (Glasnović-Gracin 2004, 236). Therefore, what in England is called *trapezium*, in North America is called the *trapezoid* (Tanton 2005, 504). In the early twentieth century the interpretation of the ancient writings, apropos Late Latin terms *trapezium* and *trapezoid* confirms the British terminology (Heath 1908, 189–190). Serbian terminology is the same as the British one, so this type of section is called trapezoidal (see the division of quadrilaterals on parallelogram, trapezium and trapezoid in: Petojević 2005, 118). So, a trapezoid is a geometric figure different from a trapezium and hence this section, which for us is a trapezium, not a trapezoid, we shall call a trapezoidal section. “Trapezoidal” section of a tomb appears in the terminology of Miloje Vasić (Васић 1907, 66–98) and Ljubica Zotović (Зотовић 1986, 41–60), while Mihailo Valtrović did not mention any of these terms, but in the description of these tombs “sideling built sides” are mentioned (Валтровић 1884b, 56). As a geometric figure, a trapezium is always present in architecture and the arts, often with a symbolic role. Miloje Vasić has tried to find analogies from different epochs and areas, for Viminacium’s graves and tombs (Васић 1907, 83–91).

<sup>16</sup> Mihailo Valtrović was the first who mentioned bricks placed over the tomb’s opening as covering bricks (in Serbian – *poklopnice*; Валтровић 1884b, 56). Descriptions and drawings of the Viminacium graves and tombs, as well as those with the trapezoidal section are introduced for the first time in this paper (Валтровић 1884b, Tab. I, Fig. 3).

<sup>17</sup> J. Durm, *Die Baukunst der Etrusker. Die Baukunst der Römer, Handbuch der Architektur*, pt. 2, v. 2, Darmstadt, J. Ph. Diehl, 1885, 751.

<sup>18</sup> Васић 1907, 90.

<sup>19</sup> Đurić 1985b, 139–147.

<sup>20</sup> Đurić 1985b, 146.

<sup>21</sup> Зотовић 1986, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Kogać 2007, 29.

<sup>23</sup> For only two structures, of these seventeen, can the exact look of the section be determined, because their end walls are preserved entirely. For eleven structures, the approximate look can be given, i.e. their approximate reconstruction can be made, while four structures are not preserved well and it is hard to make assumptions about their dimensions. (All these determined by the examination of documentation from the archive of The Institute of Archaeology).

<sup>24</sup> Founded based on the mutual comparison of structures within the documentation from the archives of The Institute of Archaeology.

<sup>25</sup> Data are taken from documentation of the archive of The Institute of Archaeology.

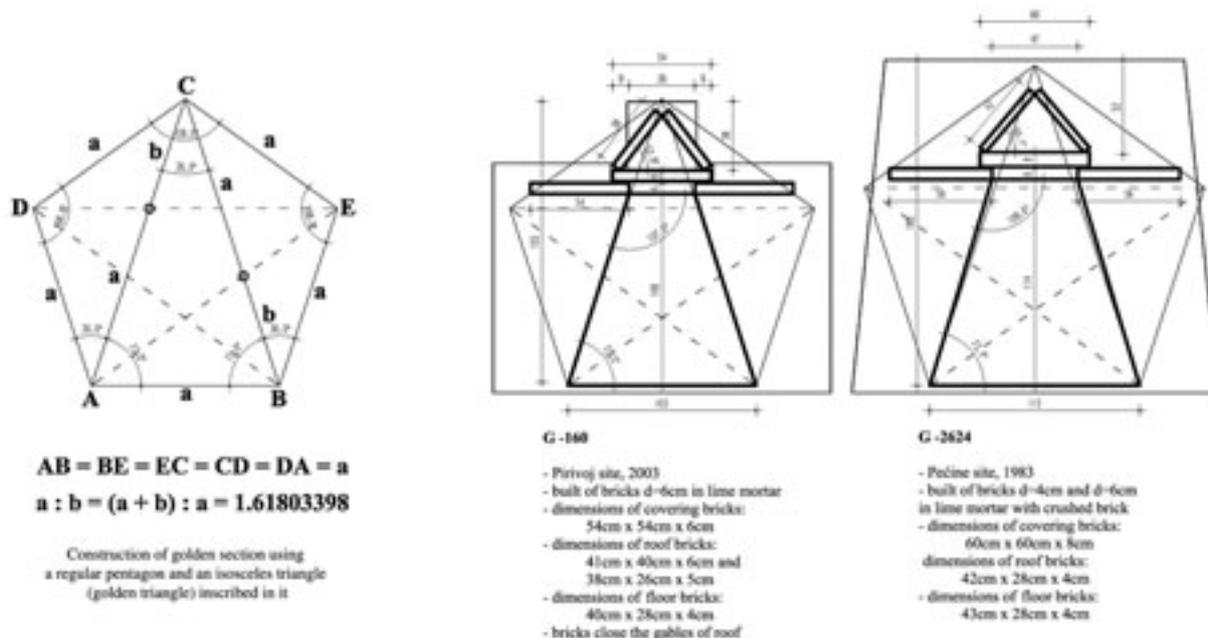


Fig. 5. Designing of the golden section and preserved tomb with the geometry (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić, according to Livio 2003, Fig 25, 79 and schemes and field diary of the tomb excavation, from the archive of The Institute of Archaeology)

Сл. 5. Конструисање златног пресека и очуване гробнице са геометријом (цртеж: Емилија Николић, према Livio 2003, Fig 25, 79 и скицама и дневнику ископавања гробнице, из архиве Археолошког института)

angle between the trapezium’s leg (the lateral side) and its longer base is 72.5° (Fig. 4).

Part of the tomb’s construction that has almost always been preserved, as the basis for reconstruction, is its bottom, ie the floor. The width of the floor could have been determined by the number of the deceased persons or as a result of the personal choice of the person who built the structure.<sup>26</sup> Approximate reconstructions over the existing bottom of the tomb can be made by relying on the field of construction and the materials used: with an analysis of the bricks’ dimensions<sup>27</sup> with which the structure is built, and with which the upper width of the tomb’s space could be bridged, as well as with the comparison with other preserved tombs. However, looking at the two preserved tombs, we notice that the geometry of their sections depended not only on the dimensions and on the constructive characteristics of the materials. With careful observation of these sections, we see that they could be related to the golden section (Fig. 5).<sup>28</sup> A regular pentagon can, very easily, be constructed in which certain trapezoidal sections of the tomb can be inscribed. There it can be seen that the angles between a larger base and a trapezium’s leg, approximately correspond to the angle at the base of an

isosceles, “golden” triangle, which is 72°,<sup>29</sup> around which is delineated the aforementioned pentagon. If we go further, and include the covering bricks of the roof and other upper parts of the structure, within the frame of this inscribed trapezoidal section we can obtain a height approximate to the height of the aforementioned triangle.

During the formation of a regular pentagon, it is necessary to determine the golden section of the triangle’s

<sup>26</sup> For instance, fresco painted tombs from Viminacium G-5313 and G-5337 (from the archive of The Institute of Archeology) have a wide floor, even though only one person was buried there.

<sup>27</sup> Using written sources: Валтровић 1884c, 92–93 and Васић 1907, 68 and according to later documentation from the archive of The Institute of Archaeology.

<sup>28</sup> Golden section (Golden ratio) means that one dimension is divided in such a way that the relation of the longer part to the whole is equal to the relation of the shorter part to the longer one. It is also called “divine proportion”. It appears in different forms in nature and, as such, it was always fascinating to mathematicians and artists (Hargittai and Hargittai 1994, 160). It is present in all cultures and all the arts (Holme 2010, 44–50; Tabak 2011, 13–17; Ghyka 1977, 20–39).

<sup>29</sup> Livio 2003, 78–80.

leg. It can be used in an attempt to introduce this rule within the structure of a particular scene (Fig. 6). In this way, the line that divides the area of a triangle into two parts, according to the golden section and, hence, the trapezoidal area too, could be the basis for forming the wall painting's composition in the tomb. This division may have a relation with the painted representations, apropos with the division of the eastern wall of the tomb G-160 into two fields (Fig. 7). However, this cannot be

said with any certainty, because the dimensions of the fields on the west wall cannot be related to the golden section, and the division of fields within the southern and western walls can be a purely geometrical division (into two approximately equal parts) and itself determines the division on the eastern wall.

Geometry makes the creation of our intuitions of space objective.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the idea of exploring the tomb G-160 in a different way can be observed as a wish of

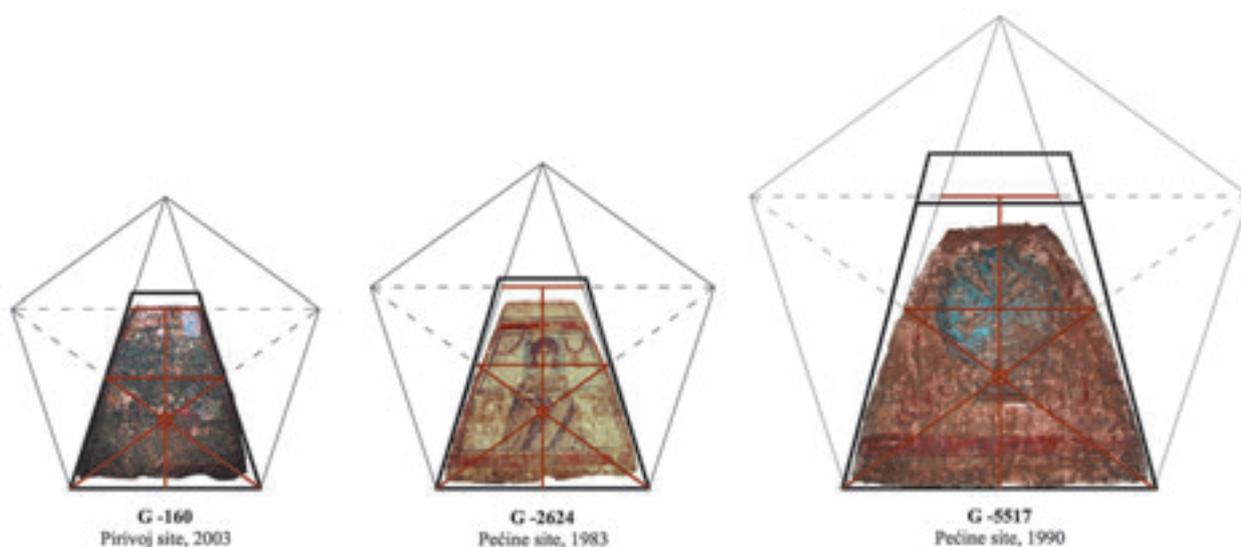


Fig. 6. Possible positions within painted composition connected to the golden section of the tombs (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić, photos M. Korać)

Сл. 6. Могућа места у сликаној композицији везана за златни пресек гробница (цртеж: Емилија Николић, фотографије М. Кораћ)

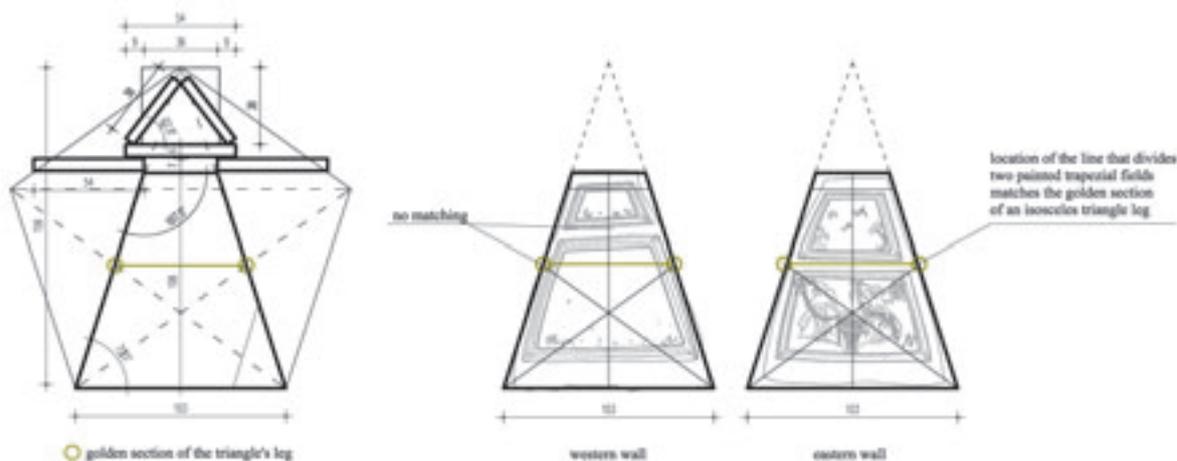


Fig. 7. Possible positions within the painted composition connected to the golden section of the tomb G-160 (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić, Dragana Rogić)

Сл. 7. Могућа места у сликаној композицији везана за златни пресек гробнице G-160 (цртеж: Емилија Николић, Драгана Рогић)

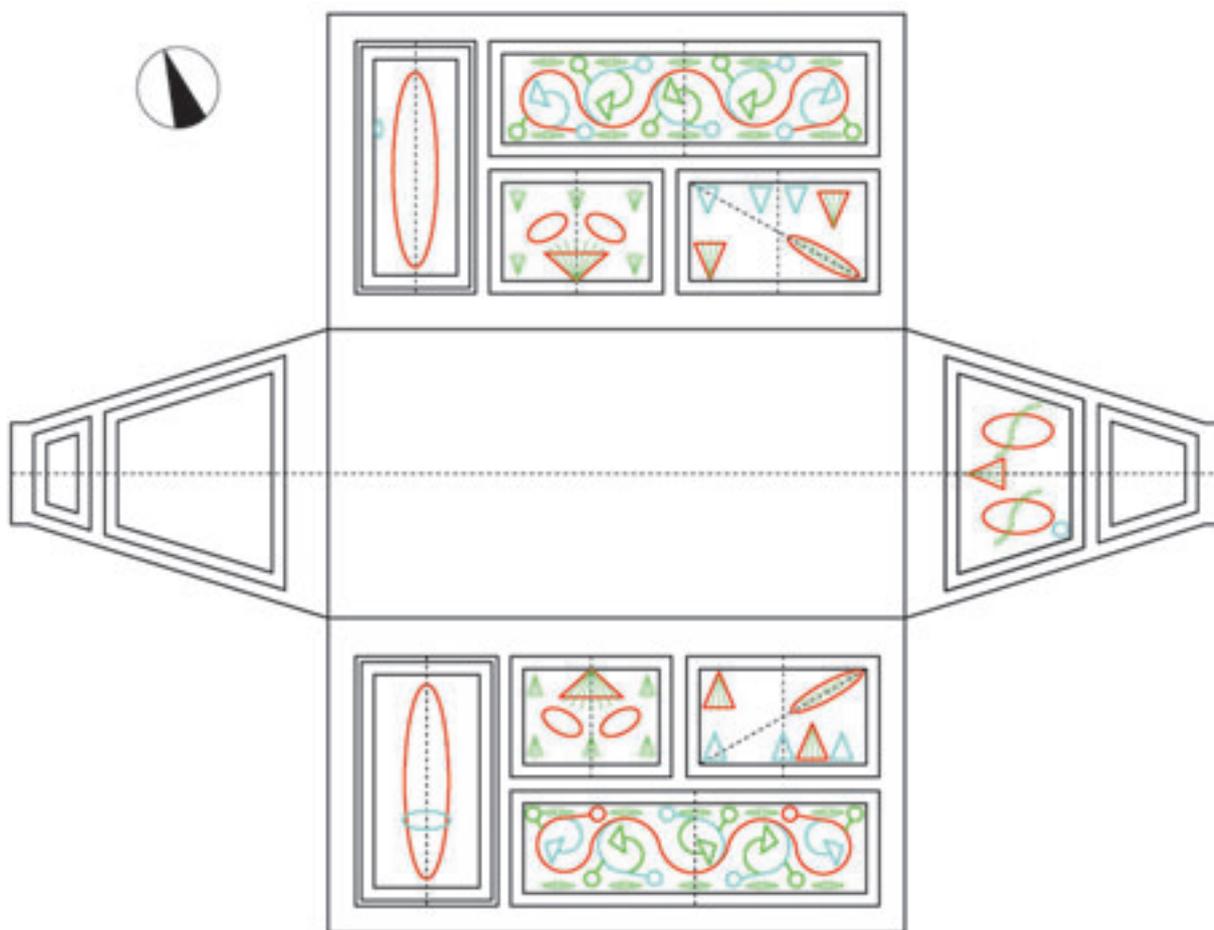


Fig. 8. Unfurled image of the tomb’s space in the prism shape and with the trapeze base, with the depicted positions of symmetry axes on each wall (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić)

Сл. 8. Развијена слика гробног простора у облику призме са основом трапеза, са приказаним местима оса симетрије на сваком зиду (цртеж: Емилија Николић)

the authors of this paper. In every aspect of its construction and geometry one can search for a rule, a principle, or ask the question as to why the ancient builder or artist did something in one way and not the other. Classical geometry develops over time and obtains its “new languages”.<sup>31</sup> One of them is fractal geometry<sup>32</sup>, which our interpretations of the tomb’s geometry in this paper, and in future research, can expand on and thus, force us to think about Viminacium’s tomb architecture in a different way than before.

If we accept Vitruvius’s claim that “the proportion is the matching of a certain part with the individual parts of the building and with the whole” as a differently given definition of the existence of the golden section and, further, that the “symmetry arises from the proportion” and that “on this the law of symmetry is

based”,<sup>33</sup> then it is very important to pay attention to the symmetry and its types within the structure of the tomb G–160, as well as in the compositions of wall paintings within it. An isosceles trapezium that is formed with the floor and walls of the tomb, along with the covering bricks, as a form, is suitable for the

<sup>30</sup> Barnsley 1993, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Barnsley 1993, 1.

<sup>32</sup> There is interesting to mention the field of fractal geometry which can be important topic in new interpretations within the domain of sepulchral architecture. As an extension of the classical geometry which provides to us, real, approximate insight into the structure of an object, fractal geometry is used for known structures, “from ferns to galaxies” to be decomposed and precisely explained (Barnsley 1993, 1).

<sup>33</sup> Vitruvius V, IV.

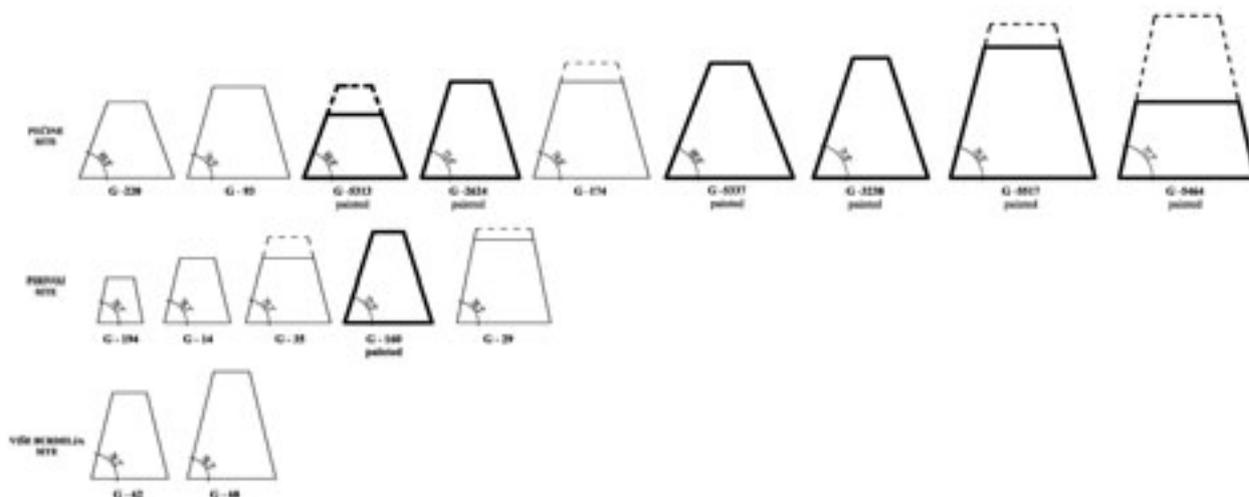


Fig. 9. Schematic representation of trapezoidal cross sections of the selected tombs from the Viminacium sites (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić, according to schemes and excavation diaries of the tombs from the archive of The Institute of Archaeology)

Сл. 9. Шематски приказ попречних трапејезних пресека одабраних гробница са локалитета Виминачијума (цртеж: Емилија Николић, према скицама и дневницима ископавања гробница из архиве Археолошког института)

symmetrical arrangement of the representations on the lateral walls of the tomb, because it has only one axis of symmetry which clearly divides the prism-shaped tomb's space into two equal parts. The paintings of the tomb G-160 possess multiple symmetries – bilateral, right hand and left hand symmetry, as well as translational, rotational, radial, spiral, ornamental and repetitive symmetry.<sup>34</sup> Each of the scenes, and the motifs within them, possess any of the aforementioned symmetries or a combination. One of the basic pictorial principles, which the artists used to achieve a better composition in the painting, is the burial space symmetry. This gained a new level of reading by participating in the construction of the symbolism of motifs and scenes. This meaning is best seen within the symmetry of the tomb's space, where other visual and iconographic elements are put into the context of the connected and the common narrative and, together with symmetry, convey an appropriate message (Fig. 8).<sup>35</sup>

### Iconographic analysis

Since entering into funerary art, the image has become an inseparable part of the idea of eternal life. The legend of an image's origins includes the observation of shadow and the search for its look (contour, outline), so that even Pliny the Elder, in his book *The*

*Natural History (Naturalis Historia)*, wrote that painting began with the sketching of the human shadow.<sup>36</sup> Who else lived in the underworld, but the shadows of ancestors? The image has appeared in the life of a man, naturally and spontaneously, thus he kept it on his way to death.

Influenced by the philosophy of death, funerary art flourished. During the period of the Empire, the cult of the dead was much venerated, so the tradition of funerary painting continued from here to late antique, pagan tombs. The characteristic ornamental, geometric, zoomorphic and floral motifs, possessing a certain symbolism, here had only one purpose, as a warrant for the deceased person for a peaceful transition and stay in

<sup>34</sup> More about the symmetry and its types in: Јадрешин-Милић 2008, 86–87, 92; Hargitai and Hargitai 1994, 2, 28, 39, 68, 124, 131, 160–164; Weyl 1952, 83–115.

<sup>35</sup> This is most noticeable on the northern and southern walls of the tomb, where the motifs of paradise and the world of the blessed are depicted, and positioned as images in the mirror, owing to bilateral, i.e. mirror symmetry, which, in this context, potentiates the meaning of another reality, i.e. another life – afterlife. More about symmetry usage in the “Tomb with cupids” in: Anđelković Grašar, Nikolić, Rogić 2012, 244–249, 256.

<sup>36</sup> Rosenblum 1957, 279–290; Rackham 1968, 270.

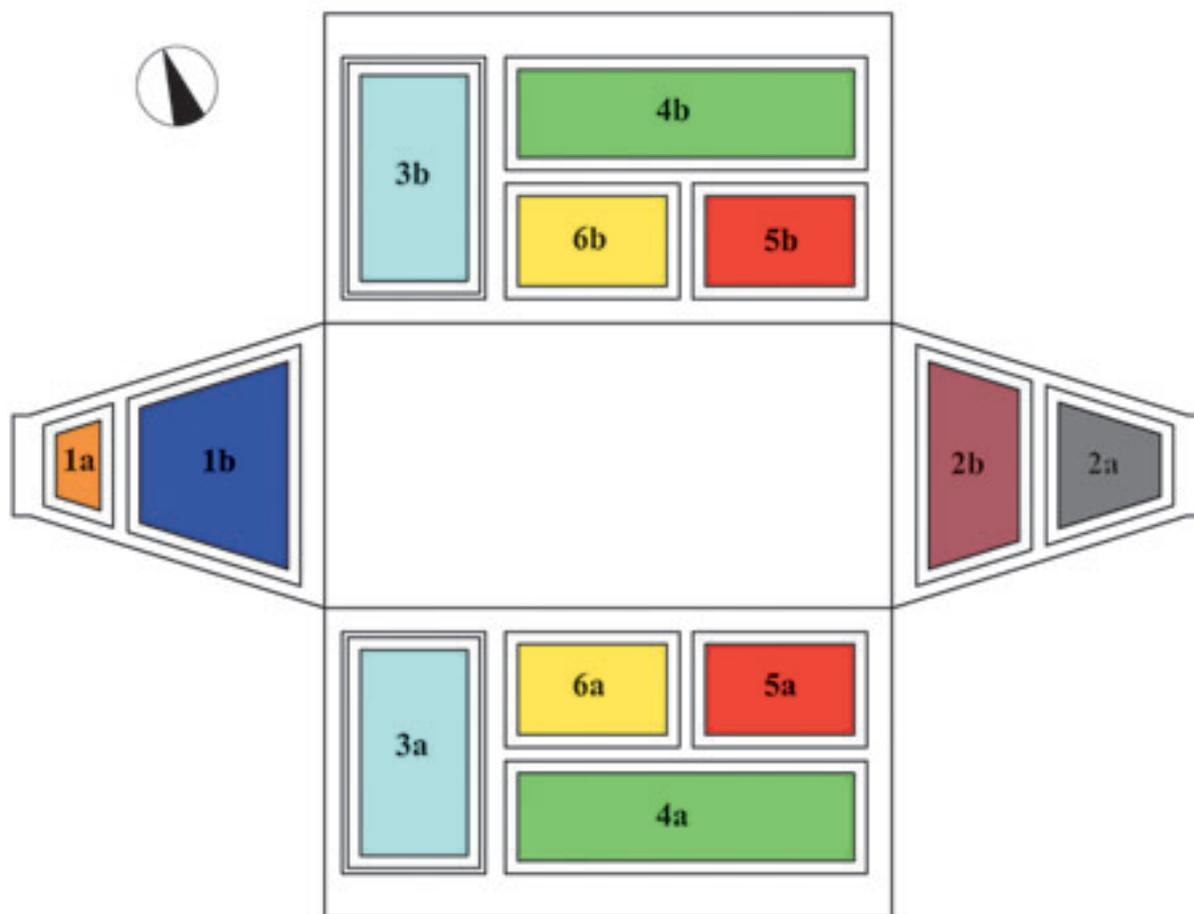


Fig. 10. Schematic representation of fields on the walls with marks which are used in the description of iconography (drawing by: Emilija Nikolić)

Сл. 10. Шематски приказ поља на зидовима уз ознаке које се користе у опису иконографије. (цртеж: Емилија Николић)

the world of blessed. The whole point of painting the tombs was, in fact, that the deceased could appear as a victor, who ran, gloriously, across to the next life.

In the case of tomb space imaging, painting had no more freedom than in the decorating of rooms in Roman villas or public buildings. Pictorial compositions had to be coordinated with architectural space, by which the look of the image was often determined.

The trapezoidal section of the tomb G–160 formed the shapes of the fields where frescoes were executed. Images on the end walls have a trapezoidal shape, and images on the lateral ones are rectangular and slightly inclined. Fresco panels within the tomb are divided into fields of different dimensions. These fields are filled with scenes and motifs (Fig. 10). The western and eastern end walls, with a trapezoidal shape, are divided in the mid-

dle with a horizontal red line. Thus, there are formed two smaller trapezoidal fields, the upper and the lower. Both fields of the western wall are damaged (Fig. 10/1a, 1b), and on the eastern wall the upper field is damaged (Fig. 10/2a), while in the lower field the cupids are visible (Fig. 10/2b). The lateral northern and southern walls are rectangular and each is divided into four fields of different dimensions. The first field is formed besides the wall at the west end, so that on a third of the length of the wall, an elongated rectangle is formed by a vertical red line. In these fields of the southern and northern walls are placed standing human figures (Fig. 10/3a, 3b). Two-thirds of the rest of the northern and southern walls are divided in half by a horizontal red line. The upper rectangles form a frieze which contains vine tendrils (Fig. 10/4a, 4b), and the lower rectangles



Fig. 11. Visitor in the interior of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: Jelena Anđelković Grašar)

Fig. 12. View on the eastern and southern walls of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Сл. 11. Посетилац у унутрашњости „Гробнице са купидонима“ (фотографија Ј. Анђелковић Грашар)

Сл. 12. Поглед на источни и јужни зид „Гробнице са купидонима“ (фотографија М. Кораћ)

are divided, by the vertical line, in half once again. Thus, two smaller rectangles are formed. In those which are closer to the eastern end wall, a peacock is located (Fig. 10/5a, 5b), and in those in the middle, two birds over a kantharos (Fig. 10/6a, 6b). All these fields, where motifs are placed, are formed with the red line which is between 5 cm and 10 cm wide. Then from inside, below the red line, ochre and green borders are added, between 3 cm and 4 cm wide, and finally, toward the motive, there is a black line of about 1cm wide. In such a way the borders formed coffering fields as a kind of frames for the scenes (Fig. 12).

**Western Wall, possible interpretations.** The western end wall is badly damaged. The finest layer of plaster has almost completely fallen off, and the frescoes are only partially visible, mostly in the lower part of the trapezoidal field toward the southern wall. What is clearly visible is the red border that surrounds the entire field of the trapezoidal panel and the horizontally drawn line in the middle which divides it into two, unequal trapezoidal fields – the upper, smaller and lower, bigger one. The ochre, green and black borders in the interior of these fields are well preserved. In the larger, lower field, in the southern corner, a decorative spiral – floral red element is visible on an ochre background, which is, by its shape and colours, very similar to the decoration on the sleeves of the deceased lady’s dress who is represented on the western wall of the “Pagan tomb”, G–2624, from Viminacium.<sup>37</sup> This would favour the assumption that, in Viminacium, there was a painting workshop, pro-

ducing the characteristic pictorial handwriting, in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and during the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

In the smaller, upper trapezoidal field, according to M. Korać, there was an inscription, which was damaged, so it was possible to define only some of the letters. In the first row there were two short, indeterminable letters. In the second row were the letters TROP and in the third row the letters TIA.N.<sup>38</sup> At the place where these letters once were, it is hard to notice their traces. In the late Roman, fresco painted tombs inscriptions are extremely rare<sup>39</sup> and, considering the fact that this inscription was located on the western wall, if it was preserved in its entirety, maybe it could have told us something more about the persons to whom the tomb belonged.

The iconographic repertoire is similar for most of the excavated pagan tombs of the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of present-day Serbia and its surroundings. The painting in them is dedicated to the deceased person or persons, usually with their portraits on the western wall. Human figures, when they are shown in the funerary

<sup>37</sup> Korać 2007, 106.

<sup>38</sup> Korać 2007, 131.

<sup>39</sup> Besides inscriptions in the Christian tombs, which mostly follow the narrative of the scenes, in the pagan context they can be found in the Flavios and Eustorgia tomb from Thessalonica, where one is located in a lunette above the deceased’s portraits, and the other one above the servant’s head. Đurić 1985b, 79–81, 92–94, 114–116, 125–127, 167; Dunabin 2003, 454.

art, sometimes cannot be identified as the buried individuals,<sup>40</sup> but when they are identified as such, they are not always portrayed on the western wall.<sup>41</sup>

The deceased persons were portrayed on the western wall of the tombs in Plovdiv (*Philippopolis*),<sup>42</sup> then in Silistra (*Durostorum*),<sup>43</sup> in Beška<sup>44</sup> and in Viminacium's "Pagan tomb" (G-2624).<sup>45</sup> Considering the style, time and space, these four tombs are the closest analogies to the "Tomb with Cupids". Also, the usual offering scene i.e. offertory of gifts, is a required part of the painting repertoire dedicated to the deceased in late antique art.

**Offering scene.**<sup>46</sup> The lateral, longitudinal sides, the southern and the northern walls in the "Tomb with cupids" have the same arrangement of painted fields. In the longitudinal rectangular panels, which stand next to the west wall of the tomb, there are standing figures of servants in the "offering–procession" scene. The figure of a servant on the northern wall is poorly preserved. It is located in a separate frame. Contours of blue clothes are visible, as well as the right shoulder and a hand extended towards the west wall. Maybe, in this hand was located a goblet of wine, which is indicated with the remains of the blue (glass) and bordeaux (wine) colour (Fig. 13, 24). The male head is depicted in three-quarter profile, also facing to the west. A similar figure of a servant, with a goblet, is located in the central metope of the southern wall of the tomb in Beška (Fig. 16b).<sup>47</sup> On the southern wall, the servant figure is better preserved and more visible and its movement is also directed towards the western wall. The head is also in three-quarter profile, but with the hair well combed back from the face, and falling over the right ear and shoulder of the figure (Fig. 14). This is contrary to the hair of the short-haired servant of the northern wall, which reveals the left ear and ends behind it, with gentle wavy curls falling over his forehead. The hairstyle of the figure on the southern wall is indicative of a maidservant. This maidservant is dressed in a blue, ankle length dress, over her hand is a white cloak, or *palla*, which is mantled, and on her feet are closed, black shoes – *calceus*, which were worn on formal occasions by men and women. They reach to the ankles of the maidservant; at the sides they are open in the form of a comma, and in the middle, toward the top, a tab sticks out.<sup>48</sup> She carries a white oval tray in her hands, on which yellow circular forms surrounded by a red outline are visible (Fig. 15, 24). These forms could be round, ceremonial breads, known as *panis corona*,<sup>49</sup> which can also be found on the tray of the servant from the "Pagan tomb" (G-2624) from Viminacium.<sup>50</sup> Bread

represents a spiritual and physical strength, apropos the visible and manifested life. When it is not material food, bread is spiritual food. These breads are gifts to the buried individuals. They mark the opening of a new cycle, in this case the transition to a new life.<sup>51</sup> One of the three servants of the tomb at Beška, also offers funeral bread on his tray.<sup>52</sup> In the tomb at Silistra, on the end, western wall, to the left of the image of the deceased couple, there is a standing figure of a maidservant in a long tunic, facing the deceased couple, and carrying a patera and a jug in her hands (Fig. 16a).<sup>53</sup> Because of the coiffure, which follows a straight line

<sup>40</sup> Frescoes of the tomb in Brestovik near Smederevo, besides the imitation marble panelling, the coffered ceiling and the floral and zoomorphic motifs, also have an unidentified human figure on the western wall, which contained a small niche. The tomb is dated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century by Mihailo Valtrović, or in the 4<sup>th</sup> by Stričević. Валтровић 1906, 128–138; Стричевић 1957, 411–413.

<sup>41</sup> Within the linear ornamentation of frescoes in the tomb in Čalma, near Sremska Mitrovica, a few contours of human figures are recognisable, of which the female figure in the long mantle, depicted on the eastern wall, represents the deceased. Popović 2011, 242; Milošević 1973, 85–94; Milošević 1971, 3–13.

<sup>42</sup> Portraits of the deceased persons, a married couple, are depicted together with servants, who are bringing them various gifts in their hands. Овчаров, Ваклинова 1978, 26–27.

<sup>43</sup> Portraits of the deceased, a married couple are depicted together with a procession of servants, who are bringing various gifts in their hands that are dedicated to them: mirrors, dresses, trousers and an incensory. The manner of painting of the figures from this procession resembles the figures of the male and female servants from the "Tomb with cupids". Димитров, Чичикова 1986; Danov, Ivanov 1980, 105–121; The offering scene can be found in earlier periods, within the frescoes of the dome in Kazanlak, rendered in the period between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. In the wider frieze, a solemn procession is depicted, with hostlers and horses, players, youngsters and maidens, who are bringing gifts to the couple of Tracian aristocrats, depicted in the middle of the scene. Danov, Ivanov 1980, 75–103.

<sup>44</sup> Deceased's portraits – a married couple are depicted with a procession of three youngsters and a maiden who are bringing gifts: baskets of fruits, cups of wine, jugs and grapes. Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 17–32.

<sup>45</sup> Across the portrait of the deceased lady, on the eastern wall an offering scene is depicted with a servant who brings sacral bread. Korać 1993, 107–122.

<sup>46</sup> More about the scene in: Đurić 1985b, 161–174.

<sup>47</sup> Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 28, sl. 8; Đurić 1985a, 5–18.

<sup>48</sup> Boucher 2004, 125.

<sup>49</sup> Because of the poor preservation of the scene it is not possible to determine the exact number of breads.

<sup>50</sup> Korać 2007, 95, 96.

<sup>51</sup> Гербран, Шевалије 2004, gifts: 140, bread: 274.

<sup>52</sup> Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Danov, Ivanov 1980, 106. TAB. 59.

Fig. 13. Depiction of the servant on the northern wall of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Fig. 14. Detail of the depiction of maidservant with ritual breads, southern wall of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Fig. 15. Depiction of maidservant, southern wall of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Сл. 13. Представа слуге, северни зид „Гробнице са куйидонима“

(фотографија М. Кораћ)

Сл. 14. Детаљ представе слушкиње са обредним хлебовима, јужни зид

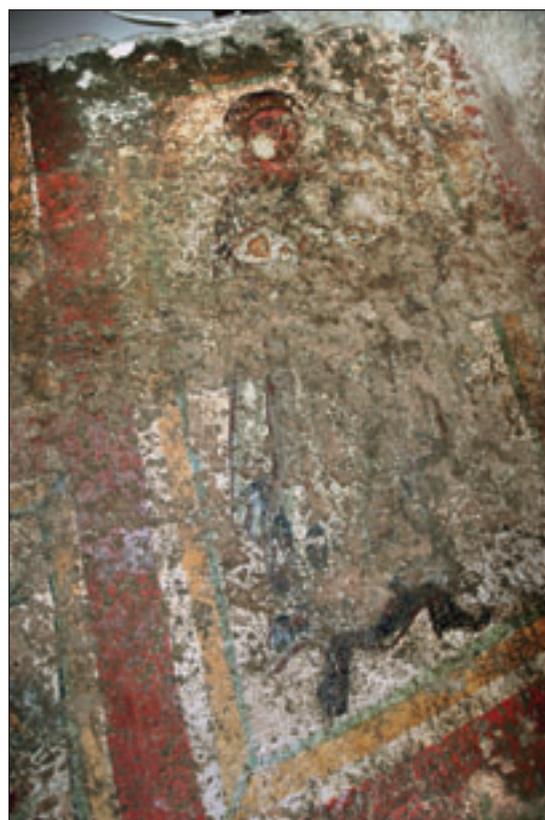
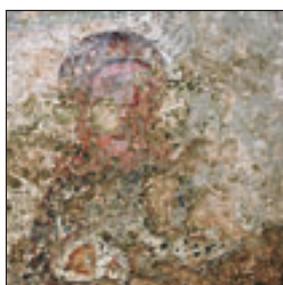
„Гробнице са куйидонима“

(фотографија М. Кораћ)

Сл. 15. Представа слушкиње, јужни зид

„Гробнице са куйидонима“

(фотографија М. Кораћ)



across the forehead and falls on the shoulders, as well as a long tunic, which is similar to the figure in the “Tomb with cupids”, we can conclude that the figure on the left of the western wall of the tomb G–160 is female. If the figure on the southern wall represented a maidservant, and that on the northern wall is a servant who, with their movements and gifts (breads and wine)<sup>54</sup>, are participating in an offering scene, the aforementioned analogies and the similar iconographic repertoire, also lead us to the conclusion that, most probably, the depiction of the married couple in a solemn pose of masters was located on the western wall of the tomb.

#### ***The southern and the northern wall, the composition of paradise***

**Peacock.**<sup>55</sup> The other two-thirds of the painted fields on the southern and the northern walls depict the next life and the symbolic image of paradise. The peacock is one of the most common motifs in compositions of paradise and is equally present in pagan and Christian art. In separately framed fields of the northern and southern wall, next to the eastern end wall, a single peacock is depicted (Fig. 17, 18, 19). The peacocks are facing the main scene, i.e. west. They are represented in almost all

painted tombs. They can be depicted independently, as is the case here, or as in the Viminacium “Pagan tomb” (G–2624), where they occupy the entire space of the northern and southern walls, facing the portrait of the

<sup>54</sup> These terrestrial gifts became celestial food. Đurić 1985b, 171.

<sup>55</sup> The peacock is a frequent motif in Roman, late antique, early Christian and, later, in Byzantine art. It is a common decoration in relief, sculpture, mosaics and painting. Its symbolism became so universal that, as a motif, it gained the characteristics of a visual character. About the peacock as a sort of sign in the late antique and early Christian art in: Anđelković, Rogić, Nikolić 2011, 231–248.

<sup>56</sup> Fuler, Wachman, Pinter 1988, 22–27.

<sup>57</sup> Миятев 1925, 5–14.

<sup>58</sup> Đurić 1985a, 5–18; Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 17–32.

<sup>59</sup> Гербран, Шевалије 2004, peacock: 679.

<sup>60</sup> Тоунбе 1973, 250–253.

<sup>61</sup> About the vegetative motifs from this and other tombs from the territory of present day Serbia in: Рогоћ, Анђелковић 2011, 85–104.

<sup>62</sup> Fruit is the symbol of abundance, the desire for immortality and headway. Гербран, Шевалије 2004, 1048.

<sup>63</sup> Barbet 1994, 28, Fig 8.

<sup>64</sup> Barbet 1994, 40, Fig 10.

deceased lady, i.e. west. More often, peacocks are represented in pairs, flanking a kantharos filled with wine or water. These depicted peacocks can be seen in the Viminacium “Tomb with the Christ monogram” (G-5517), on its eastern wall, and in the western part of the tomb G-5464, where, among the peacocks, an amphora is located. In Silistra, the peacocks over the kantharos are located in the lunette of the western wall, above the portraits of a married couple. In Pécs (*Sopianae*), on the vault of the tomb on the eastern and western sides, goblets flanked by peacocks are located.<sup>56</sup> In Sofia, in the lunette of the southern wall in the tomb marked with the number 1, peacocks are located on both sides of the cross.<sup>57</sup> In the upper frieze of the northern wall in the tomb at Beška, there are three peacocks, two placed opposite each other, and a third one without a pair.<sup>58</sup> The peacock is known as Hera’s bird and as a solar symbol. In the Christian tradition, the peacock symbolises the sun’s wheel and the starry sky and is,

therefore, a symbol of immortality and apotheosis.<sup>59</sup> In the funerary painting, it is best known for its symbolism related to the image of paradise and the blissful world.<sup>60</sup> We must not forget that the peacock is related to the Dionysus’s cult, which is indicated with other symbols from the “Tomb with cupids”.

**Kalathos and vegetative motifs.**<sup>61</sup> The conical vessel—kalathos, filled with vibrant colours suggesting herbaceous plants, depicted in green, or flowers depicted in red, is located in front of the peacocks. Another such vessel, depicted as being in the distance, is located behind the peacock’s tail (Fig. 17, 18). The kalathoses are painted in ochre and covered with crossed diagonal lines of brown, which resembles baskets made of wicker. Almost identical baskets are painted on the lateral walls of the “Tomb of the banquet” in Constanta (Romania, late 4<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD), but they are painted with the fruits<sup>62</sup> which rabbits<sup>63</sup> eat and with peacocks.<sup>64</sup> A similar form of this basket

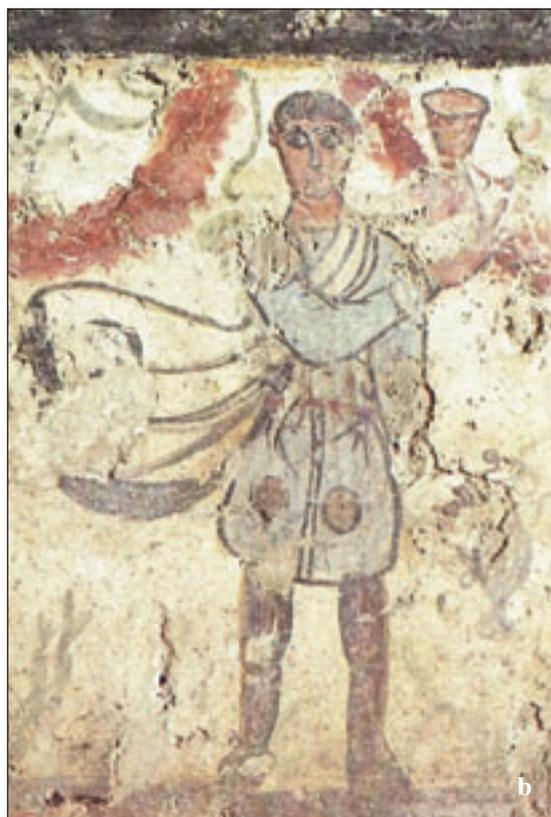
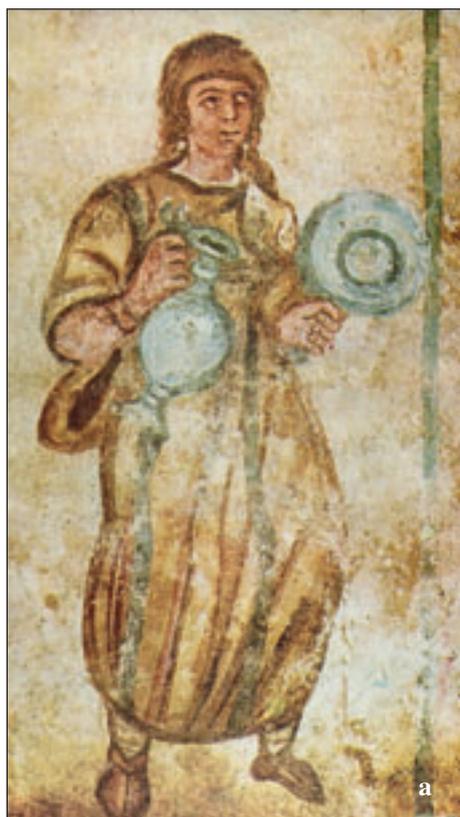


Fig. 16a. Midservant from the tomb in Silistra (according to Димитров, Чичикова 1986, fig. 29)

Fig. 16b. Servant from the tomb in Beška (according to Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 27)

Сл. 16а. Слушкиња из гробнице у Силистри (према Димитров, Чичикова 1986, fig. 29)

Сл. 16б. Слуга из гробнице у Бешкој (према Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 27)



*Fig. 17, 18. Peacocks, southern and northern wall of the "Tomb with cupids" (photo by: M. Korać)*

*Сл. 17, 18. Паунови, јужни и северни зид „Гробнице са куйидонима“ (фотографија М. Кораћ)*



Fig. 19. Detail of the peacock from the southern wall of the “Tomb with Cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Fig. 20. Birds over the kantharos, southern wall of the “Tomb with Cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Сл. 19. Детаљ пауна са јужног зида „Гробнице са кујидонима“ (фотографија М. Кораћ)

Сл. 20. Птице над кантаросом, јужни зид „Гробнице са кујидонима“ (фотографија М. Кораћ)

is among the scattered paradise motifs on the vault of the Santa Costanza’s ambulatory, visible on the dish in the shape of cone.<sup>65</sup> The kalathos as well as the goblet, filled with fruits or herbs in front of the peacock, also symbolise fertility, the cornucopia, one that contains the drink of immortality.<sup>66</sup> The remaining space of the white background is filled with vegetative motifs, freely staggered plants with large red and yellow flowers on the top.

**Paired birds over the kantharos, possible interpretations.** In the next two central fields of the northern and southern walls, two pairs of birds are represented. In these panels, pictured as framed images, two stocky, greenish-blue birds are painted, leaning over the kantharos, which is depicted in a similar manner as the kalathoses in front of the peacocks. In all four corners of the panel and above the birds, there are floral elements which resemble the small, floral vegetation (Fig. 20). The form and position of these birds are not common, and their analogies are rare. Unlike the peacock, whose representations in art are naturalistically rendered,<sup>67</sup> the pair of birds over the kantharos are painted in a schematic manner. These birds look dumpy and are bent inward, so that the tops of their feet lean on the edge of the kantharos. Their heads are larger than in the peacock’s depiction and are rendered as semicircular, so they look like they continue directly into the body, as if without a neck. Layers of rich wing feathers cover the entire lower part of their bodies. The wings them-

selves appear to begin below the eye. The bird’s beak is small, shrunken, and painted red. The bird’s tail is a little bit longer than the body. The next question that arises is: given the appearance and colour, what birds in nature do these birds from the tomb resemble?

**1) Doves.** In the first case, the bent position of the birds and the bluish-green nuance could be reminiscent of doves. The dove alternately raises and lowers its body momentarily, constantly moving its neck whilst puffing its chest. The position of these birds huddling in the cold is well known, with their heads drawn into their feathers and their chests puffed out (Fig. 21a). This position resembles exactly the birds from the “Tomb with Cupids”. The artist was limited to a small range of colours and, with a mixture and combination of those colours whose pigments were available, he was trying to get closer to the natural appearance of the birds. The top of the head, behind the head and the throat of the dove is dark blue, the upper back and wings are dark grey-blue, the lower back is light blue, and the head and chest are reddish grey. The other lower parts of the body are pale grey-blue, while the lower part of the belly is white. The lower part of the

<sup>65</sup> Oakeshott 1977, 57.

<sup>66</sup> Гербран, Шевалије 2004, chalice: 345–347, basket: 398, goblet: 689.

<sup>67</sup> Anđelković, Rogić, Nikolić 2011, 231–248.



Fig. 21a. Dove (Dove3 us: <http://blog.borrowlenses.com/2012/01/tip-of-the-week-real-world-cold-weather-shooting-tips/>)

Fig. 21b. Quail (<http://www.lovac.bosnjace.com/divljac.html>)

Fig. 21c. Partridge (<http://vrtpavlovic.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/kamenjarka.jpg>)

Сл. 21a. Голуб (Dove3 us: <http://blog.borrowlenses.com/2012/01/tip-of-the-week-real-world-cold-weather-shooting-tips/>)

Сл. 21b. Прејелеуца (<http://www.lovac.bosnjace.com/divljac.html>)

Сл. 21c. Јабебуца (<http://vrtpavlovic.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/kamenjarka.jpg>)

neck is decorated on both sides with bright white spots. The wings are grey, the tail feathers are black and adorned with a bright transverse stripe. A broad stripe on the bend of the wing and a large spot on the tail feathers are also white.<sup>68</sup> Similarities with the described look of the dove are noticeable on the birds from the tomb.<sup>69</sup> According to the archaeozoological research, it is known that the domestic pigeon (*Columba domestica* in ancient and late antique periods), inhabited the territory of present day Serbia and was one of the favourite domestic animals.<sup>70</sup>

The motif of doves over the dish – goblet, is known in both the decorative,<sup>71</sup> and funerary art. In sepulchral art, the motif of doves over the kantharos can often be seen in combination with peacocks. They can be found in pagan, and in old Christian tombs. In the pagan tomb at Silistra, in the lunette of the eastern wall, above the entrance and motifs of candelabrum which flanked it, and across a similar composition with peacocks in the western lunette, two symmetrical doves are depicted, positioned facing each other. Because of the damage to this part of the wall, it is difficult to confirm.<sup>72</sup> Also in the old Christian tomb at Pécs, in the vault with the damaged central medallion, and where once stood a monogram of Christ, on the four sides, elongated goblets divide the vault into four equal sections. On the eastern and western sides, these goblets are flanked by peacocks, as has already been mentioned, while on the northern and southern sides, there are doves in the same place.<sup>73</sup> In Sofia’s necropolis, in the tomb marked with number 9, where a painting was created

from the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, in the northern lunette, where the kantharos is below the line in the form of rainbow and in the triangular remains of the lunette, there are also visible some roughly sketched doves. The ancient theme of the Hellenistic representation of the soul as a bird, who refreshes in the afterlife with boon water from an amphora,<sup>74</sup> in this case is Christianised.<sup>75</sup>

In Greek mythology, Aphrodite’s sacred bird was a dove, and Erotes – Cupids, and Aphrodite’s favourites, depicted on the eastern wall of the tomb, may indicate the same symbolism. However, in correlation with the afterlife and the peacocks’ symbolism in the pagan funerary art, with which the doves are most often depicted, here they should be viewed as symbols of the souls of

<sup>68</sup> Brehm 1982, 300–305.

<sup>69</sup> The artist painted the head and lower part of the body light green, while the wings are of a light blue nuance, with yellow accents.

<sup>70</sup> Недељковић 2009, 31, ТАБ I, II, IV, VI; Gál 2005, 308–317, Tab 3.

<sup>71</sup> Famous mosaic from the Hadrian’s Villa, the copy of the mosaic from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, represents four doves on the edge of the dish, where they drink water. Birds gained great dignity with this mosaic. Woodford 2004, 77–78; Rizzo 1929, TAV. LXXI.

<sup>72</sup> Димитров, Чичикова 1986, 34.

<sup>73</sup> Fuler, Wachman, Pinter 1988, 22–27.

<sup>74</sup> Миятев 1925, 86–105.

<sup>75</sup> The dove’s symbolism in Christianity is well known. In the Holy Trinity, it symbolises the Holy Spirit. A dove was released from the Noah’s Ark after the flood and she finds land and brings back the olive branch. 1 Moses 8:11.

the righteous ones, and the dish from which they are drinking water, as a symbol of the spring of memory.

2) *Quails, partridges*. Another way to identify these birds by their appearance and body posture is the similarity with those of birds from the family of Phasianidae. Thus, these could then be quails or partridges (Fig. 21b/c).<sup>76</sup> These two species are akin. The quail belongs to the family of pheasants; it is smaller than the partridge and is a migratory bird. This bird lives on the plains and in meadows. Its plumage is various nuances of brown, and its head is adorned with yellowish lines, in a similar manner to the birds from the tomb. It has strong legs and a curved beak. Its wings are also decorated with stripes. The partridge is from the pheasant family, it is bigger than the quail and it is not a migratory bird. Its body is rounded, and of a squat form, like the birds in the tomb G–160. A related species of this common partridge is the mountain rock partridge, which has a red beak, as do the birds depicted in the tomb (Figs. 20, 21c).<sup>77</sup> Besides the aforementioned similar shape of the dish, birds which drink from it are depicted on the fresco from the “Tomb of the banquet” in the Constanta (Romania, late 4 or early 5 century AD), and these birds are identified as partridges.<sup>78</sup> A very nicely rendered rock partridge is located in the lunette above the arcosolium in the tomb of Clodius Hermes (*M (arcus) Clodius Hermes*).<sup>79</sup> It is located to the right of the glass dish filled with various fruits. With its head extended to the top of the dish, it is trying to grab the fruit with its beak.<sup>80</sup> This tomb represents the hymn to life and spring. This landscape, with flowers, baskets of fruits and birds, is an eternal garden of pleasure, designed to attract the soul of the deceased in the symbolic paradise.<sup>81</sup> The same symbolical vault full of various kinds of fruits and birds, among which some are similar in shape to quails, as well as water vessels, can be found in the mosaics of the church of Santa Costanza. Dishes scattered within this mosaic may symbolise the cleansing of sins, fruits symbolise the garden i.e. paradise, and birds symbolise the strength of the soul to rise above earthly things.<sup>82</sup> A similar concept is found on the vault of the tomb in Silistra, where various hunting scenes, flowers, fruits and birds, including peacocks, pigeons, ducks and birds similar to those described, are located in coffered fields. This is the depiction of the heavenly paradise.<sup>83</sup>

It is clear that both species of birds, quails and partridges, in funerary art symbolise the deceased’s soul which, with other symbols, approach the fields of bliss. The bird itself is a symbol of the connection

between heaven and earth, for this bird is destined with the possibility of flying. The bird is a symbol of the heavenly world.<sup>84</sup> Quails are the symbol of romantic fervour, and since they are migratory birds, are also associated with a cyclical context and the arrival of spring.<sup>85</sup>

The Expressionistic rendering of these birds, make them difficult to identify accurately, but also the opinion that most of the birds were probably painted from memory and personal experience should be considered.<sup>86</sup>

*Grapevine*. The upper frieze of the northern and southern walls, which extends above the panels with peacocks and pairs of birds, is filled with a spiral grapevine (Fig. 22). The vine and its leaves were modelled with light and dark green strokes. Red coloured grapes are located along the upper and lower edge of the frieze. Due to its rich symbolism, the grapevine is one of the most common decorations in both pagan and Christian tombs. Friezes are most often decorated with it. The grapevine can often be found on the walls of Viminacium’s painted tombs. The spiral form of the grapevine’s tendrils can be found in the tomb G–5464, and in the “Tomb with the Christ monogram” G–5517, where this motif is located in the friezes of all the walls, except the one with the monogram of Christ.<sup>87</sup> On the northern and southern walls of the tomb marked with number 4 and on the southern wall of the tomb

<sup>76</sup> In the decorative arts, these bird species can be seen depicted on the mosaic marked with the B letter, discovered in the villa rustica – *Dragoncello* (outside Rome’s city walls). White linear accents mark the plumage and wing and connect the head and the body on the bird’s black body, and are similar to the yellow accents on the bluish-green bodies of the birds from the tomb. Gerlach 2003, 46–86.

<sup>77</sup> Brehm 1982, 307, 308.

<sup>78</sup> Barbet 1994, 37.

<sup>79</sup> Mielsch 2001, 202–203; Della Portella 2000, 104.

<sup>80</sup> On the opposite side of the dish is located the parrot. A bird on the grapevine is below them.

<sup>81</sup> Della Portella 2000, 102–107.

<sup>82</sup> Oakeshott 1977, 56–58.

<sup>83</sup> Димитров, Чичикова 1986, 34–35, 52–53.

<sup>84</sup> Гербран, Шевалије 2004, bird: 754–758.

<sup>85</sup> In the Christian iconography they can be seen on the mosaics of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, in the scene “Quails fall from heaven”. Oakeshott 1977, 79. Their symbolism here is reinforced, thus they became miraculous food for Hebrews in the desert. Exodus XVI, 13.

<sup>86</sup> Đurić 1985b, 227.

<sup>87</sup> Korać 2007, 18–57.



Fig. 22. Motif of vine, southern wall of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Fig. 23. Right cupid and kalathos, eastern wall of the “Tomb with cupids” (photo by: M. Korać)

Сл. 22. Мотив винове лозе, јужни зид „Гробнице са кујидонима“ (фотографија М. Кораћ)

Сл. 23. Десни кујидон и калатос, источни зид „Гробнице са кујидонима“ (фотографија М. Кораћ)

with number 7, both of which are in Sofia, spiral vines, grapes and acanthus leaves cover the entire wall surfaces. In the tomb number 6, the vine motif is quite stylised and schematised.<sup>88</sup> In the second old Christian tomb in Pécs, in the lunette of the northern wall, along the slope of the vault, there is a dark green vine, with thick leaves and black grapes.<sup>89</sup> On the northern and southern walls, behind the heavenly fence, in the early Christian tomb in Niš, a variety of vegetation, vines, grapes and birds are represented.<sup>90</sup> Frieze with vines, grapes and birds who are pecking them, can be found in the pagan tomb in Beška. Vines as a decorative element are inherited from Hellenistic–Oriental art. The vine’s greatest importance in Roman-pagan art was gained in the Dionysian cult. This relation of Dionysus with the mysteries of death, which are also the mysteries of rebirth and knowledge, has made the vine a funerary symbol whose role continues in the symbolism of Christianity.<sup>91</sup> In fresco painted tombs, the grapevine motif and its spiral shape allude to the celestial sphere, paradise and the peace and prosperity of the deceased, which await him after death. This last mentioned motif of the spiral grapevine, is an almost symbolically inseparable part of the scene on the wall at the eastern end of the tomb G–160.

**Eastern wall, the scene with cupids.**<sup>92</sup> Here the trapezium of the eastern wall is surrounded with a red border. Then, with a red stripe, it is divided into two unequal fields, an upper, smaller field and a lower, larger one. In addition to the frame, formed with green, ochre

and black stripes, in the upper trapezoidal field, there are the remains of two nuances of green, which suggest a vine’s tendrils and leaves. Because of the poor preservation of these forms, the motif cannot be precisely identified. The lower, larger trapezoidal field is reserved for the main scene of the eastern wall. There are two cupids depicted in contrapposto, holding garlands in their hands (Fig. 12). The figure of the cupid on the left is significantly damaged, but the contours of the body are noticed, as well as the right leg which is stepped out. Behind it, the left leg is bent. The best preserved part of the whole figure, which demonstrates the precision of the artist, is the palm of the cupid’s right hand, which is raised in the air. The other hand is not preserved but, following the movement of the whole body, it would have been positioned toward the vessel that is between the two figures. Behind the left shoulder, a little, blue, spread wing is clearly visible and behind the right, part of a slanting wing. On the head

<sup>88</sup> Миятев 1925, 23–35, 55–67.

<sup>89</sup> Fulep, Vachman, Pinter 1988, 27–31.

<sup>90</sup> Мирковић 1956, 53–71.

<sup>91</sup> The Christian symbolism is clear: Christ’s blood is the wine of the New Testament, and the grapevine is the symbol of The Kingdom of Heaven and The Eucharist. Гербран, Шевалије, 2004, grapevine: 511–514; Мирковић 1956, 66.

<sup>92</sup> Cupid, or Greek Eros, is sometimes called Amor. Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Srejskić 1996: Amor: 30, Eros: 138–139, Cupid: 303.

of this cupid, in the place where the hair was, an ochre nuance is preserved. The cupid on the right side of the field is better preserved. A rosy torso and legs in contrapposto are visible. The left hand is resting on the body and the right is raised. Small blue wings are spread widely. This Cupid's head is damaged, but there is a nuance of brown, indicating that this cupid had darker hair (Fig. 23). Between them is a vessel similar in shape to the one in front of and the one behind the peacocks, filled with fruits and flowers. It seems that the cupids are taking ribbons and beautiful, stylised garlands from this kalathos. In the upper right corner of the trapezium, above the right cupid, a flower with four petals is painted.

Similarly rendered cupids can also be found in the funerary painting of the tombs in Kerch<sup>93</sup> and Alexandria.<sup>94</sup> In the first one, the cupids are located on different walls, one is holding birds in his hands, and the other one is holding garlands. They are depicted naked (one of them with a cloak) in vivid motion. In the *Stagni* tomb in Alexandria, cupids are represented on the columns of the tomb's niche. According to the posture and rendering of their bodies with dark contours, the treatment of their curly hair and wings, these cupids are, stylistically, very similar to the cupids in the tomb at Viminacium. Ichnographically, however, since it is a painting from Romanised Egypt, the cupids in Alexandria belonged to the legacies of Egyptian symbolism, referring to the syncretic deity – *Eros-Harpocrates*.<sup>95</sup>

Cupids, Venus's sons, favourites and helpers, are often depicted in the company and service of the goddess,<sup>96</sup> or in the scene of the preparation of Venus's toilet.<sup>97</sup> Regarding the cupids associated with the cult of Venus, it can be said that they belong to the cult of *Venus Funerariae*,<sup>98</sup> within funerary painting.

Cupids are often represented in pairs with a gentle Psyche, both in decorative<sup>99</sup> and sepulchral art.<sup>100</sup>

Besides accompanying Venus, cupids often can be found in the company of Dionysus, usually depicted with vines, grapes or wine.<sup>101</sup> Through the Dionysian cult, they are linked to the apotheosis and the afterlife,<sup>102</sup> and are, therefore, often depicted in funerary art.<sup>103</sup>

All these motifs and compositions, in a single tomb space, create another reality. Going beyond the boundaries of the framed fields and borders, the symbols communicate the infinite space of the cosmos. As well as the other motifs of walls in the "Tomb with cupids", peacocks, birds and vines, special attention should be directed toward the cupids represented on the ceiling of the mausoleum and to the porphyry sarcophagus of

Constantina, Constantine's daughter.<sup>104</sup> In the grape harvest scene, the cupids participate from their position on the sarcophagus and communicate with other paradise symbols depicted on the ceiling. Represented in a Christian context, all the mosaic compositions on the ceiling and the reliefs on the sarcophagus are still of pagan origin, with a strong presence of the spirit of Hellenic art. Motives of heaven and eternal life in the space of the ceiling – where there are mixed traditions of the pagan and Christian world, are also depicted on the sarcophagus. The large porphyry sarcophagus was originally placed opposite the entrance and, thus, it communicated with the motifs on the ceiling. Here, in

<sup>93</sup> Minns 1915, 143–147; Rostovtzeff 1919, 144–163.

<sup>94</sup> Venit 1999, 641–669.

<sup>95</sup> Venit 1999, 652.

<sup>96</sup> On the frieze of the renovated shrine of *Venus Genetrix* in the forum of Julius Cesar, they perform various tasks for the goddess and her lover – Mars. Ramage, Ramage 2005, 169. Then, on the landscape with the Venus and Bachus from the „*dell'Orante*“ chamber, small cupids here row toward Venus's island, Cythera. Hanfmann 1965, 258–259, TAB. XXII.

<sup>97</sup> Associated with the Venus, precisely with her toilet and the preparation of the mistress's toilet, the cupids on the silver Projecta casket are depicted as holding the clypeus with the portraits of the married couple. These boys with the small wings, facing each other, with their pose and position, resemble the cupids from the tomb G–160. Elsner 1998, 40–42. This posture of the cupids, who offer garlands and flowers to Venus, within the scene of Venus's toilet, is a common motif on the mosaics from the Roman period. Dunbabin 2010, 96, Fig. 96.

<sup>98</sup> Јовановић 2000, 11–19.

<sup>99</sup> Rizzo 1929, 15–16, 65–67, TAB. CXXXVIII–CXLII.

<sup>100</sup> Đurić 1985b, 12–13, 175–176.

<sup>101</sup> Going ahead, cupids are a compulsory part of Dionysus's escort in the scene of "Dionysus's triumph", where god approaches the abandoned Ariadne. Hales 2003, 178. They can also be found in the representations of the myth of Ambrosia, where they are depicted in grape harvesting, among the vine tendrils, in the lunette of the central apse of the triple apsidal chamber in the *Piazza Armerina*. Also in the *Piazza Armerina*, in the area of the circular peristyle, depictions of Amor as a fisherman, winegrower and vintner, can be seen, in vivid motion among the vine tendrils. Pace 1955, 48, 90; Gentili 1961, 53–54.

<sup>102</sup> Within the façade relief of the eastern gate in the younger fortification of Felix Romuliana, naked cupids are depicted in the scene of grape harvesting, within palace iconography inspired by Dionysus's cult, apotheosis and the afterlife. Срејовић 1993, 42, cat. 52.

<sup>103</sup> They are often on the decoration of a sarcophagus, depicted independently, or within a scene, always indicating epiphany, salvation, triumph and love. Elsner 1998, 150–152; Ramage, Ramage 2005, 292–293.

<sup>104</sup> Volbach 1961, 15–22; Oakeshott 1977, 56–58; Ramage 2005, 340–341.

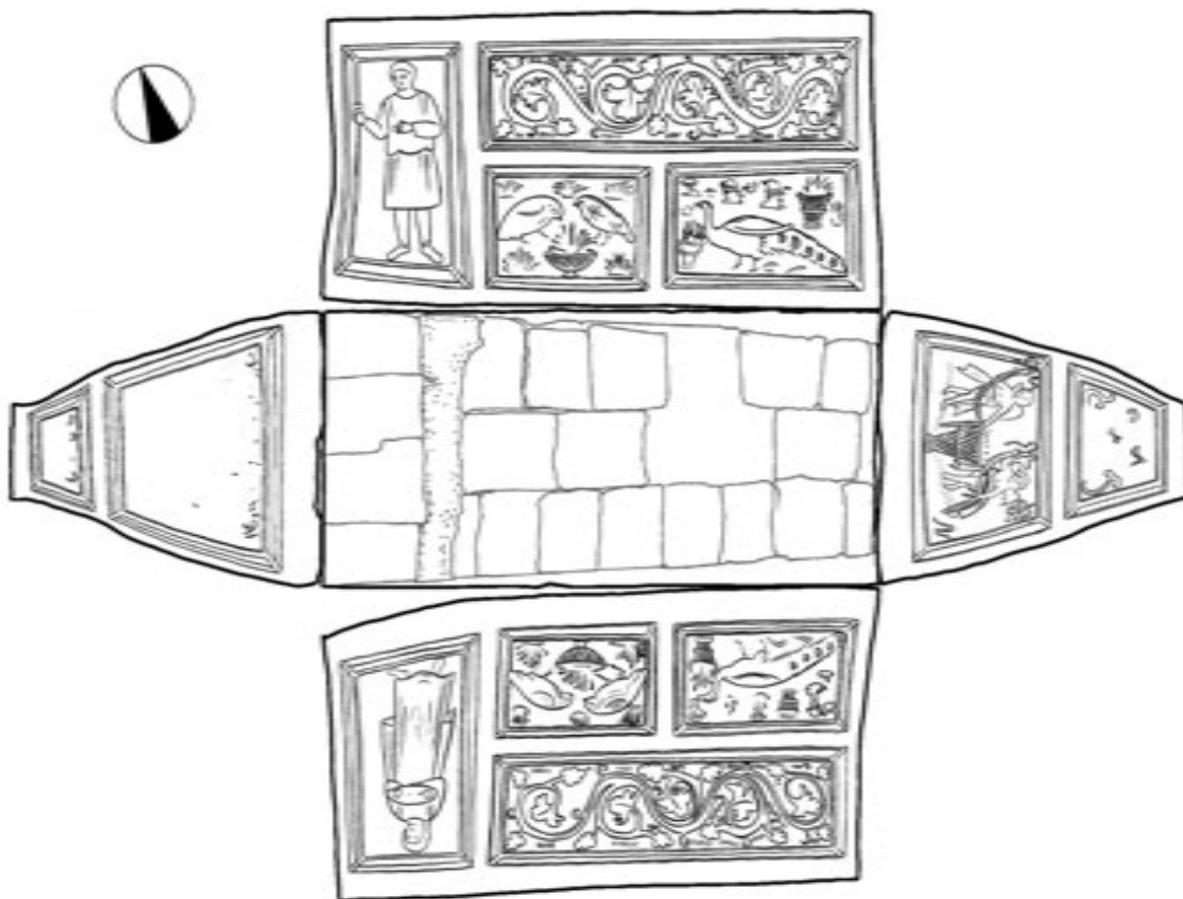


Fig. 24. Reconstruction of fresco paintings of the “Tomb with cupids” – based on fresco remains and analogies quoted in the paper, scenes of the southern and northern walls, as well as the scene with cupids on the eastern wall are reconstructed (drawing by: Dragana Rogić)

Сл. 24. Реконструкција фреско сликарства „Гробнице са кујидонима“ – на основу остатака фреско сликарства и у раду наведених аналозија, реконструисане су сцене јужној и северној зида, као и сцене са кујидонима на источном зиду (цртеж: Драгана Рођић)

the midst of a huge circular vine, with tendrils similar to those in the tomb, the cupids again press grapes and for making wine. Some of them wear garlands, and in the corners are peacocks. The ochre, cone vessel between the cupids, by virtue of its elongated shape, could have been a cornucopia. An example for this is in Trier, among the composition with cupids.<sup>105</sup> In the tomb in Beška this motif is represented within the composition of the deceased couple and is a common example of a cornucopia accompanying a deity.<sup>106</sup> As a gift filled symbol of abundance and wealth and fertility and happiness, it is often the symbol of Dionysus. The cupids are holding and waving festive ribbons and branches. Branch waving signifies honour to the winner, in this context to the one who triumphs over the death. Also,

the right-hand cupid is holding a stylised green and ochre garland. The garland is a common decorative adornment of a sarcophagus. Their painting tradition dates back to the Hellenistic period and, as a favourite motif, they also can be found in most of the tombs from the area of the Illyricum Province.<sup>107</sup> Symbolically, in the sepulchral Roman custom, they signify the afterlife or victo-

<sup>105</sup> Lavin 1967, 99–113.

<sup>106</sup> Green 2003, 108–116. On the mosaic from Winterton in Britain, an extremely stylised cornucopia is represented in its ordinary function. Neal 1981, 114.

<sup>107</sup> They are characteristic for the early Roman period. Hanfmann 1965, 228–229.

ry over the death. The flower with four petals above the right-hand cupid has its analogies in the tomb in Brestovik and in two from Viminacium: G–2624 and G–5313.<sup>108</sup> In nature, Evening primrose – *Oenothera biennis* (from the Onagraceae family) and Cinquefoil – *Potentilla erecta* (from the Rosaceae family) have this form of bloom (Fig. 24).

### The analysis of style

A first look at the interior of the "Tomb with cupids" overwhelms us with its abundance of red, green and ochre lines, which create framed fields for paintings (Fig. 12). Only then do we notice the motifs and white background within them.<sup>109</sup> Thick, red borders divide walls into the basic fields, and then thinner ochre and even thinner green borders, finished with a black line inside, create a stylised frame. The fact that the artist really wanted to create the impression of a frame with these lines is demonstrated at the corners of the edges where the lines merge. Just as it is with a real painting frame, he accentuated this edge with a single, short, green and black diagonal line, in order to make it look like a rabbit (Figs. 12, 17, 18, 20, 22). This tomb is an eclectic mixture of different stylistic characteristics of funerary painting. This reflects the treatment of the provincial school that absorbed influences from different sources. New styles of Capital's (Rome's) art were adjusted to local traditions and accepted in an individual manner within the local workshops. The manner of painting the framed fields, which is achieved using the complementary colours of red and green, resembles that of some of the "Flavian" – red-green linear – style of painting in the first catacombs: Domitilla or San Callisto from the period of 220 to 250 AD.<sup>110</sup> The frame of decorative lines is aesthetically dominant in the catacombs' painting, as is seen in this tomb and is very characteristic for the period.<sup>111</sup> Also, the white background with scattered motifs, as a feature of the tetrarchy, is noticeable within the framed fields. Although the main motif dominates the composition, the peacock or birds over the kantharos, it does not stand as a monumental element, but its background is filled with various stylised forms of flowers, bushes, diverse plants or repeated kantharos (Figs. 17, 18, 20). It seems that all these motifs defy space and, on a white background, appear to be floating, similar to the ancient symbols of floral or zoomorphic motifs in the catacombs. By inserting small stylised motifs in these areas, the artist tried to overcome the *horror vacui*. As a contribution to the confusion of diversities and the indecision of an artist

when choosing a single specific painting manner, this is especially visible on the depiction of the peacock. The painter's wish for an illusion of space is noticeable in the composition of the peacocks' tails on the panels.<sup>112</sup> Namely, the peacock and kantharos stand on the bottom edge of the frame; so that the peacock's tail does not fit the framed field, but on the left (and right) side it is coming out, thus breaks through the image space (Fig. 17). It enters our space, the space of the observer. Figures depicted in a frieze along the painting's edge can be found in the second Pompeian style, and a peacock in a pose similar to the one in the tomb can be seen in the house that probably belonged to the wife of the Emperor Nero – *Villa Poppaea*, in Oplontis.<sup>113</sup> This shows us that a part of the imperial style of Constantine's monumental style, which is actually a renaissance or renewal of the second Pompeian architectural style, was partially adopted by the Viminacium painters.<sup>114</sup> The composition of fields in the tomb is clear and symmetrical. The vine and peacocks are painted rapidly in an impressionistic manner which borders on naturalism (Figs. 19, 22). This seems to bring us back to the Flavian style, which is characterised by a desire for naturalism and motion, thus giving the impression of an ephemera and transient moment, as is the case in the Fourth Pompeian style.<sup>115</sup> The influence of classicism is not lost, so the forms are clear and finely executed, while a drawing that describes them is visible in the darker contours and highlighting of the feathers. This same drawing can be found on the cupids' bodies, where the artist, with the darker red contour, highlights the musculature (Fig. 23). The vine is represented in an easy, uninterrupted stroke of dark and light green colour, while a cluster in the vine is, in fact, a gathering of a combination of stains of red (Fig. 22). In this easily rendered decorative element, the finest impressionism is noticeable. We can conclude that the workshop did not follow a

<sup>108</sup> About this flower type in: Рогоћ, Анђелковић 2011, 88–89, 100, fig. 3.

<sup>109</sup> The lime-white surface of the background is recognised from the decorative painting of the Viminacium baths. Rogić, Despotović, Milovanović 2008, 75–81.

<sup>110</sup> Герке 1973, 9–47.

<sup>111</sup> Grabar 1982, 7–8.

<sup>112</sup> Lavin 1967, 99–113.

<sup>113</sup> Ramage 2005, 85–89.

<sup>114</sup> Чубова 1966, 5–120.

<sup>115</sup> Wirth 1968, 30–49.

sole artistic signature, and that everything that is at the style's border can be seen in the motifs of the birds over the kantharos (Fig. 20). The reluctance to present a resemblance to a specific bird from the nature leads us to the real style of the late antiquity, when artists did not want to represent objects naturalistically. They replace the anatomical correctness of figures with an inner spiritual content or pure symbolism, which should provoke the viewer's thoughts and sensitivity. Thus, a true expressionist manner of representation is appearing.<sup>116</sup> It is often the case that one kind of bird is rendered differently each time it is painted.<sup>117</sup> In a similar manner, the floral motifs in the background of the main ones, the peacocks or the birds are shaped by simplification, stylisation and abstractness, so that they cannot even be identified. They are there only to indicate the depth of space (Figs. 17, 18, 20). The figural scenes are, unfortunately, the most damaged, and it is certain that they would have given us the most complete picture of the artistic expression of the Viminacium workshop. Unlike the cupids figures that, with their small, stocky bodies, most resemble the cupids from the scene of grape harvesting from Piazza Armerina, the mausoleum of Santa Costanza and Trier, the figures of servants in the offering scene are, on the contrary, depicted monumentally and elongated, thus occupying the entire field in the frame. A completely different artistic expression of safe strokes, solid forms and clear shapes is, perhaps, indicative of the greatest artistic knowledge of the master who had worked in the "Tomb with cupids" (Figs. 13, 14, 15, 24).

Because of so many different artistic handwritings, it is certain that the work in the tomb G-160 was divided between the master and his assistants. Probably the hardest parts, and these would certainly be the human figures, were painted by the leader of the workshop. Characteristics of monumental, solid and clear forms of human figures, with large eyes, a soft, oval shaped face and tight lips and with no other details on the face, are all features of the expressionistic classicism of Constantine's era.<sup>118</sup> The background has no depth and the most similar rendering can be found, as has already been mentioned, in Silistra, also on the figures of servants. The colouring of the tomb is rich, intense red, blue, green, brown and black, and is mostly used for the lines of the frames, the figures' contours and for the modelling and drawing of forms. Less intense ochre, light blue and light green are framed with darker contours, which describe basic shapes, on top of which the artists often later added descriptive lines, flecks and

short lines (as can be seen on the goblets, the peacock's tail and the clothing of the figures). A very nice, bright tone of rose has been used by the artist as a basis for painting skin tones (the cupids' bodies and the faces of the servants). White is used in short, swift strokes to accent certain forms, mainly the birds' feathers.

### **Sociological, philosophical and methodological frameworks for observing the tomb and the painting in it**

Besides religious syncretism, which is characteristic for late antiquity, there is the important fact that the change of the philosophy of death also happened in this period. The philosophy of "death-life" begins in Rome with Plotinus. From the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, it not only influences the change of funeral and post funeral rites, and hence the change to new eschatological principles, but also breaks into the arts. The dominant theme of visual arts then becomes death.<sup>119</sup>

Since the grave is no longer a residence of the deceased, the soul is primary and liberated of its material remains, and inhumation then becomes the only form of burial. Funerals are conducted in various grave constructions, depending on the economic potential of the deceased.<sup>120</sup> Entombments in the fresco painted tombs were a very expensive type of funeral.<sup>121</sup> If luxury equipped tombs testify to the social status of the deceased, and the funeral fashion to his respect of life and death, the aspect of the tomb as an eternal dwelling, i.e. house,<sup>122</sup> stands opposite to the ever present idea of the grave as a temporary residence, later, finally accepted in Christianity. However, these tombs still have elevated bricks in the form of a "pillow" under the head of the deceased and a gable roof above the tomb's opening. It is possible that these are the reminiscences of past times or just good constructive solutions that should not be changed. Painting of life, in this case, of the "death space", originates from the painting of villa rustica, where it mostly had only a decorative and rarely a

<sup>116</sup> Čremošnik 1984, 198.

<sup>117</sup> This is the case with the partridge, whose depiction is different in the four tombs in which it is represented. Đurić 1985b, 225.

<sup>118</sup> Čremošnik 1984, 199.

<sup>119</sup> Герке 1973, 9–47.

<sup>120</sup> Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 186.

<sup>121</sup> Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 186; Зотовић 2000, 15–16.

<sup>122</sup> Валтровић 1884, 123; Васић 1907, 93–94.

<sup>123</sup> Shear 1930, 3–26; Anderson 1987, 6.

cult or religious role.<sup>123</sup> Although the schemes and systems of the decoration are not substantially changed whether it is a decoration of the rooms of living or dwellings of dead,<sup>124</sup> unlike the villas, sepulchral space was mostly painted with motifs of a cult-symbolic character. It remains unknown to what extent late ancient man dedicated his life, or its part, to the contemplation of, and the preparation for, death. The ancient Egyptians were prepared for death,<sup>125</sup> and the tendency for immortality occurred as a desire for the "survival of the self", i.e. the need for the idea of "to not ever die".<sup>126</sup> This tendency gave birth to the role of the portrait in funerary art. The Roman custom of making post mortem human masks (*imago*) testifies of the desire for preserving not only the face, but also the self of ancestors.<sup>127</sup> One interesting opinion is that the usual scene repertoire of funerary art in some tombs had already been painted, when the images of the deceased were over painted after death.<sup>128</sup>

If the grave is the dwelling of a deceased, it is logical to ask whether the tomb's space, at the same time, became a sacred space as an architectural entity?

On stelae and sarcophagi of this period there are the biographical scenes from the life of the deceased, unlike the painting of tombs, which is abstracted with symbolism.<sup>129</sup> Symbolic images of paradise or mythological figures have not stood in the tomb just referring to what they represent, but as images for the purpose of the deceased one. In such a context, they could accept the meaning of an icon,<sup>130</sup> emanating their actual presence in the tomb.<sup>131</sup> Image-icons placed in the tomb's space create a new context for the space, which should be observed as a sacred place. The late antique sacred space of the tomb stands halfway between the deceased-hero from the cult of the tomb (mausoleum) of the eastern Mediterranean<sup>132</sup> and the consecrated tomb space of the Roman catacombs.<sup>133</sup> A new methodological approach, hierotopy,<sup>134</sup> led us to this idea. Observed through the lens of visual culture, a man in the process of self-awareness as a spiritual being firstly used the image, and then created a specific space for his connection with the transcendent world.<sup>135</sup> In such a way, a new space was created, with a different purpose, for another life, within the real space of the cemetery i.e. necropolis. The fresco design, along with the construction that creates the aforementioned space, is different from similar constructions, owing to this impression of another reality, which is actualised through art.<sup>136</sup> If the idea of a grave as a house<sup>137</sup>, i.e. an eternal dwelling, is rejected because of the change in philosophical prin-

ciples, the interpretation of this space as a vestibule of the world of the blessed or, later, of heaven, remains, thus the context of the space and the content of the frescoes in the tombs suggests it.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the consideration of the construction and geometry of the "Tomb with cupids" in Viminacium, is that not only that painted representations carried in them principles of composition, but that the structures as well, could be carefully designed and executed according to certain principles, which

<sup>124</sup> Rostovtzeff 1919, 145.

<sup>125</sup> According to a large number of unfinished tombs in the necropolises of Thebes, it seems that ancient Egyptians did not started work at the tomb's construction in the earlier phase of life, but only when they were in later years or when the illness occurred. Mackay 1921, 154–168.

<sup>126</sup> Hanfmann 1973, 260.

<sup>127</sup> Della Portella 2000, 62–63; Hanfmann 1973, 266.

<sup>128</sup> Popović 2011, 238.

<sup>129</sup> Kampen 1981, 47–58.

<sup>130</sup> The function of an icon, in this place, could have a meaning which was attributed to them by John of Damascus in his defence of holy images, during the iconoclasm, and where the image, i.e. the icon, is explained as an emanation of the depicted figure, i.e. the sign of the presence of the one who is represented. Payton 1996, 173–183.

<sup>131</sup> This Christianised context most certainly cannot be applied to late antique painting, not even early Christian, but having in mind the meaning and importance of the image in the afterlife of the period, the funerary image should be observed with all icon functions.

<sup>132</sup> More about grave cult in: Carstens 2002, 391–409.

<sup>133</sup> The first Christians used the tomb space of the catacombs for religious services or other gatherings such as agape. Grig 2004, 205; Della Portella 2000, 149–215.

<sup>134</sup> The term Hierotopy was developed in 2002 by the Russian art historian and Byzantinist Alexei Lidov. The term consists of two Greek words: hieros (sacred) and topos (place, space). The definition of Hierotopy is: *Hierotopy is the creation of sacred spaces regarded as a special form of creativity, and a field of historical research which reveals and analyses the particular examples of that creativity.* Lidov 2006, 32, ref. 2. Although originally it was used in Byzantine culture research, this method has been applied to different periods and cultures in recent years.

<sup>135</sup> Lidov 2006, 33.

<sup>136</sup> In Plato's dialogue *Hippias Major*, during the discussion about beauty, the existence of images and reality as separate units is emphasised. Canto, Wing 1985, 124–145.

<sup>137</sup> Although there was a custom of inscribing the architectural or painted elements in the tombs of the Roman Alexandria as replicas of the architecture of living, its influence goes back to the period of catacombs. Venit 1999, 642.

were not dependant on the material potentials and construction performance. This is supported by the fact that there are a number of other tombs from Viminacium with the same cross-section and of the same, or similar geometries, and which were not painted (Fig. 9). However, it should be mentioned that the geometries which are the closest to the ideal case of inscribing a trapezoidal section into an isosceles triangle with an angle of  $72^\circ$ , happened exactly in the fresco painted tombs. This further emphasises the possibility of the existence of the golden section within the painting of a tomb.

Owing to the aforementioned iconographic analogies from other pagan tombs, it is noticeable that the usual setting of scenes in the “Tomb with cupids”, with the deceased’s portraits on the western wall and the cupids on the eastern wall, would be those mythological figures who introduced the deceased persons to the afterlife.<sup>138</sup> They carry with them the joy of living and are intermediaries, as we have seen, between gods and humans. They are the lovers of Psyche – the soul and Venus’s children, who carry love with them and thus, are the real guides for the next life. In its Greek form, Eros, by using love and longing, ensures the creation and permanent renewal of the world, and he is, as such, the opposite of Thanatos – death.<sup>139</sup> Besides these, all

other symbols promise both victory over death and life after death. These other symbols are the branches and garlands, or the abundance of divine gifts from the cornucopia. The exact plan of the ascent of the soul from earthly life, with the servants who are closest to the western wall, through the victory and soul transition on the eastern wall, leading to a deserved paradise garden, is clearly expressed with the symbols of peacocks – the celestial birds, doves / quails / partridges – terrestrial birds,<sup>140</sup> kantharoi, vines and grapes. All these became an essential part of the scene repertoire of the catacomb ceilings and floor mosaics, interpreted as the Christian cosmos (Fig. 24).<sup>141</sup>

Owing to its location, at the crossroads of East and West, Viminacium painting was filled with symbiosis. While painting the tomb G-160 – “Tomb with cupids”, the artists eclectically accepted some of the expressionistic, classicistic and monumental styles of Constantine’s time. At the same time they used some solutions of illusionism and impressionism, going back to traditional models in the red-green style of the first catacombs. Based on the mix of influences of Constantine’s art and earlier styles, and the retention of the conventional, whilst carefully and partially accepting the new styles, the painting of the “Tomb with cupids” could be dated to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>138</sup> If these cupids were from the escort of Venus’s *funerariae*, here we could convey the observation of the path to eternal serenity, given by A. Jovanović, and who quoted Tibullus’s verse from the poem dedicated to Delia: ... *Venus herself will conduct me to the Elysian fields of eternal serenity*. Јовановић 2000, 16, реф. 34.

<sup>139</sup> Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Srejskić 1996, Eros: 138–139, Thanatos: 517.

<sup>140</sup> Within the esoteric comprehension, and according to Orphic doctrine or Neopythagoreanism, these birds could be the sublimation of the deceased’s soul, which went back to the homeland of the spirit and on the island of the divinised hero. Јовановић 2007, 139–145.

<sup>141</sup> Цветковић-Томашевић 1978, 87–101.

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**Резиме:** ЈЕЛЕНА АНЂЕЛКОВИЋ ГРАШАР, Археолошки институт, Београд  
ЕМИЛИЈА НИКОЛИЋ, Археолошки институт, Београд  
ДРАГАНА РОГИЋ, Археолошки институт, Београд

## **„ГРОБНИЦА СА КУПИДОНИМА“ ИЗ ВИМИНАЦИЈУМА: ПРИЛОГ ПРОУЧАВАЊУ КОНСТРУКЦИЈЕ, ИКОНОГРАФИЈЕ И СТИЛА**

*Кључне речи.* – Виминацијум, касна антика, гробница, трапез, златни пресек, конструкција, симетрија, геометрија, фреска, сликарство, купидони, иконографија, стил.

Фреско осликана гробница G–160, позната је као „Гробница са купидонима“, због представе купидона на источном зиду. Откривена је 2003. године на виминацијумској некрополи „Пиривој“, где се и данас презентује јавности *in situ*.

Конструкција гробнице има трапезни пресек. У оквиру анализе конструкције гробнице, у овом, као и у осталим фреско осликаним гробницама, видимо геометрије које су блиске идеалном случају уписивања трапезног пресека у једнакокраки троугао са углом од 72°. Ове геометрије могу бити повезане са златним пресеком, што наглашава могућност његовог постојања и у оквиру сликарства једне гробнице.

Чеоци зидови гробнице G–160 (западни и источни) имају облик трапеза, док су подужни, искошени зидови (северни и јужни) у облику правоугаоника. Фреске западног зида нису сачуване, али у оквиру тумачења иконографије и симетрије,

могући закључак је да су приказивале портрете покојника. Источни зид садржи сцену са купидонима, калатосом, гирландама и цветом. Јужни и северни зид имају исти распоред поља и сцена и, у односу на западни зид, постављени су у симетрији леве и десне руке, односно као у огледалу. Међу мотивима ових зидова су паунови, птице интерпретиране као голубице/препелице/јаребице, винова лоза и сцена са приношењем дарова (слушкиња на јужном и слуга на северном зиду). Према аналогијама, а у оквиру контекста простора гробнице, ови мотиви су јасна алузија на рај и други живот, којем покојници приступају вођени купидонима и обезбеђени даровима слугу. Еклектички манир сликања, указује на мајсторе локалне радионице, који су за узор користили доминирајуће стилове преконстантинске и константинске уметности, што сликарство ове гробнице ставља у сам почетак IV века.