

GRADIVO

Miscellanea

*Barbara Benulič, Brussels***CISTERCIAN LEGENDARIUM (ALC. 421)
FROM ALCobaça:
THE PROBLEM OF ORNAMENTED
QUIRE SIGNATURES**

Cistercian Monastery Santa Maria de Alcobaça, Portugal, was founded in 1153 as 53rd affiliation of Clairvaux on the border area of the recently established Portuguese kingdom. The monastery's church, that started being built in 1178, is one of the oldest and most significant examples of Portuguese gothic architecture. The institution became an important cultural centre at the beginning of the 13th century and was favoured by the Portuguese kings. The monastic scriptorium started to produce manuscripts in the last quarter of the 12th century and stayed active till the end of the 15th century when the production of manuscripts slowly ceased.

Alcobaça's medieval library is nowadays considered to be one of the richest Cistercian libraries and it has been put together in harmony with the Cistercian rule. According to the rule, in 12th and 13th century the majority of works was composed of works by Latin and Greek patristic authors, commentaries on the Bible and hagiographies. Contemporary authors were mainly represented by St. Bernard, Hugo from St. Victor and St. Anselm. In medieval times there were no works by classical authors kept in Alcobaça's library.

The Cistercian Legendarium from Alcobaça, consisting of five parts (Alc. 418, 419, 420, 421 and 422) from the late 12th century is, among the Alcobaça manuscripts, one of the most worthy of attention due to its rich illumination. The manuscript has been, in comparison to other manuscripts from Alcobaça fund, thoroughly researched: François Dolbeau¹ wrote about its interesting textual structure, Aires

¹ François DOLBEAU, Le légendier d'Alcobaça, *Anacleto Bolladiana*, 102, 1984, pp. 263–296.

Augusto Nascimento² focused on its binding, while Maria Adelaide Miranda³ in her art historical analyses mostly discussed its initials. So far ornamented quire signatures in Alcobaça manuscripts in general, and those appearing in *Legendarium* (Alc. 418–422) in particular, have not been discussed by any art historian.

According to its style and composition the *Legendarium* may be divided into two groups:⁴

Group 1: The manuscripts Alc. 420 and Alc. 422 are executed in the so-called Alcobaça *heavy style*. This term denotes Alcobaça illumination from the end of the 12th century, which is mostly limited to initials. Its characteristics are stylised foliage, although some non-floral elements are present as well. The composition of leaves and tendrils is simple, clear-cut and repetitive. The leafy forms have a fleshy and heavy effect; the leaves are often presented as buds and sprouts. There is no visible dynamics. The prevalent colours are green, ochre, blue and red.

Group 2: The manuscripts Alc. 418, Alc. 419, and Alc. 421 are, regarding the rest of Alcobaça manuscripts, exceptional.⁵ They are modelled after the so-called old Clairvaux *Legendarium*, which has been regrettably lost⁶. This type of illumination was not imitated in later Portuguese illumination and this is why the stylistic and esthetical features of the three *Legendarium* manuscripts, together with their echoing Santa Cruz manuscript, are considered unique in Portuguese

² Aires Augusto NASCIMENTO, *Encadernação Portuguesa Medieval. Alcobaça*, Lisboa 1984.

³ Maria Adelaide MIRANDA, *A Inicial Ornada Românica nos Manuscritos Alcobacenses*, Lisboa 1984 (master thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, typescript); Maria Adelaide MIRANDA, *A Iluminura Românica em Santa Cruz de Coimbra e Santa Maria de Alcobaça*, Lisboa 1996 (doctoral dissertation, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, typescript); Maria Adelaide MIRANDA, *A Iluminura Românica em Portugal, A Iluminura em Portugal. Identidade e Influências* (Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, 26. 4.–20. 6. 1999), Lisboa 1999

⁴ MIRANDA 1996, cit. n. 3, p. 278.

⁵ The style is echoed also in the preserved manuscripts of *Legendarium* from the Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, which are supposed to have been produced after Alcobaça original at the beginning of the 13th century. MIRANDA 1999, cit. n. 3, p. 204.

⁶ Of the preserved manuscripts the third part of Clairvaux Bible is the nearest to this manuscript (Troyes, Bib. Mun., MS 27). Walter Cahn described this illumination as “fatherly and somewhat fussy”. Walter CAHN, *Romanesque Manuscripts. The Twelfth Century*, II, London 1996, cat. 70.

medieval illumination. Next to various floral elements, also stylised drapery and geometrical elements, together with repeated pearls, contribute a repeating constitutive element. The leaves are completely unfurled, often serrated and they seem to be constantly fluttering in the wind. In terms of composition the initials are a complex group of elements with a vitality and vivaciousness completely of their own. The movement of the ornament is not present only in the rounded part of the letters but also in their perpendicular bodies, forming a kind of *perpetuum mobile*. Undoubtedly this is an improvement of the dynamics towards the foliage of the new gothic style, in which sprouts and tender buds are replaced by big, fully developed large leaves. Furthermore, the introduction of geometrical elements points toward the developments at the turn of the 12th century.

The Legendarium as a whole produces a variegated and vivacious effect and is considered one of the most richly illuminated manuscripts of the late 12th century produced in Alcobaça. As such it is not in accordance with the Cistercian asceticism, nor does it follow the famous 80. or 82. article, which forbids the use of colour and floral ornaments.⁷ Probably its richness derives from its exemplar - the Old Clairvaux Legendarium- which might have been produced at the time when the ban was already in recession. Some of its rich ornamentation could be due to its importance in religious rituals and as such constantly observed by all monastic community. This type of illumination is surprisingly optimistic, full of *joie de vivre* and points toward the new era, which would begin at the turn of the century.

The illumination of the three parts of the Alcobaça Legendarium (Alc. 418, 419, 421) is one of the rare representations of the late 12th century illumination having been produced both in Clairvaux and Burgundy in general. It is the reflection from the provinces, which today, as the second or the third wave of imitations, bears witness of the characteristics of the artistic production in centres, which spread their influence far and wide. Since the original Legendarium has been lost it is impossible to find out how far the authors strayed from it, it is also impossible to determine which elements could be ascribed to

⁷ A certain disregard of Cistercian asceticism is also present in Stična manuscripts. Cf. Nataša GOLOB, *Twelfth – Century Cistercian Manuscripts. The Sitticum Collection*, Ljubljana – London 1996, p. 171.

their original contribution, and also if their work could be said to surpass the efforts of the Clairvaux artists. Owing to such circumstances it is also difficult to identify the individual artists: where they came from and where they learnt their craft.

Of the five parts of the Legendarium only Alc. 421 contains quire signatures, which surpass their functional use, that is the numbering of each end of the quaternion. In other four parts of the manuscript quire signatures are complemented by an abbreviation *-us*, and sometimes a dot in front and at the end of the number. In all five parts the quire signatures are placed in the middle of the lower margin.

The quire signatures in Alc. 421 are interesting and special for their rich foliage and the dialogue that they form with the big initials in the manuscript. They are often the overlooked illuminated element of the manuscript, but are, due to their purity of form, its constituent, and artistically a very interesting part. The quire signatures in Alc. 421 represent an exceptional artistic element in stylistic and structural harmony with all the other textual elements.

The Alcobaça Legendarium is composed in similar way as other manuscripts that content the liturgical basis: the ruling is spacious and the margins are opulently large and empty. The bottom margins, approximately 102 mm tall, offer enough space for the artist's intervention and the use of his pen. The manuscript is additionally ornamented by calligraphic initials, which in the first third of the manuscript denote each paragraph, but are absent in the second third of the manuscript. In the last third, however, they appear only sporadically. The manuscript is not heavily rubricated – the red is used only to mark the first letters of the *incipits* and, only occasionally the *explicits*. All the above elements constitute a special effect of rhythm and colour, which is best perceived while perusing all the folios of the manuscript.⁸

⁸ In terms of the rhythm of the ornamentation, it is interesting to note that the last ornamented quire signature appears on folio 103v, calligraphic initials start to disappear from about 53rd folio, whereas from folio 62 onwards they disappear completely. They appear again from 153th folio onwards, but they are different, possibly drawn by another person. In short, the middle part of the manuscript is devoid of ornamentation, the quire signatures appear as strictly functional Roman numerals. Only the big painted initials seem to be a constant: they appear regularly at the beginning of each legend, sometimes also at the beginning of the prologue.

There are thirty painted initials in Alc 421. In average they are from six to seven lines tall; initials with descenders, like the letters "P", "F" and "A" can be even twenty-five written lines tall, whereas the initial "P" on folio 198 runs across the whole page.⁹ All the initials appear on the dark background, which follows the contours of each letter. In the composition of the foliage the initials usually follow the late Romanesque aesthetic code, although there are some initials which might be considered as innovative and surpass the established form. It would appear that such outstanding cases usually depend on the chosen typology of the letter.

The body of these late Romanesque initials is made up from foliated scrollwork, which is in most cases split and then again gathered together by a pearl clasp. Inside the letter, in its belly, the tendrils are spirally twisted several times and end in a sort of eye or bud, from which grow the leaves in concentric circles. The leaves also appear at the bottoms and the tops of the letters and are often elongated into abundant fan-shaped tails. The foliage appears life-like and natural, and is easy to read, whereas the whole composition gives the impression of being deliberate and well executed.

Outstanding among the initials are some letters S.¹⁰ It seems as if the artist gave his imagination free rein and deliberately abandoned the established dynamic of the Romanesque initial. The letter's leading constructional element is no more foliated scrollwork, and it has no similarity to natural flower segments. The body of the letter is filled with unusual tapestry-like ornaments in which the floral is still present but is presented in a bizarre construction that has no connection with the natural. The leaves do not grow out of tendrils, but appear to grow out of the leaves themselves and thus present a totally novel arrangement. It seems that such initials represent the end of the road in late Romanesque foliated scrollwork ornamentation. It might be concluded that by the very deformation of the natural, by introducing bizarre and illogical elements the initials represent some kind of the late Romanesque mannerism. The initials I,¹¹ however adopt, due to

⁹ This is the only initial in Alc. 421 with such outstanding dimensions.

¹⁰ Such initials are: S: fol. 60v, S: fol. 84v, S: fol. 92v, S: fol. 93.

¹¹ I: fol. 106, I: fol. 143v, I: fol. 187 and I: fol. 193v.

their shape a pillar-like form. The base of the letter bears the weight of its body, which is usually filled with geometrical patterns. A kind of capital finishes and rounds up the composition. The initials of this type are very similar and comparable to the initials in the first part of the Clairvaux Bible.¹²

All things considered, it was probably the same artist who would have painted the large initials and the ornamented quire signatures. In both cases the same floral elements are used; the elements form very similar compositions, which display the same understanding of space and inner movement. Very similar is also the artist's perception of the late Romanesque foliated scrollwork.

Undoubtedly, the ornamented quire signatures are stylistically and morphologically tightly bound to the painted initials. Of course, the initials are richer and more innovative in the selection and combinations of foliated scrollwork, and there is more movement in their spatial arrangement.

Alc. 421 contains thirty quire signatures, denoting all quaternions, but the last. Eleven of them are ornamented, while nineteen consist of numerals only. The ornamented quire signatures appear from the first to the fourth quaternion and from the sixth to eleventh quaternion.

The ornaments consist mainly of leaves, which crown-like climb and envelop the top of the Roman numeral. The only non-floral elements are some pearl studded globes, and in two cases pearl studded clasps. Morphological analysis has shown that the ornamented quire signatures contain only such elements (leafy and geometrical) that appear in the initials, as well. Breaking down ornaments into their constituent parts, twelve types of leaves can be observed. Their comparatively large variety made it possible for the artist to produce a big selection of combinations.

The leafy ornaments of quire signatures in Alc. 421 are quite large, measuring from 27 mm to 52 mm in height, and 26 mm to

¹² Cf. GOLOB 1996, cit. n. 7; Walter CAHN, *Romanesque Bible Illumination*, Ithaca (NY) 1982. Françoise BIBOLET, *Les Manuscrits de Clairvaux, Les Dossiers de l'Archeologie*, 14, 1976, pp. 86–93; Jean-Baptiste AUBERGER, *L'Unité Cistercienne Primitive: Mythe ou Réalité*, Achel 1986.

73 mm in width. The Roman numerals,¹³ measuring in average about 9 mm, are almost of the same size as the written line of the text, which is about 12 mm. Together with the ornament a quire signature equals three to five written lines of the text. What all quire signatures have in common is that the leafy ornament stems from one point, which is always a pearl studded globe, growing out of a stem decorated with a pearl ribbon. The ornament is always symmetrical: the right and the left side are either identical or equally balanced. The majority of quire signatures (seven) are tripartite; the leafy ornament grows out of a plinth, the middle part spreads confidently right and left, on the top the whole composition is finalised by a kind of leafy crown. The artist would have used a fine pen enabling him to draw fine parallel lines, giving the leaves and other parts of the drawing a certain depth and life-like appearance.

Quire signature 1 (9v)

The Roman numeral is accentuated by dots: two on each side of the numeral. Below there is abbreviation *-us*. This quire signature is the only ornamented quire signature in the whole manuscript to have these two elements. Immediately above the top of the numeral there is a stem, carrying a globe from which two shell-shaped leaves grow. The body consists of a shell-shaped leaf encircled by two serrated pearly leaves. It is interesting to note that on the same folio – on 9r side – there appears on the bottom margin an elongated serrated and pearl-studded leaf, quite similar to the one, which on the other side of the folio forms the right part of the ornamented quire signature. But in all probability it would not have been drawn by the same artist, for it is not executed in the same easy and flowing line. In reality it appears rather awkward and crude. But it is not possible to determine if the leaf was drawn at the same time as the Legendarium was being illuminated, or if it belongs to some later period.

¹³ Large Roman numbers, written boldly and confidently were probably not made by a scribe, but by the hand of some other master: possibly the artist himself, the librarian, or even the abbot, who often revised and corrected the manuscript before sending it to the binders.

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1. Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Alc. 421, fol. 17v



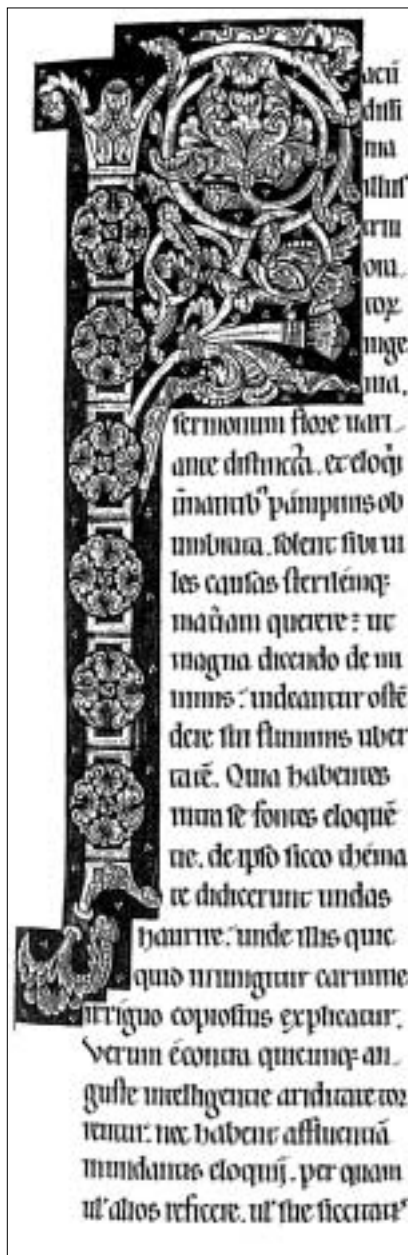
2. Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Alc. 421, fol. 49v



3. Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Alc. 421, fol. 65v



4. Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Alc. 421, fol. 81v



5. Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Alc. 421, fol. 102r

Quire signature 2 (17v)

The Roman numeral is underlined by a thin line. The ornamentation is tripartite: the stem carries a globe from which grows a big cup-shaped leaf on a pearly background. From the globe, and from behind the cup-shaped leaf, grow two dish-shaped leaves decorated with a pearly ribbon.¹⁴ Another cup-shaped leaf, growing on a thin stem from a globe crowns and finalises the ornament.

Quire signature 3 (25v)

At the bottom the Roman numeral is extended by two calligraphic ornaments, which curl upwards and downwards. Also this ornamented quire signature is tripartite. From a globe, like eagle's wings, grow two serrated elongated leaves. From the middle of the globe straight upward grows an elongated shell-shaped leaf, which is decorated by two tripartite leaves forming a kind of fan. Along the edge the leaves are trimmed by thin hair. Such hair-trimmed leaves are common in Cistercian Burgundy (i.e. Cîteaux), as well as at the fringe of Cistercian Europe in Stična.¹⁵ This phenomenon undoubtedly shows that the influence was spread by Cistercian tradition, rather than by local and regional impact.¹⁶

Quire signature 4 (33v)

This ornament of this quire signature is slightly different because there is a furled half-leaf between the globe and the stem. From the globe grows a heart-shaped leaf, which is at the bottom encircled by cone-shaped metal looking like clasp. From the side, out of the globe, grow a pair of serrated and a pair of double-folded leaves.

Quire signature 5 (41v) is not ornamented.

Quire signature 6 (49v)

This is one of the most richly ornamented quire signatures in the whole manuscript. The leafy ornaments grow out of a split stem with a globe, out of which grow several cup-shaped leaves. The upper two cup-

¹⁴ The term is adopted from the typology of leaves, used by master Bernard from Stična (GOLOB 1996, cit. n. 7, p 112).

¹⁵ GOLOB 1996, cit. n. 7, p. 96.

¹⁶ GOLOB 1996, cit. n. 7, p. 97.

shaped leaves bear on each side two decorated globes (ripe fruits). To the left and to the right the leaves continue in two fluttering ribbons. The fluttered leafy elements and drapery are common also in large painted initials. Presumably the artist would have taken a special pleasure in depicting this motif in order to show his mastery of drawing. The crown is formed by a furled leaf, which perfectly completes the composition. The ornament as a whole gives an impression of might and consequence, as if it were some kind of heraldic symbol.

Quire signature 7 (57v)

The ornamentation is comparatively simple: from the stem and the globe grows a double cup-shaped leaf, turned upward and thus forming some kind of leafy dish, which is on its inside studded by pearls. The composition is crowned by a shell-shaped leaf.

Quire signature 8 (65v)

The leafy part of this quire signature is different in its composition: the pearl globe, from which grows the foliage stands in the middle of the ornament rather than at the bottom. Consequently the stem is much longer. From the globe to the left and to the right grow four double folded leaves with a pearly ribbon running through the middle of them. Between each pair of the leaves there grow from the globe additional two pairs of dish-shaped leaves with a pearly ribbon and two fruit-like globes, plus two tiny stylised folded leaves. As was the case with quire signature 6 (49v), the movement of the ornament is stressed producing the effect of seeing a natural floral arrangement fluttering and dancing in the wind.

Quire signature 9 (73v)

Here the aesthetic approach is different, producing an asymmetrical leafy effect.¹⁷ From the plinth upwards the leaves spread in a fan-shaped composition of serrated and folded leaves. The leaves on the right hand side are bigger and produce an effect of movement. The edges of the leaves are again trimmed by fine hair, which gives the quire signature a special kind of softness.

¹⁷ Similar asymmetrical leafy ornaments are to be found in the book of templates from Einsiedelen (late 12. century). Robert W. SCHELLER, *Exemplum*, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 118–122.

Quire signature 10 (81v)

This quire signature is special in that the globe from which the leaves grow now dominates the composition. It still lies at the top of the stem but is much bigger than the globes in the former signatures. Its interior is decorated with fan-shaped leaves, which elegantly decorate the rim. The delicacy of the ornament recalls a kind of precious goldsmith work. Globes decorated with fan-like leaves represent an often-repeated motif also in initials. So for example in initial P (folio 102) it decorates the body of the letter. It seems that the artist must have worked with some kind of template because the motif gets repeated in the same dimension in various places.¹⁸

Quire signature 11 (88v)

The ornament of this quire signature is unique in that the leaves do not grow out of the globe but from a pearl clasp. The three cup-shaped leaves climb one after the other, and are topped by a circular fruit, flanked by two folded leaves in side view. Again the composition is not tripartite and gives the impression of width, rather than height.

Quire signature 12 (96v) is not ornamented**Quire signature 13 (104v)**

This is the last ornamented quire signature in this manuscript. Its composition is tripartite: from the stem and the globe on each side grow two cup-shaped half-leaves on a pearly background, and two fan-shaped leaves in the middle. The centre of the ornament is encircled by two pearly ribbons. The top of the quire signature is made of two cup-shaped leaves and one folded leaf. Two spiral snail-like coils growing from the bottom of the stem are especially attention catching. The coils are an element common to many Cistercian scriptoria. In Cîteaux the ribbon as a decorative element fills the body of the initial N,¹⁹ in Stična the coils are spread along the oblique bar of the letter N.²⁰

¹⁸ I got the idea that templates might have been used from the article by Nataša Golob (Nataša GOLOB, *Kadelne inicijale v dveh volumnih frančiškanskega Graduala, Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, n.s. XXXVIII, 2002, pp. 152–183).

¹⁹ GOLOB 1996, cit. n. 7, p. 95.

²⁰ GOLOB 1996, cit. n. 7, p. 95.

The last volume of the *Legendarium* (Alc. 421) is one of the rare late 12th century Alcobaça manuscripts to contain ornamented quire signatures.²¹ Although not all quire signatures are ornamented, the rest that are, represent an important artistic element of the manuscript. Undoubtedly they are the work of an experienced scribe or illuminator who also created the richly illuminated initials in the text itself. Thus the ornamented quire signatures are an integral part of the manuscript. In both cases the same stylistic elements form the same artistic message and style, the ornamented quire signatures representing a stylistic counterpart to the big painted initials. Unquestionably both are created following the same well thought-out concept. In creating the big painted initials the artist used particular elements successively, allowing a certain interplay and complementation thus creating a whole which is not easy to interpret and where the particular elements cannot be identified without a certain effort. In quire signatures, however, one can easily perceive the pure and intrinsic form of each individual element. Consequently, the floral ornamentation of the quire signatures might be understood as a key or a simplified rendering of all elements, thus enabling the real understanding of the morphologically rather complicated initials. It is probably not a coincidence that very similar leafy crowns can be found in the *Model-Book* from the Cistercian monastery in Rein in Austrian Styria.²² This book, of course, cannot be considered as one of the sources of the Alcobaça manuscript, but nevertheless it can be concluded that the same artistic ideals and convictions pervaded the 12th century Cistercian monastic art. The Rein *Model Book* presents also an example of how formal stylistic elements got spread among European calligraphers and illuminators. There are various elements in Alc. 421 that point to the fact that its author might have consulted certain models or even templates to produce the ornamentation of this kind.

The comparison between the Alcobaça quire signatures and those from Stična (Slovenia was also on the fringe of Cistercian expansion) is unavoidable. In both cases we find that the central Burgundy style underlines all work. But at the same time the matrix is enriched

²¹ Ornamented quire signatures are to be found also in: Alc. 431, 441 and 442 (MIRANDA 1984, cit. n. 3, p. 60).

²² SCHELLER 1995, cit. n. 16, pp. 149–154.

by the local understanding of art and beauty. In Stična also some elements from Alsace, Cologne and Rhine region can be traced.²³ Which means that the monastery's links with the Cistercian community were stronger than the links with the nearby monasteries in Austria or Southern Germany. Similarly, the Alcobaça Romanesque illuminations cannot be stylistically connected to the manuscripts which were at that time being produced in the nearby monastery Santa Cruz in Coimbra, where in the 12th century there was a rich library coupled with a scriptorium. Looking for influences from the rest of the Iberian Peninsula does not bring proper answers either, even when we search for parallels in other Cistercian monasteries. It seems that Alcobaça was stylistically most strongly connected to Burgundy and to the type of illumination that was being produced in the 12th century monasteries in Cîteaux and Clairvaux. The manuscript in question (Alc. 421) is the reflection of the creative turmoil in the central monastery, which is not surprising allowing for the fact that the centre lent the manuscripts to be copied to provincial monasteries long after their establishment. There was enough opportunity to exchange their work at the occasional conventions of the abbots and other local representatives, where not only manuscripts were being "borrowed" but calligraphers, illuminators and copyists, as well. Nevertheless, the Alcobaça artists managed to find their own expression, which despite obvious influences of the Burgundy style, offers enough novel and original elements to deserve its own place in medieval creativity, and its own appellation: the Alcobaça *heavy style*.

²³ GOLOB 1996, cit. n, 7, p. 169.

CISTERCIJANSKI LEGENDARIJ (ALC. 421) IZ ALCOBAÇE: PROBLEM OKRAŠENIH KUSTOD

Alcobaški Legendarij v petih delih (Alc. 418, 419, 420, 421 in 422) je bogato iluminiran rokopis s konca 12. stoletja, ki je nastal v portugalskem cistercijanskem samostanu Santa Maria de Alcobaça. Čeprav je rokopis eden izmed boljše dokumentiranih rokopisov alcobaškega srednjeveškega fonda, o okrašenih kustodah četrtega dela Legendarija (Alc. 421) v strokovni literaturi še ni bilo govora, čeprav so zaradi svoje sintetičnosti v smislu stilne govorice zelo zanimiv del celote iluminiranega rokopisa.

Stilno morfološko lahko alcobaški Legendarij razdelimo na dve skupini: prva (Alc. 420 in 421) sovпада s tako imenovanim alcobaškim slogom, druga (Alc. 418, 419, 421) pa je odvod oziroma nadaljevanje clairvaujske iluminacije druge polovice 12. stoletja.

Velike slikane iniale in okrašene kustode v Alc. 421 so med sabo neločljivo povezane in vse kaže, da jih je izdelal en sam iluminator. V obeh primerih so uporabljeni enaki rastlinski elementi, ki se med seboj povezujejo v podobne kompozicije. Tudi razumevanje prostora in notranjega gibanja ornamenta je identično, kot tudi percepcija poznoromanskega stilnega okrasa.

Alc. 421 vsebuje trideset kustod, a le enajst jih je okrašenih. Okras kustode predstavljajo pretežno rastlinski elementi, ki se kot nekakšna krona vzpenjajo nad zgornji del rimske številke. Listni okras kustod je razmeroma velik in meri od 27 mm do 52 mm v višino in od 26 mm do 73 mm v širino. Listni okras kustod je praviloma someren in se razrašča iz ene skupne točke ali rastlinskega brsta. Natančna analiza kustodnega okrasa pokaže tesno povezanost in dialog s slikanimi inialami v tekstu in opozori na možnost, da lahko okrašene kustode razumemo kot nekakšen ključ oziroma poenostavljeno ponazoritev likovnih prvin, ki sestavljajo velike iniale. Več pokazateljev v iluminaciji Alc. 421 namiguje, da si je iluminator pri svojem delu pomagal s predlogo, kakšnim drugim vizualnim pomagalom ali morda celo s šablono.

Močan stilni naslon iluminacije četrtega dela alcobaškega Legendarija (Alc. 421) na burgundsko produkcijo skriptorijev v Cîteauxu in Clairvauxu potrди dejstvo, da je bil samostanski skriptorij bolj povezan s sestrskimi cistercijskimi ustanovami, četudi oddaljenimi (podobne elemente najdemo tudi v Stični), kot pa z bližnjimi samostani v ožji ali širši regiji.