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## HIEROTOPY, JERUSALEM AND THE LEGEND OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS<sup>1</sup>

In his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircea Eliade describes the archetypal need to remain in direct communion with a “centre” producing the sacred. “The rocks, springs, caves and woods venerated from the earliest historic times are still, in different forms, held as sacred by Christian communities today. (...) But what the continuity of the sacred places in fact indicates is the autonomy of hierophanies; the sacred expresses itself according to the laws of its own dialectic and this expression comes to man *from without*. If the “choice” of his sacred places were left to man himself, then there could be no explanation for this continuity”<sup>2</sup>.

The autonomy of hierophanies and the continuity of the sacred in Nature *from without* are embedded in the medieval Legend of the Wood of the Cross. How does the narrative, visual and material aspects of this legend relate to that collection of stones, the empty caves, the crusader’s sweat and the dust in pilgrim’s pockets we call Jerusalem? In other words, how was Je-

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Prof. dr. Alexei Lidov for giving me the opportunity to reconsider aspects of my research in the Legend of the Wood of the Cross from a hierotopical point of view. This article is a revision of the material concerning the anthropological concepts of time, space and the human desire to construct the sacred place. See: *A Heritage of Holy Wood. The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image // Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples*, 22, Leiden-Brill, 2004; *The legend of the True Cross between North and South. Suggestions and Nuances for the Current Research // Annali dell’Università di Ferrara*, 1 (2004), p. 123–150; *The Mural Paintings in the Campanile of the San Nicolachurch in Lanciano (ca 1330-1400). Contributions to the Reading of an Unknown Legend of the True Cross in the Abruzzi, Italy // Reading Texts and Images. Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communications. Papers from the Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literacy, Utrecht 7–9 December 2000 / Ed. M. Hageman en M. Mostert, Turnhout-Brepols, 2005, p. 311–366. With special thanks to Liesbet Kusters (K. U. Leuven) for her editorial work on the footnotes, and to Jan Bleyen for the English translation.*

<sup>2</sup> *Eliade M. Patterns in Comparative Religion*. New York, 1954, p. 369.

Jerusalem, a catalogue of sacred loci indeed, transmitted by medieval narrative? And how does this widespread medieval tale contribute to our concept 'Hierotopy'? Originally elaborated and defined by Alexei Lidov, Hierotopy is the formation of the sacred space by means of the interaction of architecture, the material image and rituals. This article however, deals with the mythographic genesis of sacred topography, and does so in the methodological space *between* hierophany and hierotopy. I will present three angles to detangle this matter: the definition of sacred space in the Legend of the Wood of the Cross, the figure of Seth in Christian tradition, and the impact of the Legend on medieval iconography.

#### I. THE DEFINITION OF SACRED SPACE IN THE LEGEND OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS

When Adam feels death approaching, he sends his son, Seth, to the earthly Paradise for solace. From the Tree of Life, Seth receives three twigs. The angel Michael allows him a glimpse of paradise. There he sees a child crying in the top of a tree that first was dry and then became green. The child weeps over the fratricide. He promises salvation in 5000 years. Back home, Seth plants the twigs on the grave of his erstwhile deceased father. In a vision, Moses is asked to go and get the tree at Hebron. So he does. He makes the bitter waters of Marah sweet with the tree and later plants it in the land of Moab where he dies. Again in a vision, also David is asked to pick up the tree in the land of Moab. So he does. On his way to Jerusalem he heals a leper and turns an Ethiopian into a white man by merely touching them with the tree. At home the tree roots so deeply that David has to divert the city walls. Beneath the tree there came a well. David composes his psalms at the tree's stem. The tree becomes really big and beautiful by the time of Solomon. Solomon cuts down the tree for the construction of the temple. But the wood constantly changes its dimensions, refusing to fit the temple. Neglected, the wood appropriately is arched over the river Kedron. It is on this wooden bridge that the meeting between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba takes place. She foretells that the wood will one day support the Messiah, who shall be executed by the Jews. Filled with mistrust, Solomon tosses the wood into a puddle, the *Piscina Probatica* (today near Saint Anne's). In the time of the Passion of Christ, however, the wood is found floating and the Jews fashion a cross from it. Later the Romans will crucify Christ on it<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Hereafter follows the Finding of the True Cross. This is the feast of May 3. The story picks up again on 14th of September with the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The relic of Helen was stolen by the Persian Cosdras, but Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor recuperates it in a battle, kills Cosdras, baptises his son, and brings the relic back humbly bare-footed through the Porta Aurea of Jerusalem.

Thus goes the legend as it became widespread in the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. The famous compilation *Legenda Aurea* (c. 1260) by Jacobus de Voragine however, gives a summary which leaves out the vision of Seth, and the roles of Moses and David, skipping directly to Solomon<sup>5</sup>. Jacobus recounts the Legend of the Wood of the Cross as a prefiguration of the *Inventio crucis* of May 3 and the *Exaltation crucis* of September 14<sup>6</sup>. The connection between the cross and the *lignum vitae* is an Early Christian metaphor<sup>7</sup>. It constitutes the *basso continuo* of concepts which varied on the synthesis between the cross and the Tree of Life, between Paradise and the sacrifice. It is known that this typological exegesis started its rampant dissemination in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. From then onwards, the cross was made part of a diachronic shadow play between the Old and New Testaments: the cross was already there in its potential form in the staff of Moses, in the Tau of Aaron, etc. The idea that the material of the Old Testament wood would effectively become the bearer of the Messiah was unfolded in the narrative since the 12<sup>th</sup> century from the Book of Genesis to the Passion. The first traces<sup>8</sup> of the origins of the legend are evident in the church histories of

<sup>4</sup> It would be beyond the scope of the present article to investigate in detail at all aspects of the complex literary history of the formation of the legend. For this see: Meyer W. *Die Geschichte des Kreuzholzes vor Christus // Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen Classe der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 16, 2, Munich, 1882; Miller A. R. *German and Dutch Versions of the Legend of the Wood of the Cross. A Descriptive and Analytical Catalogue* / Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1992; Prangma-Hajenius A. M. L. *La légende du Bois de la Croix dans la Littérature française médiévale* / Ph.D. Dissertation, Assen, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Jacobi a Voragine *legenda aurea. Vulgo historia lombardica dicta* / Ed. Th. Graesse. Osnabruck, 1969: 303 f.; Jacobus de Voragine. *The Golden Legend. Reading on the Saints* / Ed. and trans. W. G. Ryan. 5<sup>th</sup> edn. New York, 1995, p. 277–284.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobi a Voragine *legenda aurea*., p. 605–611; Jacobus de Voragine., p. 168–173. Originally the feast of the Invention of the Cross was celebrated in Jerusalem on 14<sup>th</sup> September, and was also seen as the feast of the dedication of the Constantinian church of the Holy Sepulchre. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century, this feast in honour of Helena and the finding of the Cross was increased in importance by the commemoration of the restitution of the relic of the Cross by Heraclius. For the history of the liturgy, see: Aetheria // *Itinerarium Egeria* (382–386), *Fontes Christiani*, 20; Wilkinson J. *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land // Jerusalem-Warminster*, 1981, p. 136–137; *Le sacramentaire gélasien* (Vaticanus Reginensis 316). *Sacramentaire presbytéral en usage dans les titres romains au VIIe siècle* / Ed. A. Chavasse // *Bibliothèque de Théologie*, 4, 1, Turnhout, 1958, p. 350–364; L. Van Tongeren. *Exaltation of the Cross. Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy*. Louvain, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> See: Reno S. J. *The Sacred Tree as an Early Christian Literary Symbol. A Phenomenological Study // Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*, 4, Saarbrücken, 1978: *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> All of the aspects of the complex literary-historical formation process of the legend are too vast to go into here, see: Meyer, *op. cit.* (n. 3); Miller, *op. cit.* (n. 3); Prangma-Hajenius, *op. cit.* (n. 3).

Petrus Comestor<sup>9</sup>, Johannes Belethus<sup>10</sup> and Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon* (1180)<sup>11</sup>. Jacobus de Voragine names the first two as his authorities in his *Legenda Aurea* (ca. 1260). It is most probable that the 12<sup>th</sup> century authors picked up their material from oral circuits, but monastic backgrounds can also be traced back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. Even further back in time we find dualistic milieus, like the 9<sup>th</sup>-century Bogomils<sup>13</sup>. Philologists consider this milieu responsible for the syncretism between two origins<sup>14</sup>: one group originated around the figure of Seth in Greek apochrypha about the life of the protoplasts. The other group developed around the Moses-lore in mainly Slavonic manuscripts on the basis of exodus 15: 25 *ostendit ei lignum*<sup>15</sup>.

Another important but exclusively Slavonic feature is the story of a threefold tree withered by Lot<sup>16</sup>. Isaiah's references to the cedar, the cypress and the pine while making the "place of My Feet glorious" (60: 13) have al-

<sup>9</sup> Gervase of Tilbury, in his *Otia Imperialia* (1212), focuses on Comestor's Temple passage. 'Traditio Graecorum habet quod de arbore illa, in cuius fructus peccaviat Adam ramus fuit translatus in Jeruzalem qui in tantam excrevit arborem, quod de illo facta est crux domini'. The typology connected with the apple tree becomes more frequent from the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Cadwell J. R. Gervasius Tilburiensis. Manuscripts of Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* // *Scriptorium*, 16, 1 (1962), p. 28–45; Gervasius Tilburiensis. *Le livre des merveilles. Divertissement pour un empereur* / Trans. by A. Duchesne, J. le Goff, et al. Paris, 1992; *Klijn A. F. J. Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* // *Supplements to Novum Testamentum*, 46, Leiden, 1977, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Beleth J. Rationale divinatorum officiorum* // *Patrologia Latina*, 202, Paris, 1856, cols. 152–153; Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 100–101.

<sup>11</sup> Not edited in: *Godfrey of Viterbo. Pantheon* // *Patrologia Latina*, 198, Paris, 1855, cols. 872 ff.; it is included in Meyer, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 112–114; Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 108–114.

<sup>12</sup> Angelov D. Le mouvement bogomile dans les pays balkaniques et son influence en Europe occidentale // *Actes du colloque international de civilisations balkaniques* (Sinaïa, juillet 1962), p. 173–183; Bozoky E. Le livre secret des cathares. *Interrogatio Iohannis. Apocryphe d'origine bogomile. Edition critique, traduction, commentaire* / Foreword by E. Turdeanu. Paris, 1980; Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> See also: Ivanov J. *Livres et légendes bogomiles. (Aux sources du catharisme)*. Paris, 1976.

<sup>14</sup> Klijn, op. cit. (n. 8): passim.

<sup>15</sup> For the Cathars, Moses belonged to the 'negative zone'. He would have led the Israelites out of Egypt at the command of the evil God; Nelli R. Le phénomène cathare // n.p., 1967, 146, n. 24. Moses makes no further appearance in the mainstream Wood of the Cross Legends of Beleth, Comestor and Jacobus de Voragine, although he was already present in the earliest texts of 12<sup>th</sup> century (e. g. a Middle English variant with an 11<sup>th</sup>-century prototype). On this basis it could be investigated whether Moses was suppressed by the church scholars because of a 'negative' past.

<sup>16</sup> Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 31–33; The figure of Lot occupies a central place in a Greek variant (800–1000) which was translated into Slavonic around 1200. By the side of the Nile Lot finds three shoots, which he must water and care for as atonement for his incest. Solomon finds this wood, and vainly tries to incorporate it into the Temple. Later, the Cross is made out of it.

ways been understood as relating to the three types of wood that were made in the construction of the Cross of Christ. In fact, this is the founding legend of the Holy Cross monastery in Jerusalem<sup>17</sup>.

The Legend of the Wood of the Cross was deeply rooted in the anthropology and mythology of the Christian world, which is evidenced by its diffusion over all the classical languages of the sacred word and in later times also in the vernaculars of Western Europe. What is the common concept and purpose of this tradition in the light of sacred space and hierotopy?

The legend follows the Wood of the Cross on its 'pilgrimage' from the Tree of Life to its final destiny as the instrument of the Passion. The old patristic symbolic superposition of paradise with Jerusalem develops in a diachronic narrative<sup>18</sup>. The selection as well as the interlace of passages based on the books of the bible, are pivoted by three mechanisms.

Firstly, those passages in the Old Testament are selected with reference to the wood (*ostendit ei lignum*, for exemple) or to well-known prophecies concerning the cross (the role of the Queen of Sheba for example)<sup>19</sup>. The legend's theme of the Queen of Sheba as a prophetess, was influenced by the Byzantine sibylline genre<sup>20</sup>. The Legend of the Wood of the Cross alludes to the biblical passage that tells of her meeting with Solomon, but here she appears in the role of sibyl — she is the first to ven-

<sup>17</sup> In the monastery of the Holy Cross just outside Jerusalem it is believed that this tree of Lot once stood on the monastery site. This monastery was founded in the 7th century, which could mean that the Lot legend circulated before the Greek variant. The monastery is mentioned in Niccolò da Poggibonsi's travels (1346–1350); *Bagatti B. Fra Niccolò da Poggibonsi. Libro d'oltremare (1346-1350) // Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*, 2, 1, Jerusalem, 1945, p. 43–44; *Fra Niccolò of Poggibonsi. A Voyage Beyond the Seas (1346-1350) / Trans. by T. Bellorini and E. Hoade // Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*, 2, 2, Jerusalem, 1945.

<sup>18</sup> For early Christian symbolism: *Reno*, op. cit. (n. 6).

<sup>19</sup> *Delebecque E. Où situer l'arbre de vie dans la Jérusalem céleste. Note sur Ap. XXII, 2 // Revue Thomiste*, 88, 1 (1988) p. 124–130; notes that the notion Tree of Life (*Lignum vitae*: Gen. 2: 9; Ezek. 21: 8; Rev. 2: 7; Rev. 22: 2, 14, 19) appears in the Hebrew and Greek translations as 'to xulon', the wood; p. 126–127: 'il ne signifie pas "arbre", il signifie "bois", la matière du bois et singulièrement un objet taillé dans du bois, comme un poteau, un pieu ou un piquet, donc du bois mort, lequel, ici, vit'. Delebecque's argumentation is apparently developed independently of *Reijners G. Q. The Terminology of the Holy Cross in Early Christian Literature as Based Upon Old Testament Typology // Graecitas christianorum primaeva*, 2, Nijmegen, 1965: passim.

<sup>20</sup> *Köhler R. Zur Legende von der Königin von Saba oder der Sibylla und dem Kreuzholze, Kleinere Schriften*, 2, Berlin, 1902, p. 87 ff; *Salomon und Sheba / Ed. J. B. Pritchard*, London, 1974; *Beyer R. Die Königin von Saba. Engel und Dämon. Der Mythos einer Frau*. Cologne, 1987; *Baert B. The Wood, The Water, and the Foot, or how the Queen of Sheba met up with the True Cross. With emphasis on the Northern European Iconography // Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte (MARG)*, 16 (2004), p. 217–278.

erate the wood with a foreknowledge of the Passion. Petrus Comestor (d. 1178) describes her identification of the wood in the *Domus Saltus*; John Beleth locates the event at the bridge over the Kedron. The Queen is part of a wider intercultural network. Her meeting with Solomon inspired Jewish, Islamic and Christian apocrypha. Her proto-demonic origin connects her to Lilith, the demon queen, and Semiramis, the consort of the Assyrian King Sausiudad V (824–810); and as a bringer of gifts she is associated with the Three Magi.

Secondly, the Legend of the Wood of the Cross was based on convictions of tradition. David and Solomon are believed to have dug important water channels in Jerusalem, thus founding the lower city, connecting it with main springs outside the city such as Gihon<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, also geographic particularities of the Holy land became important features in the legend. Both Marah, Moab and the Kedron valley were known for their lands with natural water sources and sheltering woods<sup>22</sup>.

In other words, the legend of the wood is also about the primal concern of mankind: fertility and the regeneration of nature embodied by the archetypical triangle of sacred space: tree-well-mountain. In that sense, the legend of the wood defines the shifts from two concurring centres of the world<sup>23</sup>. The archetypical *omphalos* of semitic cosmology — the creation and death of Adam — shifts to that other *omphalos* of Christian cosmology — the death and resurrection of Christ. Between both *omphaloi*, a linear time, a time of expectation is spread out. The Legend of the Wood of the Cross tells about the patience of salvation. Secondly, the Legend of the Wood defines the very founding of Jerusalem. How a tree decided to root on that certain spot, how this rooting generated a well. How one king gave the well a wall in honour of God, and finally how the other king gave the hill a house for God. Thirdly, the Legend of the Wood develops the old ‘vertical’ paleo-christian metaphors between paradise and Jerusalem into a linear determination of biblical time and space. This determination is revealed *from without*, indeed, from divine hierophany. The biblical kings and protagonists act unconsciously in the divine conspiracy. Only Seth and the Queen of Sheba are gifted with the secret knowledge of the Messiah and His crucifixion, a secret knowledge that mirrors the necessity of nature itself. Below I will focus on the role of Seth in Christian tradition.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor J. E. Christians and the Holy Places. The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins. Oxford, 1993: passim.

<sup>22</sup> Ben-Dov M. Historical Atlas of Jerusalem. London, 2002: passim and p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Buttersworth E. A. S. The Tree at the Navel of the Earth. Berlin, 1970.

## II. SETH IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

In Gen. 4: 25–26 is written “Adam had again intercourse with his wife. Eve bore a son which she called Seth, because, according to Eve, God gave another son instead of Abel who is murdered by Cain.” In Gen. 5: 3–4 Seth is mentioned in the context of the ten generations before Noah: “When Adam was hundred thirty years old, he procreated a son who was like his, and he called him Seth”. In this passage it is suggested that Seth is the first and only son. In I Chronicles 1, he is indeed the only son of Adam that is mentioned; this is also the case in Luke 3:38, which lists the generations up to the coming of Christ. In Gen. 5, by the way, it is noticeable that Eve has no special role in this narrative.

Seth receives most attention in the Jewish-Christian apocrypha that specifically focus on the lives of Adam and Eve. In the *Vita Adae et Evae* (ca. 70 AD), the dying Adam sends his wife and son, Eve and Seth, to Paradise to obtain the healing oil of life<sup>24</sup>. On their way there, Seth is bitten by a snake. Eve chides the serpent for daring to cast itself at the image of God (Seth). When they arrive they encounter the Archangel Michael, guardian of Paradise, who sends them back with the promise that Adam will be led back to the Tree of Life at the coming of the Messiah<sup>25</sup>. Shortly afterwards, Adam dies and is buried in Paradise<sup>26</sup>. When Eve feels that her own ending is drawing near, she imparts to her gathered children the knowledge that God had entrusted to her husband before the Fall, including a prophecy of the destruction of the world by fire and water. She also asks Seth to explain the disposi-

<sup>24</sup> Critical edns.: Meyer W. *Vita Adae et Evae* // *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen Classe der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 14, Munich, 1879: the passage concerned, p. 231–243; Riessler P. *Altjüdische Schrifttum ausserhalb der Bibel*. Augsburg, 1928, p. 674–681. The principal intrinsic variant of the *Vita Adae et Evae* is the Apocalypse of Moses, before 70 AD; Charles R. H. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. 2, Oxford, 1913, p. 123–154. For the traditions and versions in different languages, see: Stone M. E. *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* // *Early Judaism and its Literature*, 3, Atlanta, 1992; Anderson G. A. and Stone M. E. *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* // *Society of Biblical Literature*, 5, Atlanta, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> In the earliest version of the mission to paradise — which will be an essential motif of the Legend of the Wood of the Cross — no mention is made of the Tree of Life. But the appearance of the motif is not far off: the salutary saps that are mentioned could only come from the Tree of Life. In 2 Enoch 8: 3–5 the Tree of Life is lauded for its sacred oil. The motif of the oil as source of life and healing appears in all primitive cultures, but especially in the Sumerian; Widengren G. *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient and Near Eastern Religion*. Uppsala, 1951, p. 59–60. The promise that the blessed will enjoy themselves under the Tree of Life is typical of Jewish Apocalypticism; Quinn E. C. *The Quest of Seth, Solomon's Ship and the Grail* // *Traditio*, 21 (1965), p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> In this source, there is a reference to the ‘ostrum’ at the burial. The ‘ostrum’ is also mentioned in the interpolation in the *De imago mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis; Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 96.

tion of the stars. Seth inscribes all that he has seen and learned on two pillars — one in stone which will withstand water, and one of clay, which will withstand fire<sup>27</sup>.

The nostalgia and longing for Paradise is a cosmogonic and anthropogonic archetype. There are conspicuous similarities between Seth's mission and the 'return to Paradise' in the Sumerian-Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh (ca. 2000 BC). Gilgamesh, however, undertakes the journey in quest of his own immortality, although he, like Seth, is confronted with its impossibility<sup>28</sup>. The motif of the son who strives to heal his father by means of supernatural aid has much in common with the Canaanite epic of Keret (1800–1375 BC). In this case the father is miraculously cured<sup>29</sup>. The return to Paradise is also not unknown in Hebrew literature itself: probably the earliest antecedent appears in 1 Enoch<sup>30</sup>.

The motif of 'Sethian' knowledge is taken up in the *Antiquitates* I, 60–65 of Flavius Josephus (39–100)<sup>31</sup>. Here, for the first time, the destruction by water is connected with the Flood and Seth's knowledge is identified as geometry and astrology<sup>32</sup>. Ginzberg points out that little is known about a Jewish 'glorification' of Seth, but that Josephus' account betrays traces of 'veneration' or at any rate a Messianic identity that is attached to his persona<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> The most important translations are the Greek and Armenian; the latter reputedly from Gnostic circles; *Stone M. E.* The Penitence of Adam // *Corpus scriptorum christianorum Orientalium*, *Scriptores Armeniaci*, 13–14. Leuven, 1981, p. 429–430; *Sparks H. F. D.* The Apocryphical Old Testament. Oxford, 1984, p. 141–143; *Morard F.* L'apocalypse d'Adam. Québec, 1985; *Bertrand D. A.* La vie grécque d'Adam et Eva. Paris, 1987.

<sup>28</sup> *Kramer S. N.* Gilgamesh and the 'Huluppu'-Tree. A Reconstructed Sumerian Text. Chicago, 1938; *Heidel A.* The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels. 2nd edn. Chicago, 1949, p. 268–269; The Epic of Gilgamesh / Ed. and trans. by N. K. SANDERS. London, 1971. In Assyrian art the genii carry a twig. See an alabaster wall panel from the period of Ashur-Nasir-Apal II (885–860 BC), originally from Nimrud, New York, Metropolitan Museum.

<sup>29</sup> *Gaster T. H.* The Canaanite Epic of Keret // *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 37 (1946–1947), p. 285–293.

<sup>30</sup> *Quinn E. C.*, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 23; *Ginzberg L.* The Legends of the Jews. 5, Philadelphia, 1913–1928. p. 95–96, esp. 163. On journeys to Paradise in folklore, see: *Gatto G.* Le voyage au paradis. La christianisation des traditions folkloriques au moyen âge // *Annales. Economies. Sociétés. Civilisations*, 34, 5 (1979), p. 929–942.

<sup>31</sup> *Josephus Flavius.* *Antiquitates Judaicae* / Ed. and trans. by H. Thackeray. I, 60–65, 4, London, 1961, p. 28 (Greek) and p. 29 (English). The chronicle became an important prototype for medieval world chronicles.

<sup>32</sup> Perhaps this contributed to Enoch, who was superseded by Seth as the first 'astronomer'; *Klijn*, op. cit. (n. 8), p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> The Byzantine chronicler Syncellus (ed. G. Dindorf, CSHB, 1829, I, 16–17) maintains that Seth was carried off by angels (cf. Enoch) and initiated by them in all that concerns the Fall, the coming of the Messiah, and so forth; *Ginzberg L.*, op. cit. (n. 29): 149, n. 52. A Sethian soteriology is elaborated in Gnosticism (below); *Ginzberg L.*, ibid.



Philo of Alexandria (13–50 AD) no longer calls Seth a son of Adam but ‘drinking-water’ and ‘seed’ of Adam, thus expressing the idea that Seth embodies an entire (Adamic) generation<sup>34</sup>. He adds, however, that no historical truth whatsoever can be attributed to this generation. Perhaps his words are directed against the Samaritans, who believed themselves to be the direct descendants of Seth and thus also considered themselves to be the possessors of divine wisdom<sup>35</sup>.

The early Church Fathers refer rather sporadically to Seth and indeed they add little to the Jewish interpretations. However, Augustine contrasts Seth as a righteous ancestor with Cain, and — as in the targum — integrates the story of Noah as the end of a decadent mixing of the two generations<sup>36</sup>. Augustine makes an etymological association between Seth’s name and *resurrectio*<sup>37</sup>. Jerome recognizes in Seth the concepts *semen* and *positio*<sup>38</sup>. John Cassian attributes to him the qualities of *pietas* and *justicia*<sup>39</sup>, thereby verging on a comparison with Christ<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *De posteritate Caini*, 10 and 124–125; *De posteritate Caini* / Ed. and trans. R. Arnaldez // *Les oeuvres de Philo d’Alexandrie*, 6, Paris, 1972, p. 50 (Greek) and p. 51 (French): ‘ce sera un rejeton mâle, Seth, l’acte d’abreuver’ (10) and p. 118 (Greek) and p. 119 (French): ‘Seth se traduit par “abreuvement”’ (124). ‘Donc de même que sur la terre les semences et les plantes lèvent’ (125).

<sup>35</sup> Seth was said to have built the Samaritans’ home town, Damascus, and given them books; *Klijn*, op. cit. (n. 8), p. 25–26.

<sup>36</sup> *Friedman J. B.* The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought. Cambridge — London, 1981, p. 93–94, adds that in the *Wiener Genesis* the world monsters are considered to be descendants of Cain. Moreover, the blending of Cainites and Sethites had produced giants and consequently the Flood. See also: *Bresc M.* Le temps des géants // *Temps. Mémoires. Traditions au Moyen Âge. Actes*, Aix-en-Provence, 1983, p. 243–266; *Reim G. Joh. 8. 44. Götteskinder. Teufelskinder* // *New Testament Studies*, 30, 4 (1984), p. 619–624; *Stephens W. E.* ‘De historia gigantum’. *Theological Anthropology before Rabelais* // *Traditio*, 40 (1984), p. 43–89.

<sup>37</sup> *Augustine*. De civitate Dei, 15, 17–18 // *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 67, Turnhout, p. 479: ‘Seth interpretatur resurrectio’; *Aurelius Augustinus*. De stad van God / Trans. by G. Wijdeveld. 2nd edn., Baarn, 1984, p. 706. Also noted by *Ulrich A.* Kain und Abel in der Kunst. *Untersuchungen zur Ikonographie und Auslegungsgeschichte*. Bamberg, 1981, p. 192.

<sup>38</sup> *Jerome*. Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum, 20, 17 // *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 72, Turnhout, 1959, p. 71: ‘Seth positio sive positus aut poculum vel gramen aut semen seu resurrectio’.

<sup>39</sup> *Cassian J.* Collationes, 21 // *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, 13, Vienna, 2004, p. 571.

<sup>40</sup> *Ephraem*. Commentatio in Genesim et Exodum, 5, 1 // *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 152, Turnhout: 54; Latin trans., *ibid.*, 153, 5, 1: 43: ‘In Seth autem, qui omnino similis fuit Adae, similitudo Filii figurata est qui signatus est a patre suo genitore, sicut Seth ab Adam qui progenit eum. Seth [...] est: Populus iustus Domini’; *Ephraem Syrus*. Uitleg van het boek Genesis / Dutch trans. A. G. P. Janson and L. van Rompay, Kampen, 1993: 86.

Thus Christianity sees in Seth both Abel's replacement (Gen. 4) and a new progenitor (Gen. 5)<sup>41</sup>. Etymologically too, he is alluded to as righteous seed and thus connected indirectly to Christ. Hugh of St Victor (1096–1141) goes so far as to interpret (*significat*) Seth as *Christum* and Cain as *diabolum*<sup>42</sup>. This typological attention already contains the germs that will allow Seth to become the progenitor of the Messiah in the Legend of the Wood of the Cross. The journey to Paradise on Adam's behalf is also incorporated in the etymological interpretations which are generatively related to 'seed' and 'foundation'.

The integration of Seth into the context of the Wood of the Cross was initially somewhat tentative. The fact that Seth played a leading role in a branch of Gnosticism, whose adherents were known as Sethites, may be ground for this<sup>43</sup>. The Gnostic Seth was a fusion of his character in Genesis (and his apocryphal elaboration) and the Egyptian god<sup>44</sup>. Gnosticism adheres to a dualistic doctrine, in which equal and thus continuously conflicting roles are assigned to principles of good and evil. The symbolism of light and darkness plays an important role. Gnostic texts (which often have a mythological quality) emphasize the participatory nature and transmission of divine knowledge. Gnostics thus distinguish themselves from other Christians by their status as initiates, just as Seth, through Adam, God or angels, was also a possessor of divine knowledge.

Our knowledge of gnosis, formerly necessarily based on anti-heretical tracts,<sup>45</sup> was increased considerably by the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library (1945) near present-day Cairo<sup>46</sup>. Found among this long-buried

<sup>41</sup> In turn, Abel is seen as a type of the Passion of Christ; *Quinn E. C.* The Penitence of Adam. A Study of the Andrius Ms. (Bibliothèque Nationale Fr. 95 Folios 380r-394v). Mississippi, 1980: p. 48. Seth prefigures Christ's mission in connection with God's realm (Paradise!).

<sup>42</sup> *Hugh of St Victor*. Allegoria in Vetus Testamentum, I, CXI // *Patrologiae Latina*, 175, Paris, 1854: cols. 640; *Klijn*, op. cit. (n. 8): 25.

<sup>43</sup> *Klijn*, op. cit. (n. 8): 81–117.

<sup>44</sup> On this issue, see: *Pearson B. A.* The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature // The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, 2 / Ed. B. Layton. Studies in the History of Religions. Supplements to 'Numen', 41, Leiden, 1982, p. 472–503; *Onash Chr.* Der Ägyptische und der biblische Seth // *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, 27 (1980), p. 99–119.

<sup>45</sup> *Epiphanius*. Panarion Haeresis, 39, 1, 2 / Ed. K. Holl. Leipzig, 1922, p. 72, suggests that Gnosticism equated Seth with Christ; *Pseudo-Tertullian*. Adversus Omnes Haereses, 2 / Ed. A. Kroyman. Vindobonae-Lipsiae, 1906, p. 218; explains this 'Christus tantummodo Seth' by their equal descent from the 'Mother-God'.

<sup>46</sup> See the series: Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi. Section textes / Eds. J. E. Menard, P. H. Poirier and M. Roberge. Quebec; *Quispel G.*, art. Gnosticism from its Origins to the Middle Ages // The Encyclopedia of Religion / Ed. M. Eliade. New York — London, 1987, p. 566–574, esp. p. 567; *Klijn*, op. cit. (n. 8): 90–107; Nag Hammadi geschriften / Ed. and trans. by J. Slavenburg and W. Glaudemans. Deventer, 3rd edn., 1994–1995.

trove of papyri were three hymns or ‘steles’ devoted to Seth<sup>47</sup>, as well as writings purportedly in Seth’s own hand. In Manichaeism, the culminating expression of Gnostic thought (preceptor, Mani 216–276), Seth is often referred to as ‘our Saviour’<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, precisely in these milieus there was a strong development of myth and symbolism surrounding the Tree of Life. The tree, the fruit, the root and the twig are central. Mani interpreted the Fall of Adam in positive terms: by biting into the apple his eyes were opened — he became a sharer of divine knowledge, in other words<sup>49</sup>. Thus, in Manichaeism the dry Tree of Knowledge becomes a positive pole, just like the green Tree of Life. The dry tree merely conceals its light, allowing it to escape when it is cut down. The Manichaean tree usually has three stems, thus referring to the three sons of Noah<sup>50</sup>.

In the Gospel of Nicodemus (originally written in Greek at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century but swiftly translated into Armenian and Coptic)<sup>51</sup>, Seth’s journey as described in the *Vita Adae et Evae* is reintroduced in the

<sup>47</sup> Claude P. C. Les trois stèles de Seth. Hymne gnostique à la triade (NH VII, 5) // Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi. Textes, 8, Quebec, 1983; Slavenburg J. and Glaudemans W., op. cit. (n. 45): 363–375. This version mentions three pillars rather than two.

<sup>48</sup> Kephalaia I / Ed. H. Ibscher. Stuttgart, 1940, p. 133.

<sup>49</sup> This is also apparent in an Armenian text in which an angel lays a twig on Adam’s eyes, which makes him ‘see’. The action symbolizes an alternation between light and darkness, the paradox of life and death; Böklen E. Adam und Qain. Im Licht der vergleichenden Mythenforschung // Mythologische Bibliothek, 1, Leipzig, 1907, p. 76, does not date this source, although, according to Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 59, the wording could be called ‘primitive’.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold-Döben V. Die Symbolik des Baumes in Manichäismus // Symbolon, 5 (1980), p. 9–26; Klimkeit H. J. Der dreistämmige Baum. Bemerkungen zur Manichäischen Kunst und Symbolik // Festgabe Wilhelm Perpee zum 65. Geburtstag. Bonn, 1980, p. 254 ff. The Manichaean tree bears precious stones. In Slavonic versions of the Wood of the Cross legend, often three different trees operate, which separately come into contact with Seth, Lot and Moses. The trees grow into the three crosses of Calvary; Miller, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 31–33.

<sup>51</sup> The oldest Latin version is found in a 10th-century manuscript preserved in Einsiedeln; Codex Einsidlensis 326, Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek; The Gospel of Nicodemus. Gesta Salvatoris / Ed. and trans. by H. C. Kim. Toronto, 1973: 2; Michl J., art. Evangelien, II, 18. Nicodemusevangelium // Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche. 3, Freiburg, 1959: cols. 1226; L’Evangile de Nicodème. Text Slave et texte Latin / Ed. and trans. by A. Vaillant. Genève — Paris, 1968; Vandoni M. and Orlandi T. Vangelo di Nicodemo. Milan, 1968: vol. 1: the original Coptic text, vol. 2: commentary and Italian trans.; Scheidweiler F. Nikodemusevangelium. Pilatusakten und Höllenfahrt Christi // Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung / Eds. W. Schneemelcher and E. Hennecke, 6th edn., 1, Tübingen, 1990: 398 ff.; Klijn A. F. J. Apocriefen van het Nieuwe Testament. 3rd edn., 1, Kampen, 1990. Jacobus de Voragine’s ‘Greek apocrypha’ probably does not refer to the *evangelium Nicodemi*, as he mentions the source by name further on.

context of Christ's descent into hell<sup>52</sup>. Seth himself is speaking and he tells Nicodemus how Adam sent him to Paradise and what happened there. Eve has dropped out of the picture. The Christianization of the motif is expressed in the promise that when 5,500 years will have passed Adam shall be saved by Christ, baptized in the Jordan and anointed with the oil of the Tree of Paradise. The *Descensus* must be read in relation to baptism and the restoration of Paradise<sup>53</sup>. This frame story points to the ultimate redemption of baptism (baptism in the Jordan = anointing with oil = union with the Tree of Life). The idea in which baptism and the Tree of Life are melded is tinged with Manichaeism<sup>54</sup>. The earliest western European translation of the *Vita* appeared in 998 in the Old Irish *Saltair na Rann* ('psalter in verse'), written by Airbertach Mac Cosse Dobráin<sup>55</sup>. But Seth's twig is still absent.

In the West, Seth's twig is first mentioned in Lambert of Saint-Omer's *Liber floridus* (1120) (Gen. 5: 3–4)<sup>56</sup>. In 1170, John Belet has Seth appear as a 'mediator' between the Tree of Life and the Cross in the context of the Exaltation of the Cross. The motifs of the seed and the twig continue to appear side by side, as they both formed the etymological explanation of Seth's name for the Church Fathers. The motif of Seth's Wood of the Cross also spread in the form of interpolations in other apocrypha. In addition, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, most *Vita Adae et Evae* variants, which already had a Seth character thus, were also provided with a Wood of the Cross motif<sup>57</sup>,

<sup>52</sup> Every G. Christian Mythology, n.p., 1970, p. 134. The *Descensus* was added to the Apostles' Creed at the synod of Sirmium (359); Quinn, op. cit. (n. 40), p. 37–38. The return to hell or the descent into the underworld is obviously archetypal. The motif appears in Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek myths (for bibliographic data: *ibid.*, p. 38).

<sup>53</sup> As in the Gnostic-apocryphal letters of the Apostles (Ethiopia, 2nd cent.). L'Épître des Apôtres et le Testament de notre Seigneur et notre Sauveur Jésus-Christ / Ed. and trans. by J.-N. Peres // Apocryphes / Eds. A. Desreumeaux and E. Norelli, 5, Turnhout, 1994: p. 86–87: 'Je [Christ] leur ai donné (de) la main droite le baptême de la vie, du pardon et de la rémission de tout mal'; see also: *ibid.*: 40–41. In the 'Odes of Solomon', a Gnostic-Syrian text from the 1st, 2nd or 3rd century AD, the descent into hell is celebrated as a salvation of mankind, as a rejoicing of the restoration of Paradise. This is also the meaning of baptism. Les odes de Salomon / Ed. and trans. by M.-J. Pierre // Apocryphes / Eds. A. Desreumeaux and E. Norelli, 5, Turnhout, 1994: p. 194–198, Ode 42; This is, in fact, the final ode.

<sup>54</sup> Quinn, op. cit. (n. 40): 43 ff.; Cumont F. La cosmogonie manichéenne d'après Theodor bar Khôni (Recherches sur le manichéisme, 1). Brussels, 1908, p. 46–49.

<sup>55</sup> The Irish Adam and Eve Story from Saltair na Rann / Edn. B. O. Murdoch. Dublin, 1976.

<sup>56</sup> Lamberti S. Audomari Canonici Liber Floridus. Codex autographus Bibliothecae Universitatis Gandavensis / Ed. A. Derolez. Ghent, 1968: 5, fol. 2r; Lambertus qui librum fecit. Een codicologische studie van de Liber Floridus-autograaf (Gent, Universitaire bibliotheek, ms. 92) / Ed. A. Derolez. Brussels, 1978: 35; Quinn, op. cit. (n. 40): 156, n. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Quinn, op. cit. (n. 40): 88; Meyer, Vita, op. cit. (n. 23), so-called Class III of the *Vita*; see also the list of the most manuscripts that relate to a variant, a translation or an interpolation of the *Vita*; Halford M. E. B. The Apocryphical Vita Adae et Evae. Some Comments on the Manuscript Tradition, Neuphilologische Mitteilungen. 82 (1981), p. 417–427.

and from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards the connection of an existent (Seth's mission) and later theme (Seth receives and plants a part of the Tree of Paradise) also appears in the Nicodemus traditions and translations<sup>58</sup>.

Researchers have not yet been able to categorize every text that contains Seth's Wood of the Cross motif. M. B. Halford has ventured on the manuscripts that contain the *Vita Adae et Evae*. The length of this list demonstrates the popularity of the Adam legend but also reveals that most manuscripts were produced in Germany<sup>59</sup>. There was an explosion of texts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century<sup>60</sup>. After 1500 the Seth motif became less in evidence, but it lived on, albeit inconspicuously, in popular narrative<sup>61</sup>.

Seth is the child that came as a new Abel. He is the son created after the face of his father. He is the first astrologist. He is the twig carrier. He is the seed of the Messiah. He is the founder of a paradise outside paradise. In short, Seth is the man who plants the tree of the cross. If we look at him from an anthropological point of view, Seth carries the threefold role of transmitter, traveller and founder.

Seth transmits glimpses of the universal knowledge possessed by Adam into stone, clay and even wood. In some versions Seth has a vision of the dry and the green tree and thus has the insight of regeneration and the coming of Christ as a cosmological event<sup>62</sup>. He travels between two worlds and incorporates the universal desire to regain paradise as in the proto-Israelite myths. The Sumerian-Babylonian Gilgamesh-epos mentions the journey to paradise in order to gain immortality, but is also confronted with the impossibility of that same venture. The Kanaänitian epos of Keret mentions the son going to paradise where he indeed receives the cure for the father<sup>63</sup>. And as a founder,

<sup>58</sup> Wülcker R. P. *Das Evangelium Nicodemi in der Abendländische Literatur*. Marburg, 1872; Meyer W. *Die Geschichte*, op. cit. (n. 3): 118; Lindström B. *A Late Middle English Version of the Gospel of Nicodemus Edited from British Museum MS Harley 149*. Uppsala, 1974; Masser A. *Dat Evangelium Nicodemi van deme lidende unses heren Ihesu Christi. Zwei mittelniederdeutsche Fassungen*. Berlin, 1978; Cumps J. *De middel nederlandse prozavertalingen van het evangelium Nicodemi* (unpub. thesis), [Leuven, 1963]; Shields H. E. *An Old French Book of Legends and Its Apocryphical Backgrounds. A Study of Ms 951 (I.5.19) of the Library of Trinity College*. Dublin, (unpub. doct.), n.p., n.d.

<sup>59</sup> Of importance is the late 13th-century poem *Eva und Adam* by the poet Lutwin, transmitted only in a mid-15th-century manuscript preserved in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, Codex Vindob. 28980. In addition, the manuscript is illustrated; Halford M. B. *Illustration and Text in Lutwin's Eva und Adam. Codex Vindob. 2980*. Stuttgart, 1980; Halford M. B. *Lutwin's Eva und Adam. Study. Text. Translation*. Göttingen, 1984.

<sup>60</sup> Halford. *The Apocryphal Vita Adae et Evae*, op. cit. (n. 56), p. 417–427.

<sup>61</sup> Peuckert W.-E. *Die Legende vom Kreuzholz Christi im Volksmunde // Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, 18 (1927), p. 164–178.

<sup>62</sup> Meyer, *Die Geschichte*, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 131–149.

<sup>63</sup> Gaster T. H. *The Canaanite Epic of Keret // Jewish Quarterly Review*, 37 (1946–1947): 285–293.

Seth shows a very old, if not the oldest 'DNA', the seed indeed, of the sacred topos: a grave and a tree. The strings of death in the soil, and the twigs growing towards heaven must be the beginning of spot sacrifice. Seth is *position* indeed: he takes place in the double meaning of defining the *sacred* spot and generating the *sacral* event.

In the harbour of the Legend of the Wood, Seth incorporated these deep archetypes until the late Middle Ages and diffused them through cyclical iconography in churches and manuscripts.

### III. THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE LEGEND OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS. NEW PERSPECTIVES

The cycles devoted to the legend of the Cross in churches in Tuscany are well known and well studied. The cycle by Agnolo Gaddi in the Santa Croce in Florence (fig. 1), where the three branches of the legend according to the *Legenda Aurea* were combined in the choir<sup>64</sup>, was taken as the *exemplum* for similar cycles in Volterra (1410), Montepulciano (1415) and Empoli (1420)<sup>65</sup>. And of course the apex of this tradition is the repeatedly studied cycle of Piero della Francesca in Arezzo (before 1466) (fig. 2)<sup>66</sup>.

According to the *Legenda Aurea*, all these cycles were mediated by Franciscans. The Franciscans favoured the theme of the legend of the Cross for various reasons. According to their writings, St Francis had received his stigmata on 14<sup>th</sup> September, the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross<sup>67</sup>. Moreover, in about 1340 they had become the *custodes* of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem<sup>68</sup>. The theological metaphor for the *Lignum vitae* of the Cross was

<sup>64</sup> The last will and testament of Alberto di Lapo degli Alberti, written in 1348 (during the plague epidemic) is the earliest definite evidence of the contacts between this family and the Franciscan order (Florence, Archivio di Stato, Diplomatico S. Croce); Cole B. Agnolo Gaddi. Oxford, 1977: 79 f.; Blume D. Wandmalerei als Ordenspropaganda. Bildprogramm im Chorbereich franziskaner Konvente Italiens bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts // Worms, 1983, p. 90–91; Salvini R. Agnolo Gaddi // Santa Croce / Ed. C. Nardini. Florence, 1989, p. 185–215; Pfleger S. Eine Legende und ihre Erzählformen. Studien zur Rezeption der Kreuzlegenden in der italienischen Monumentalmalerei des Tre- und Quattrocento // Europäische Hochschulschriften 18. Kunstgeschichte, 214, Frankfurt — Vienna, 1994, p. 53–72. See also: Rosito M. G. Santa Croce nel solco della Storia. Florence, 1996.

<sup>65</sup> Pfleger, op. cit. (n. 63): 138, n. 2. See also: Lavin M. A. The Place of Narrative. Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431–1600. Chicago — London, 1990, p. 117–118; Volterra. La capella della croce in san Francesco. Volterra, 1991; Porretti F. Volterra magica e Misteriosa. Pisa, 1992, p. 89, 236–239; Carli E. Volterra nel medioevo e nel rinascimento. Pisa, 1978.

<sup>66</sup> For a status quaestionis, see: Beck J. Piero della Francesca at San Francesco in Arezzo. An Art-Historical Peregrination // Artibus et historiae. An Art Anthology 47 (2003), p. 51–80.

<sup>67</sup> Bonaventure. Legenda Major (1260–1263) // Opera omnia. Quaracchi, 1882, XIII, 3; Fioretti, 13<sup>th</sup> c.: I Fioretti di San Francesco / Ed. G. D. Bonino. Turin, 1974, p. 176, 180.

<sup>68</sup> Odoardi G. La custodia di Terra Santa nel VI centenario della sua costituzione // Miscellanea francescana 43 (1943), p. 217–256.

also developed in Franciscan circles. Taddeo Gaddi painted a picture of Christ crucified on the Tree of Life in the refectory of the Santa Croce in Florence (circa 1340)<sup>69</sup>, after the *Lignum vitae* of St Bonaventure (1257–1274). In that treatise, the story of the life and redemption of Christ was re-told symbolically in terms of the fruits of the tree of life<sup>70</sup>. The Franciscans, who realized that the flourishing legend of the Cross fitted in well with their ideas, adopted it and maintained a personal relationship with the theme throughout the later Middle Ages.

Recent research indicates, however, that the Tuscan monopoly position must be nuanced to a significant extent. New exploratory research in the so-called marginal zones has decentralized the perspective both in Italy and the rest of Europe, and has broadened this perspective with a comparative approach. At this point I wish to give a short survey of these new developments.

It has always been assumed that the cycle in the Santa Croce in Florence, dating from about 1392, was the oldest iconographical testimony of the third branch of the legend, the story of the Wood of the Cross under the Old Covenant (i.e. Seth, Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba). The person who commissioned the work and the artist were believed to have been the innovators of this iconography. The discovery in 1995, however, of a few wall-paintings in the campanile of the church of San Nicola in Lanciano (Abruzzi), depicting the Seth episode and the building of the temple by Solomon, moves the earliest dating forward to about 1330 (fig. 3). It thus can be concluded that there were already impulses on the Adriatic coast of the Mediterranean which predated the great core area around Florence. Additional research is needed to ascertain the specific literary background of the cycle in this region. What is certain is that the *Legenda Aurea* was not followed faithfully, and there are conjectures that Greek, or even Slavonic influences may have played a role<sup>71</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Esmeijer A. C. *L'albero della vita di Taddeo Gaddi*. Florence, 1985.

<sup>70</sup> Bonaventure. *The Soul's Journey into God. The Tree of Life. The life of St. Francis* / Trans. and introd. by E. Cousins. New York — Toronto, 1978, p. 119–175. A useful study of the Franciscans and the tree of life is Thomas H. M. *Franziskaner Geschichtsvision und europäische Bildentfaltung*. Wiesbaden, 1989. See also: Bougerol J. G. *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*. New York — Rome, 1964, p. 159–160.

<sup>71</sup> Baert B. *The Wall Paintings in the Campanile of the Church of St. Nicola in Lanciano (ca. 1330–1400). Reading an Unknown Legend of the Cross in the Abruzzi, Italy* // *Iconographica* 2 (2003), p. 108–125. The largely forgotten cycle of the legend of the Cross in Montegiorgio, south of the Marche, painted in about 1430 and attributed to Alberto da Ferrara also shows that the Tuscan group had less of a monopoly than has been assumed up till recently (fig. 2). Here too one finds a cyclical organization which (deliberately?) diverges from a Tuscan standard; Baert B. *La cappella Farfense in Montegiorgio. Una leggenda della vera croce nelle Marche (circa 1425)* // *Arte cristiana* 804 (2001), p. 219–233.

Secondly, research has established unknown interpolations in genesis iconography mediated by illustrated manuscripts. At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Bohemian author Lutwin (from Kutna Hora, in the present-day Czech republic) finished his vernacular rhyme translation of the *Vita Adae et Evae apocrypha*<sup>72</sup>. It became known as *Eva und Adam* and it establishes a connection between the journey to Paradise and the arch of Noah. Nowadays, the text is only preserved in one fifteenth-century manuscript, illustrated with twenty-nine pen-drawings (fig. 4)<sup>73</sup>. A catalogue of the vita material was published in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, and 2/3 of these manuscripts were meant for a North European public between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>74</sup>. This is a remarkable given in the light of the reception history of the iconography of the Legend of the Wood of the Cross above and beneath the Alps. Below I develop a case-study.

The 1485 painted chapel of Duttonberg was a dependency of the Dominican monastery of Wimpfen that had been dedicated *zum heiligen Kreuz* since 1270 (fig. 5). The Cross feasts of 3<sup>rd</sup> May and 14<sup>th</sup> September had been among the high feasts of the monastery, and its relic of the Cross attracted a great number of pilgrims<sup>75</sup>. The cycle of the chapel opens with the meeting between Seth and the angel at the gates of paradise (fig. 6). The twig which Seth receives has a special shape. It has three lobes, with in the centre a small, round, green crown, and, at either side, a long, green branch, growing upwardly. The three-lobe form is a reference to the Cross and the Trinity<sup>76</sup>. The ultimate purpose of the wood is made explicit in the following scene, which shows the tree growing on Adam's grave, with in the middle a piece of wood in the shape of a tau (fig. 7). In the following compartment this remarkable tree is being cut down by two men (fig. 8). The crosstree is mentioned in popular pilgrimage culture and devotion practices.

<sup>72</sup> Halford. Illustration and Text in Lutwin's *Eva und Adam*, op. cit. (n. 58); Halford. Lutwin's *Eva und Adam*, op. cit. (n. 58); Murdoch B., art. Lutwin // *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn, 1, Berlin — New York, 1978: cols 1087–1089. Lutwin drafted the text in the following order: the Creation, the Fall, the labours of Adam and Eve, the parting of the two, their atonement in the Tigris (Eve) and the Jordan (Adam) respectively, the second sin of Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve united in love, Eve worships the sun, Eve receives her first son Cain from the angels, an angel teaches Adam how to till the ground, the Fratricide, Adam must appear before God in Paradise, and subsequently the legend of the wood of the Cross.

<sup>73</sup> Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindob. 2980.

<sup>74</sup> Halford. Illustration and Text in Lutwin's *Eva und Adam*, op. cit. (n. 58); Halford. Lutwin's *Eva und Adam*, op. cit. (n. 58).

<sup>75</sup> Adelman G. S. *Die Kreuzkapelle bei Duttonberg und zur Geschichte des Heiligen Kreuzes* // *Nachrichtenblatt der Denkmalpflege in Baden-Württemberg*, 3 (1960): 5–9.

<sup>76</sup> In the *Boec van den Houte* there are three separate shoots.



The Libro d'oltramare of Niccolò da Poggibonsi and its German translation of the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, describe the apple-tree from paradise near the town of Damiata. Niccolò specifies that the form of the Cross can be seen in the tree, as he himself observed with his own eyes<sup>77</sup>. An interpolation in Adams bûsse, a German vitaer adae et evae variant inserted in the Weltchronik of Rudolf von Ems (in a manuscript from before 1385), tells that a branch of the forbidden tree will bear a Wurcz (a fruit) and that these branches will quickly grow in a very unusual way, i.e. into a tree that has the shape of a cross<sup>78</sup>. The idea here is transformation and superposition of tree and cross, which also is extremely economic for the visual medium.

The crosstree is also a motif in fifteenth-century mystical devotional books. The framework for this tradition is the concept of the soul journeying to paradise. The ultimate longing of the soul is to reach paradise or the “garden of devotion”, which can be entered through veneration of the Cross (fig. 9)<sup>79</sup>. The cycle of Duttonberg must be understood as an evocation of the holy land and Jerusalem in ‘spatial raccourci’ and ‘temporal contraction’. In a most economic way it memorises a key concept in Christian salvation theory for an illiterate agrarian population. Deeds of the imperial city of Wimpfen dating from 1475 and 1483 refer to the vineyards of Duttonberg as *bei den Kreuzäckern* (near the Cross fields)<sup>80</sup>.

The field chapel cycle is connected to the cycle of nature itself. The flourishing tree is not merely an emblem. It is a symbol that is derived from the practical preoccupations of a rural culture, intensively depending on the needs of food and shelter. We must not forget that the link between the two Cross feasts — the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May and the 14<sup>th</sup> of September — is in fact the cycle of nature itself, between spring and autumn, between regeneration and harvest.

During the Middle Ages, the Legend of the Wood is everybody's story, because it is a story about the cradle and the grave, alpha and omega. The Legend of the Wood of the Cross could therefore also find adhesion with the courtly elite, as is shown in the splendid book of hours for Catherine of

<sup>77</sup> *Fra Niccolò da Poggibonsi*. The German Translation of Niccolò da Poggibonsi's Libro d'oltramare / Transl. by C. D. M. Cossar, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 452, Göppingen, 1985, p. 158, ll. 15–16: “Nach der leng nach der twerch so vint man das zaichen dez kreutzes daronne vnd das han ich gesechen”.

<sup>78</sup> *Miller*, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 195.

<sup>79</sup> Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, res. 169, fol. 16: a Middle Dutch translation of Pierre d'Ailly's “Le jardin amoureux de l'âme”; *Falkenburg R. L.* The Fruit of Devotion. Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child. 1450–1550. Oculi, 5, Amsterdam — Philadelphia, 1994, p. 36–37, figs. 47–48.

<sup>80</sup> *Adelmann*, op. cit. (n. 74), p. 8, suspects that the scene between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba shows a view of Wimpfen.

Cleve in a Utrecht workshop (1442–1445) (fig. 10)<sup>81</sup>, as well as with the popular city culture. A unique xylographic print was edited by the Leuven printer Johan Veldener for Culemborg in the Netherlands on occasion of crossfeast festivities in the city (1483) (fig. 11)<sup>82</sup>. Or finally it could find adhesion, as shown in Duttenberg, with the illiterates and their agricultural praxis on the field.

#### IV. HIEROTOPY, JERUSALEM AND THE LEGEND OF THE WOOD OF THE CROSS

A tree, a well and a mountain. Where Mircea Eliade excluded human interference in the formation of sacred places — hierophany, these proceedings emphasize more than ever the desire of mankind to maintain those sacred places into sacred spaces — hierotopy. My paper dealt with the very seed of that desire. With a man who planted a tree.

The Legend of the Wood of the Cross is a cultural emanation that can be situated in the space between hierophany and hierotopy. It presents us with a diachronical cross-section of a holy land's preparations for the reception of the sacred place and space. The legend, in other words, is concerned with the *potential* for hierotopy. It harbours the prefiguring of the sacred places in Jerusalem which are still imbedded, even partly hidden in the acres, sources and forests that have been marked by the power from above. The Legend of the Wood relates how in that process a relationship is developed between man, space, and object. But as light as man's interventions in nature may seem — making a grave, building a wall, planting a twig in a spring, — precisely so fundamental are those interventions for the future sites and their architectural and ritual riches. The Legend of the Wood of the Cross, in other words, can only be understood through in the light of the hierotopical riches that we nowadays know as Jerusalem. As such, the legend incorporates the submerged Biblical Jerusalem in the early Christian and Medieval Jerusalem.

<sup>81</sup> New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 917; *Gorissen F.* Das Stundenbuch der Katharina von Kleve. Analyse und Kommentar. Berlin, 1973: p. 105, 494–525, 959–961 and 999–1001; *Plummer J.* Die Miniaturen aus dem Stundenbuch der Katharina von Kleve. Berlin, 1966: nos 79–87. See also: *Broekhuijsen K. H.* 'Ende ziet alomme int paradijs': Seth's Vision of paradise as part of an Unusual Decoration Program in a Fifteenth-Century Book of Hours from Utrecht // Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow. Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance / Ed. J. F. Hamburger and A. S. Korteweg. London, 2006, p. 103–116.

<sup>82</sup> Brussels, Royal Library, no. INC A 1582. Conway points out that the wood-cuts in the *Boec* can be reduced to thirty-two successive pairs with the same dimensions. Although each title (with six exceptions: *Hier...*) alludes verbally to the illustration above it, it is still not possible to ascertain whether the quatrains in the incunabula form the typographical setting of the original texts in the block-book; *Conway W. M.* The Woodcutters of the Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century. Cambridge, 1884, p. 13–14.

Compared to the Latin West, the impact of the Legend of the Wood of the Cross is different for the Byzantine East. Literary history shows that the Greek-Slavonic world has had a significant role in the formation and adaptation of the figures of the queen of Sheba and Seth in the legend. In addition, variants are known which feature Lot and the founding of the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Jerusalem. Important traces in the legend's transmission between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century lead us to Bulgaria and the Balkan area where the idea and image of the holy wood did not lose its liveliness. Nevertheless, the material from the legend of the Cross did not become widespread until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when it was taken up by the Latin encyclopaedias of the day. The iconographic cycles that would follow in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the West, are unique, even up to this day.

The western European Middle Ages have made use of an hierotopical 'prehistory' to shape their perception of Jerusalem and the holy places. The Legend of the Wood of the Cross looks back at the cross' biology, its roots in paradise and its vigorous journey through the Holy Land up to its destination in the Jerusalem-centre. The great popularity of this legend and its dissemination in numerous literary genres — ranging from the chronicle to the pilgrim's report — reflects the human desire for knowledge of the origin of things and the medieval reflex of archetypal embedding in the salvation history. The Legend of the Wood of the Cross shows how the knowledge of origins and the temporal tension of salvation history are situated on the borderline between hierophany and hierotopy. In the Duttenberg cycle the borderline became a niche for rural empirical knowledge with regards to the cross. In the Italian examples, the borderline made an opening for Franciscan thought. Finally, there are also the cycles of the Wood of the Cross like that in Culemborg, which kept on feeding this borderline with ideas grounded in the late medieval urban reliquary cult and pilgrimage.

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#### ИЕРОТОПИЯ, ИЕРУСАЛИМ И ДРЕВО СВЯТОГО КРЕСТА

Иеротопический проект воссоздания Иерусалима рассматривается в свете широко распространенной и весьма популярной легенды средневековья: предания о Крестном древе (*lignum vitae*).

Эта легенда является сложной композицией, в становление которой внесли свой вклад и отцы церкви, и путешественники, и крестоносцы. В ней рассказывается, как Древо Жизни было посажено Сифом у внешней границы рая, как им восхищался в Хевроне Моисей (в некоторых

версиях Авраам), как Давид перенес его в Иерусалим, как его срубил Соломон для строительства Храма, как царица Савская распознала в нем будущий Крест Христов на реке Кедрон. Иначе говоря, легенда прослеживает странствие Крестного дерева от Древа Жизни до его конечного предназначения — быть использованным в качестве инструмента Страстей.

Содержание легенды оказало огромное влияние на средневековую литературу и искусство. Перенесение ее символов и метафор в ветхозаветное время и пространство произошло в XII в. в нескольких версиях и вариантах библейской истории, церковной истории и в независимых текстах, написанных в монастырях. Знание об истории Крестного дерева сохранялось вплоть до раннего нового времени через популярные и народные жанры, такие как рассказы паломников, с одной стороны, и монументальные программы росписи церквей — с другой. Легенда о крестном древе представляет собой художественный, литературный и антропологический феномен, который позволил автору исследовать как минимум три важных аспекта истории латинского и греческого миров до наступления нового времени: пространственные образы Святой Земли, паломники и Святая Земля, а также роль реликвий.

#### КАК ОПРЕДЕЛЯЕТСЯ В ЛЕГЕНДЕ «САКРАЛЬНОЕ ПРОСТРАНСТВО»?

Легенда о Крестном древе — это *прообраз* земного Иерусалима. Это обращение к библейским истокам основания города его культурными протагонистами. «Пространство» — не устойчивое понятие, а линейный путь от рая до голгофы. В истории странствующего дерева Древо Жизни связывается с Крестом, как иерофания соотносится с иеротопией, а Сиф — с Христом. Анализируя происхождение этого нарративного памятника в записях, имеющих следы гностического влияния, автор обращается к истории идей и представлений о пространстве и времени, существовавших в христианстве.

Легенда о Крестном древе соединяет пространственные и временные «черты» библейской истории в контексте телеологии: необходимости распятия. Прообраз земного Иерусалима коренится глубоко в эсхатологическом и сотериологическом мышлении. Это возвышает литературный сюжет легенды до символического (небесного) Иерусалима. В данном случае автор анализирует смысловые уровни, выраженные визуальными средствами, используя неизвестный или не опубликованный иконографический материал ксилографических книг (гравюры на дереве), стенных росписей и рукописей высокого и позднего средневековья.

## КАКОЕ ОТНОШЕНИЕ ИМЕЕТ ИЕРОТОПИЯ К «СОЗДАТЕЛЮ ПРОТОТИПА» СЕТУ?

Сиф — дитя, выступающее в качестве нового Авеля. Он сын, созданный по образу своего отца. Он первый астролог. Он лозоходец. Он семя Мессии. Он основатель рая вне рая. Короче говоря, Сиф — это человек, который посадил Крестное дерево. Если мы посмотрим на это с антропологической точки зрения, Сиф окажется исполнителем трех ролей: посредника, странника и основателя.

Сиф обращает обрывки универсального знания, каким обладал Адам, в камень, глину и даже дерево. Согласно некоторым версиям, Сифу было видение сухого и зеленого дерева, через которое он прозрел образ возрождения и явления Христа как космическое событие. Он странствует между двумя мирами и воплощает всеобщее желание обрести рай, которое присутствовало еще в ранне-иудейской мифологии. Шумеро-вавилонский эпос о Гильгамеше включает упоминание о путешествии в рай с целью получить бессмертие, однако герой сталкивается с невозможностью этого. Ханаанский эпос о Керете рассказывает о том, как сын отправляется в рай, где находит способ исцеления для своего отца. В качестве основателя Сиф является носителем очень древней, если не древнейшей наследственной информации, того семени, которое связано с сакральным топосом: могилой и деревом. Корни смерти в земле и побег, которые тянутся к небесам, должны стать началом освящения этого места. Сиф занимает особое положение в двойном смысловом ряду — он определяет *святое место* и генерирует *священное событие*.

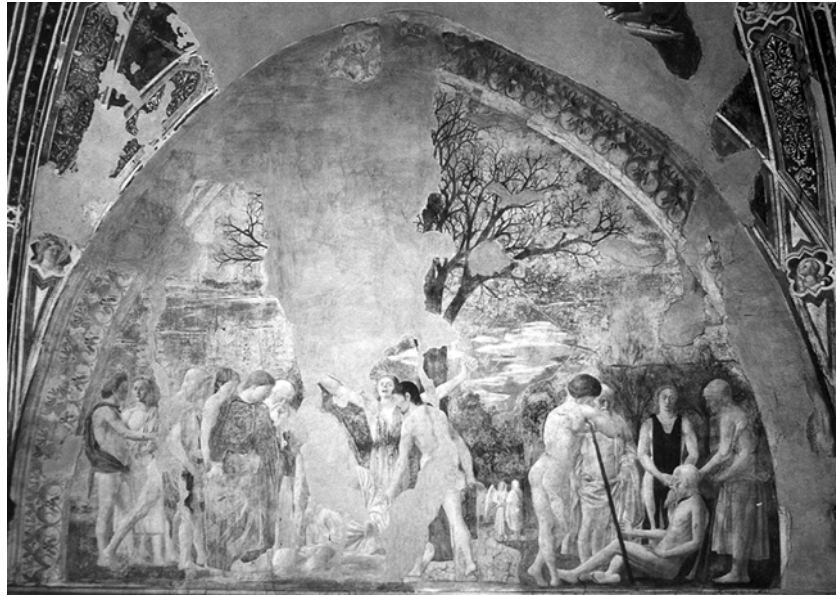
На глубинном уровне легенды о Крестном древе Сиф воплощает древние архетипы, сохраняющиеся вплоть до позднего средневековья и распространяющиеся посредством иконографических циклов в церквях и миниатюрах рукописей.

ИКОНОГРАФИЯ И СОВРЕМЕННОЕ ОТНОШЕНИЕ К СВЯТЫМ МЕСТАМ:  
АРХИТЕКТУРА И ПАМЯТНИКИ, СУВЕНИРЫ И РЕЛИКВИИ

Иконография легенды о Крестном древе прослеживается в убранстве церквей и монастырей в виде образов, которые следует понимать как анахронизм в представлении Святой Земли и Иерусалима в «пространственных ракурсах» и «временных рамках». В этом проявляется наиболее дидактичное и экономичное изображение места, которое считалось Святой землей. Автор рассматривает взаимодействие между визуальной программой и современной ей аудиторией, исторической ситуацией вне и в пределах Иерусалима, которая складывалась на основе обмена предметами между Востоком и Западом, восприятия Святой Земли паломниками и взаимодействия между различными политическими и религиозными системами.



1. Agnolo Gaddi. Piscina Probatica (detail). 1392. Firenze, Santa Croce, choir



2. *Piero della Francesca*. Death of Adam and Seth. Before 1466. Arezzo, San Francesco, choir



3. Grave of Adam and Solomon building the temple. 1330–1340. Lanciano, San Nicola



4. Eva und Adam. Lutwin, 15<sup>th</sup> century. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindob. 2980, fol. 73v, 77, 98v



5. Chapel of Duttenberg, 15<sup>th</sup> century. Wimpfen





6. Seth receives the twig. Wall painting, 1485. Duttonberg, Holy Cross chapel



7. Seth's tree grows from Adam's tomb. Wall painting, 1485. Duttonberg, Holy Cross chapel



8. The tree is cut down from Adam's grave. Wall painting, 1485. Duttonberg, Holy Cross chapel



9. Gerard Leeu. The soul in the Hortus conclusus. Thooftkijn van devotien. Antwerp, 1487. Ghent, Universitaire Bibliotheek, res. 169, fol. 16



10. Seth receives the twig from the archangel Michael. Book of Hours for Catherine of Cleves, 1442-1445. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 917, fol. 199



11. Seth and Adam, The Boec van den Houte, incunabulum printed by Johan Veldener, Culemborg, 1483. Brussels, Royal Library, no. INC A 1582