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THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. DEMETRIUS IN VLADIMIR: SOURCES, FORM AND DOCUMENTATION

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Abstract. *The article examines the twelfth-century Cathedral of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki in Vladimir both in its architectural context (from Iurii Dolgorukii and Andrei Bogolkubskii to Vsevolod III) and as a model for the use of photography in the study and propagation of architectural heritage. The high-relief stone carvings on the cathedral facades make it one of the defining monuments in the culture of medieval Rus. The article notes the pioneering color photography of Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, who recorded the Cathedral of St. Demetrius and other Vladimir monuments in 1911. The importance of his photographs as historical and cultural documents now preserved at the Library of Congress but widely available through digitization—validates Prokudin-Gorskii's original concept of photographic documentation. The article also includes a selection of the author's photographs of the St. Demetrius Cathedral, part of his detailed documentation of the monument over a period of almost four decades.*

Ключевые слова: *Русское церковное зодчество, русская фотография, Игорь Грабарь, Сергей Прокудин-Горский, Иван Билибин, Ярослав Владимирович Мудрый, Юрий Долгорукий, Андрей Боголюбский, Всеволод III Юрьевич, Давид, Псалтирь, Александр Македонский, Романская архитектура, Владимир (город), Суздаль, Боголюбово, "Физиолог" (книга).*

Key words: *Russian church architecture, Russian photography, Igor' Grabar', Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, Ivan Bilibin, Iaroslav the Wise, Iurii Dolgorukii, Andrei Bogoliubskii, Vsevolod III Iurevich, King David, Psalms, Alexander the Great, Romanesque architecture, Vladimir (town), Suzdal', Bogoliubovo, Physiologus.*

A legitimate argument can be made that the scientific study of Russia's architectural history is inseparable from the development of photography. Photography as a documentary medium has not only enabled the study of architectural monuments but has also provided a record of the condition of monuments. A defining ex-

ample of the application of photography in Russian art history—indeed, to the reaffirmation of Russian artistic culture—was the publication of Igor' Grabar's pioneering multi-volume *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva* (*History of Russian Art*), the first part of which was dedicated to pre-Petrine architecture including the wooden churches of the North. [9] The volume's superb photographs, which include the work of Ivan Bilibin, are a valuable record of monuments that in many cases no longer exist, or exist in modified form. [3]

Bilibin's involvement in photography as an artistic and documentary medium is reflective of a general Russian fascination with photography at the latter part of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the 20th century several Russian photographers had become involved in documenting the people and monuments of a vast land, none more so than Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii, who applied innovations in color photography to record the cultural variety of the Russian empire, from the northwest to the ancient cities of Central Asia. [2] Prokudin-Gorskii was unique among photographers not only in his pioneering use of color photography but also in his systematic approach to the documentation of cultural monuments.

Although Prokudin-Gorskii was not by profession an art historian, he had a historian's sense of the scholarly importance of the properly organized visual record. His vision of photography as a form of education and enlightenment was demonstrated with special clarity through his photographs of medieval architecture in historic settlements northeast of Moscow such as Suzdal and Vladimir, which he visited in the summer of 1911. His choice of these sites demonstrates an understanding of their meaning for the artistic culture of medieval Rus' and, indeed, for the development of a sense of Russian national identity. Although his intention to disseminate the photographs in widely accessible forms (textbooks, guidebooks, postcards, journal articles) was interrupted by the revolution and his departure from Soviet Russia in 1918, his photographic oeuvre has achieved his enlightened goals to a degree that he could not have imagined.

Prokudin-Gorskii's photographs of two major cathedrals in Vladimir are indispensable for an understanding of their condition at the beginning of the twentieth century, before later changes implemented during restoration and preservation efforts. Particularly significant are his several photographs of the late twelfth-century Cathedral of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki, a definitive, monumental statement of princely authority in medieval Rus'. He not only took general views from the west and southeast that give an accu-

rate, undistorted view of the structure, but he also recorded details on the main, west façade. There is no better photographic record of this major monument at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In choosing the St. Demetrius Cathedral, Prokudin-Gorskii demonstrated an informed understanding of the historical significance of the monuments he photographed. It is likely that as a highly-educated technical specialist, he was familiar with Grabar's *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva* and the role of photographic documentation in this magisterial study. The documentary relevance of his photographs for art historians has only increased with time. At the same time, his photographs were intended to draw the viewer into Russia's history through an impressive view of the country's often neglected architectural heritage. What, then, is the peculiar significance of the Cathedral of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki?

Although the specific sources of the St. Demetrius Cathedral remain a topic for discussion, the cathedral and its iconographic façade sculpture represent the culmination of a clearly defined historical development. [12] During the eleventh century Kievan princes extended their control over the northeast, in the upper reaches of the Volga River and its tributaries. Settled as early as the first century by Finno-Ugric tribes, these lands were colonized during the tenth century by Slavs from the west, drawn to the rich forests and tillable land. Settlements such as Rostov and Suzdal were strengthened and eventually formed a major principality. [30, 39-44] In 1024 Kievan Grand Prince Iaroslav the Wise suppressed a rebellion incited by pagan priests in the Suzdal area. Kiev's control proved tenuous, however. In 1071 one of Rostov's first bishops, Leontii, was killed in yet another pagan uprising, and the area was under the constant threat of raids by Volga Bulgars. At the turn of the eleventh century the town of Suzdal was fortified and acquired its own prince.

Suzdal was soon overshadowed by the fortress of Vladimir, established in 1108 on the Kliazma River some thirty kilometers south of Suzdal. Its founder, Vladimir Monomakh, grandson of Iaroslav the Wise and grand prince in Kiev from 1113, was the last of Kiev's great rulers. Monomakh is recorded in the chronicles as having built in Vladimir at some point between 1108 and 1117 a church dedicated to the Savior (the Transfiguration). [21, 56] Its site has not been discovered, but the foundation of his earlier church dedicated to the Nativity (or perhaps the Dormition) of the Mother of God has been analyzed at the site of the extant Suzdal Cathedral of the Nativity. Both churches would likely have been built of narrow brick (plinthos).

Monomakh's death in 1125 led to competition for succession to the throne at Kiev among his numerous sons, including the heir to Suzdalia, Iurii Dolgorukii. Iurii finally gained Kiev shortly before his death, in 1157, but during the protracted struggle he built much in Vladimir, center of his principality, and established settlements in Suzdalia—among them a small fortified post called Moscow. Information from the chronicles indicates that his major building activity occurred in the 1150s, presumably an indication of his desire toward the end of his life to create an architectural legacy in Suzdalia independently of Kiev.

Iurii Dolgorukii's Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior at Pereslavl'-Zalesskii (1152-57) has retained most of its original structure. [5; 30, 77-90; 20, 9-11] Although it lacks the harmony of proportions that characterizes churches built later by Iurii Dolgorukii's sons, the plan is finely calculated (particularly in the main vaulting arches) and demonstrates the facility with which limestone ashlar was used as the basic structural material. (fig. 1) No other area of early medieval Rus' produced cut stonework of such precision for structural purposes, and the means by which this precision suddenly appeared in Suzdalia are still unresolved.

The upper bays of the Transfiguration Cathedral's walls are recessed, and the facades are devoid of decoration, except for an ornamental frieze on the apse and drum. Access to the choir gallery presumably occurred through an opening in a bay of the north facade, linked by a wooden passageway to the princely residence—also of wood. Construction of a passage from the palace to the choir gallery of the main cathedral was not uncommon in me-



1. Pereslavl'-Zalesskii.
Cathedral of Transfiguration, southeast view.
Photo: W. Brumfield. 28/6/1995

dieval Rus. Structural evidence suggests that the original roofing material consisted of wooden shingles. [21, 62-63] The Transfiguration Cathedral provides the basic design for all but one of Suzdalia's major twelfth-century churches, including the Cathedral of St Demetrius in Vladimir: a cross-domed plan, with a triple apse and four piers supporting a single cupola.

Within a year of the completion Cathedral of the Transfiguration at Pereslavl'-Zalesskii, Iurii's son Andrei Bogoliubskii had commissioned the Cathedral of the Dormition, the first of the great churches in Vladimir. The plan of the Dormition Cathedral (1158-60) conformed to the elongated, six-pier plan typical of large churches in Kiev and Novgorod during the same period, and it displayed a few high-relief carvings on its facade of limestone ashlar. [27, 95-124] Among the distinctive features of the structure were a large drum and cupola, with twelve windows and 24 columns with carved capitals.

The ingenuity required to raise such a structure far exceeded that needed for Iurii Dolgorukii's churches during the preceding decade. If the source of their design remains unclear, the enigma is all the greater in the case of the Dormition Cathedral. The Laurentian chronicle mentions the bringing of masters from "all lands," and there are later references to *Nemtsi*, or "Germans" — a term broadly used for foreigners. It has been proposed, on slim evidence, that the artisans were sent to Bogoliubskii by Frederick Barbarossa. The connection with Barbarossa was made by Vasilii N. Tatishchev (1686-1750) in *Istoriia Rossiiskaia s samykh drevneishikh vremen*. [24, 127] Tatishchev was among earliest Russian historians in the modern sense, but his medieval manuscript source for this claim is not extant. Nonetheless, if certain features of the Vladimir churches—such as the portals and decorative stonework—suggest a Western medieval, particularly German Romanesque, presence, the basic plan remains firmly in the tradition of Byzantine church architecture as adapted in early medieval Rus.

However, the Dormition Cathedral was soon rebuilt in an even larger and more complex form, created during the reign of Andrei Bogoliubskii's half-brother, Vsevolod III (Iurevich). In 1185 a fire destroyed much of Vladimir and severely damaged the Dormition Cathedral. Vsevolod's builders ingeniously retained the walls of the earlier structure, weakened by fire, as the core of the cathedral, and added another aisle on each side (Fig. 2). The bays of the now interior walls were widened to create piers (bolstered by pylons), and the choir gallery was extended over cross vaults to the west aisle. [30, 354-75; 21, 51-52] On the east the apsidal struc-

ture was completely rebuilt, with a substantial increase in depth. (Fig. 3) On the other facades, the new walls were raised two stories, but not to the full height of the original structure.



2. Vladimir. Cathedral of the Dormition, southwest view. Brumfield. 26/5/1997



3. Cathedral of the Dormition, northeast view. Brumfield. 19/6/1994

The relation between the old and the new was thus clearly defined in the structure, and the additional aisles served as a form of gallery. Indeed, it could be said that the rebuilding of the Dormition Cathedral achieved the consummate integration of attached gallery and central structure that had often challenged medieval Russian architects. The consummate artistry of the resurrected Dormition Cathedral would provide an essential model for the revival of architecture in Muscovy at the end of the fifteenth century. [1, 94-95] The Prokudin-Gorskii Collection at the Library of Congress contains two photographs of the cathedral: a distant view from the east (Fig. 4) and a view from the northwest. (Fig. 5) The latter view shows a nineteenth-century bell tower and large addition attached to the north façade of the twelfth-century structure.

The Dormition Cathedral's exterior walls are marked at mid-level by an arcade frieze but relatively little carved ornament (Fig. 6). Some of the decorative stonework on the north and south walls was transferred from the original cathedral. [27, 97, 207, 214]. Nonetheless, the extant console blocks from Vsevolod's time

demonstrate the preservation of the technique, if not the scale, of carving introduced some two decades earlier by Andrei Bogoliubskii's anonymous master builders.



4. Cathedral of the Dormition, east view.
Photo: S. Prokudin-Gorskii. 1911



5. Bell tower and Cathedral of the Dormition, north view. Prokudin-Gorskii. 1911

Indeed, a closer prototype for both the plan and the façade decoration of the Cathedral of St. Demetrius in Vladimir is the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, built in the mid-1160s for Andrei Bogoliubskii near his palace compound of Bogoliubovo, a short distance to the east of Vladimir.



6. Cathedral of the Dormition, northwest view.
Brumfield. 16/5/1995

the center of Bogoliubovo consisted of a walled compound with the princely residence and limestone cathedral dedicated to the Nativity of the Mother of God, as well as one—or perhaps two—additional churches. Nikolai Voronin supervised archeological

excavations at the site in 1934-38, and his is the most extensive published description [30, 201-61]. The Nativity Cathedral was a cuboid structure similar in form to those built by Iurii Dolgorukii, but more elaborately decorated with carved masks, an arcade frieze at the midpoint of the facades, and carved capitals for the columns at the central crossing. Only fragments of the original structure survived an eighteenth-century rebuilding after the canonization of Andrei Bogoliubskii in 1702. [27, 66-95]

The Church of the Intercession on the River Nerl, however, has survived in something like its original form. Located over a meadow a short distance from the palace at Bogoliubovo, the church honors the holy festival of the Intercession of the Theotokos, which

was derived from a Byzantine miracle but elevated to a major religious holiday by Andrei over the opposition of Kievan and Byzantine religious authorities. The church was also built in memory of Andrei's son Iziaslav, who died in 1165. [30, 122; 27, 140-42; 21, 58] Built within one construction season in 1165 or 1166, the church follows the cross-inscribed design, with four piers, a single dome, and a tripartite facade culminating in *zakomary*. (fig. 7) Subtleties in design and façade articulation created a refined harmony of proportions. [29, 145; 21, 58-59; 11, 93-94]

Although its sculptural decoration may have had precedents in Suzdalia, the Church of the Intercession is the earliest surviving monument to display an iconographic message in stone. [27, 125-49] The white limestone quarried in the area provided a durable material suitable for carving, yet apart from the arcade frieze at Pereslavl-Zalenskii, the sculptural possibilities of stone had not been exploited before the building of the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir, which contained a few carved figures and columns. The rapid development of this form of exterior ornamentation at Andrei's Bogoliubovo churches (the Nativity and the Intercession, both completed by 1165) and the appearance of perspective portals again suggests



7. Bogoliubovo. Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, west view. Brumfield. 16/5/1995



8. *Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, west façade, central bay with King David. Brumfield. 18/7/2009*

the participation of foreign masters familiar with the Romanesque style in central Europe. Georgii Vagner proposes that three groups of masters worked on the carvings at the Church of the Intercession. Among them would have been a remnant of the foreigners referred to in the chronicles as working on his earlier projects. Stylistic comparisons suggest the presence of masters (“two or three”) from Galich, in

the extreme western part of Rus. Vagner suggests an assimilation of Romanesque features at the Church of the Intercession, rather than a firm influence. [27, 186-91; 15, 12; 13]

The carvings of the church facades can be divided into two categories, both of which are unusual in medieval Rus: stylized foliated patterns on the archivolts of the portals and on the capitals of the engaged columns; and the bestial and human figures on the facades. The dominant element in the latter group is a high-relief carving of King David, placed in each of the central *zakomary*. (fig. 8) Enthroned, with the right hand raised in blessing and the left holding the Psalter, David is flanked by two birds and two lions, signifying both submission and protection. The prominence allotted David suggests various interpretations: as God’s anointed, the king of Judah, he represents the warrior-leader who defeated his enemies and united the various factions within his kingdom--deeds Andrei would have compared to his own frequent campaigns to consolidate power within Rus and to defeat such external enemies as the Volga Bulgars. [27, 130-34] Built to commemorate a victory over the Bulgars, the church testifies to the power of divine intercession invoked in the Psalms.

The dedication of the church, however, honors the intercession of the Theotokos, whose protection is extended to the people of Vladimir and their just, God-fearing ruler. No representation of Mary appears on the Church of the Intercession, but the concept of feminine protection is expressed in the twenty high-relief masks of braided maidens, placed below the *zakomary*. In their stylized primitive form, the masks suggest the exaltation of the feminine in Orthodox religious art.

Although much of the carving was obscured by an attached exterior gallery, a variety of forms proliferated on the consoles supporting the columns of the arcade band: female masks, lion faces, leopards, pig snouts, griffins, and other chimeras (fig. 9). It should be noted that several of the carved consoles at the Church of Intercession have been replaced over the centuries--some as recently as the past few decades. [27, 147-48] These figures were undoubtedly drawn from the *Physiologus*, a work that had considerable impact on architectural sculpture and manuscript art throughout medieval Europe, and—more to the point—one of the secular texts imported to Rus from Byzantium. [16, 9; 10, 832] The appeal of the *Physiologus* derived from its blending of popular tales of nature with an allegorical, Christian interpretation of the beasts (often fantastic) depicted therein. The carvings on the surface of the church had a symbolic significance comprehensible to the prince and at least a part of his retinue.



9. *Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, south façade, central bay, King David. Brumfield. 16/5/1995*

But however extensive the symbolic system, the dominant figure was that of David, both in terms of its position at the center of the main *zakomary* and as the iconic image of the ruler, a strong ruler and victorious warrior. In endeavoring to unite the Russian lands around a new center of power in the northeast, Andrei Bogoliubskii would have grasped of the symbolic uses of architecture as an image and projection of the authority of the prince. This concept would be repeated in greater profusion at the Cathedral of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki, the palace church of Vsevolod III.

In view of the austerity of sculpted ornament on Vsevolod's earlier churches, the profusion of stone sculpture for his St. Demetrius Cathedral can be seen as extension of the statement princely authority made by his predecessor at Bogoliubovo. Built between 1193 and 1197, the church is similar in plan to the cuboid structure of the Bogoliubovo churches, with an arcade frieze separating two tiers, the upper of which is covered in carved limestone. [30, 396-437] (Fig. 10) Although Vsevolod's sculptors undoubtedly drew on motifs and techniques de-



10. Vladimir. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, southwest view. Brumfield. 18/7/2009

veloped three decades earlier at Bogoliubovo, there is no documented source for the extraordinary iconographic exercise of the facades of the Cathedral of St. Dmitrii. The Western medieval elements introduced in Bogoliubskii's churches are still in evidence, but some have argued in favor of borrowings from Balkan churches or from the carved tufa facades of Armenian churches. The central importance of Armenia in the development of medieval sculptural ornament was most vigorously proposed by Jurij Strzygowski in 1918). Strzygowski's theories were subsequently restated and elaborated upon in David R. Buxton. [23; 4] Vagner, however, resists this interpretation [27, 390-415]

No reliable evidence exists for any one theory of derivation, and in view of the

transience of motifs and craftsmen—from Byzantium, the Balkans, central Europe, and, possibly, the Caucasus — it is possible that Vsevolod's artisans adapted and combined elements from several sources. As Meyer Schapiro noted, Romanesque art is distinguished by its eclectic use of elements from widely diverse sources: "There is in western art from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries an immense receptivity matched in few cultures before that time or even later; early Christian, Byzantine, Sassanian, Coptic, Syrian, Roman, Moslem, Celtic, and pagan Germanic forms were borrowed then, often without regard to their context and meaning." [22, 18] Indeed, the similarities between the Western Romanesque and the Suzdalian churches, whose basic form derived from Byzantium, are closer than Schapiro knew. He had, defined different attitudes toward decoration in the two Christianities: the western being more receptive to diverse decorative motifs—even secular in origin—than the eastern, which officially venerated the image. Yet the twelfth-century churches of Vladimir show the same abil-

ity to incorporate both sacred and secular images, some perhaps of pagan derivation. The late twelfth-century Suzdalian churches exhibit the same receptivity and pose the same challenges in determining provenance and derivation.

Apart from the issue of provenance, there is the iconographic question posed by the carvings, whose order has been partially preserved despite reconstruction and renovation over a period of eight centuries. [19] Like the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, St. Demetrius was originally constructed with an exterior gallery that gave access to the choir gallery within, [27, 234-36; 21, 54] A turning point in the structure's fate occurred in 1834 during a visit of Tsar Nicholas I to Vladimir. Alarmed by the dilapidated appearance of the monument, the tsar ordered a restoration of the shrine to its "original form." That form, however, was determined with less than scholarly rigor, with the consequent demolition in 1837-39 of parts deemed to be ancillary. These included a bell tower attached to the northwest corner, as well as an exterior gallery that contained stairs to the upper level and buttressed the structure on the south, west and north sides. [8]

After this modification, many stone blocks were replaced with new carvings (particularly in the arcade friezes), and the order of some of the blocks was rearranged. The removal of the dilapidated attached structure enhanced the perception of the exterior carving, but also introduced a rearrangement of some of the carved blocks of the facade. [7] Certain valuable details were lost for lack of proper documentation. Nonetheless, the extant original carvings on the exterior display a system of religious, secular, and ornamental motifs that comprise a message in stone. Furthermore, it is likely that some, if not all, of the reconstructed elements would have conformed to the iconographic function of the original carvings they replaced.

Although certain of the plant and animal carvings are associated with motifs widespread in Indo-European folklore—and, more directly, with the *Physiologus*—their function seems primarily decorative, the repetition of highly stylized elements in an ordered setting. It has also been suggested that in addition to the *Physiologos*, a source for the fanciful creatures and images of the natural world in Suzdalian church sculpture might have been the "Golubinaia kniga" (glubinaia kniga—"profound book"), an equivalent "encyclopedia" of knowledge interpreted in the Christian context in early medieval Rus'. [25, 36] In addition, the chimeras and masks—particularly evident in the console blocks of the apse arcade (fig. 11)—no doubt play the thaumaturgic role allotted to



11. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, apse, north bay, carved limestone arcade frieze. Brumfield. 7/10/1979



13. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, south façade, east bay, right side with mounted figure of St. Gleb. Brumfield. 18/7/2009



12. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, south façade, central bay, King Solomon(?). Brumfield. 18/7/2009

them elsewhere in medieval architecture, including the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl. The human figures, however, have in many cases been identified, and it is possible

to read the facades as a text on the prince whose authority is sanctioned by God, by the Orthodox Church and its saints, and by legendary rulers of antiquity. (fig. 12) Furthermore, the military component, so essential to the maintenance of princely power, is emphasized not only in references to Alexander the Great and King David, but also to the “warrior saints,” or Roman officers martyred for their faith and canonized by the Orthodox church. They include St. Demetrius, Theodore Stratilates and George of Cappadocia. [27, 283, 285, 28] The princely saints Boris and Gleb, sons of Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev, also figure prominently, both as martyrs—in the arcade frieze of the west bay of the north façade—and as mounted warriors in the upper part of the east bay of the south façade. [27, 411] (fig. 13)

As at the Church of the Intercession, the central *zakomara* is dominated by King David, so inscribed on the west façade (fig. 14). The significance of David has already been noted in the discussion of the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, but he is joined here (on the left bay of the west façade) by the figure of Solomon, law-giver, poet, and builder of the Temple. [26, 270-72, 25, 30-31] Surrounding David are creatures of the sky and the earth, among them eagles, doves, peacocks, lions, panthers, pheasants, hares, as well as fantastic creatures such as griffins, centaurs, and the basilisk. As representations of the wise and strong ruler, David and Solomon are complemented by mythological and historical figures such as Hercules and Alexander the Great, the latter known through the Alexander Romance, a legendary version of his deeds (attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes) that circulated in Byzantium and medieval Europe.



14. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west façade, central bay, King David. Brumfield. 18/7/2009

[17] For example, a twelfth-century Byzantine relief of the Apotheosis of Alexander appears on the façade of the Cathedral of St. Mark in Venice [27, 260, 455; 6, 337] Many of these details are visible in Prokudin-Gorskii's photographs of the south and west façades. (fig. 15)



15. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west façade. Prokudin-Gorskii. 1911

Indeed, the emphasis on great rulers seems to overshadow the image of Christ, whose baptism on the left *zakomara* of the south façade is balanced by the apotheosis of Alexander the Great on the right bay (fig. 16). In symbolic terms, however, all of the above rulers and mythological figures would have been interpreted as part of an



16. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, south façade, east bay, with Apotheosis of Alexander the Great. Brumfield. 18/7/2009



17. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, north façade, east bay, with Vsevolod III and five sons. Brumfield. 26/4/1980



18. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west façade, center bay. From left: St. Theodore, St. George, Hercules Slaying Hernean Hydra. Brumfield. 18/7/2009

elaborate system of commentary on the glory and majesty of Christ. References to classical mythology as well as to the Old Testament were justified as a prefiguration of Christ's mission. The final link in the uppermost row of images occurs on the north facade, of which the left *zakomara* displays a donor group containing Vsevolod and his five sons, one of whom he holds on his knee. Of the five sons—Konstantin, Georgii, Iaroslav, Vladimir, and Sviatoslav—Vagner suggests that the one on Vsevolod's knee would be the youngest (Sviatoslav), born during the construction of the cathedral. Voronin proposes the more likely choice to be Vladimir, whose baptismal name was Dmitrii (as was Vsevolod's). [27, 258; 30, 436] (fig. 17) From Alexander, David, Solomon, and Christ, the sense of authority bequeathed to Vsevolod and to his sons is emphatically proclaimed.

Below the row of *zakomary* are further depictions of religious and secular figures, each category of which contains emblems of physical and martial prowess, as wrestlers and hunters are joined by galloping warrior saints such as Theodore Stratilates and George of Cappadocia (fig. 18). Of the several half-figure portraits of ascetic saints and churchmen, only a few can be dated to the twelfth century; the rest are replace



19. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west façade, north bay, right side. Seated figure of Theotokos. Brumfield. 26/4/1980



19A. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west façade, north bay, right side. Center: seated figure of Theotokos. Brumfield. 26/4/1980

ments sensitive to the style and identification of the originals. Much the same can be said of the arcade frieze: it is possible that only sixteen of the seventy carvings are original work, yet the overall iconographic system has been maintained. [27, 245-48] The figures of the divinity, of Mary, and of the evangelists on the west (main) facade are seated, thus indicating their regal position in the cosmic hierarchy. (fig. 19) The south facade contains statues of Russian princes, including Alexander Nevskii—proof that later sculptors used the cathedral as a pantheon for the portrayal of medieval Russian saints and leaders.

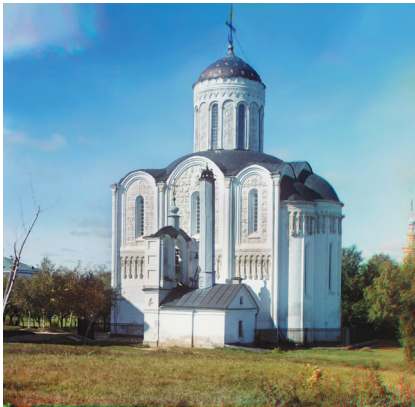


20. Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west portal, archivolt. Brumfield. 18/7/2009

Regardless of the changes introduced by the carving of new statuary, the renovations succeeded in maintaining the visual integrity of the structure, with its rich texture of limestone reliefs set



21. *Cathedral of St. Demetrius, east view. Prokudin-Gorskii. 1911*



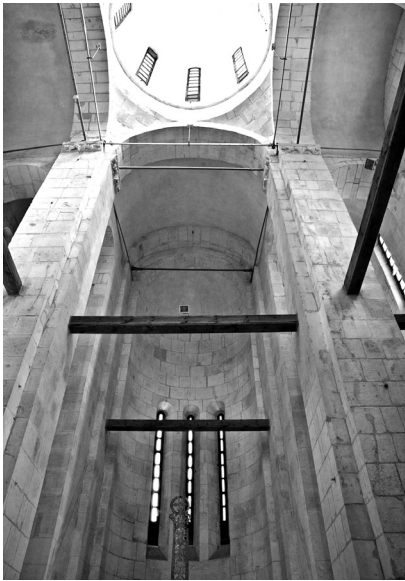
22. *Cathedral of St. Demetrius, south view. Foreground: service building (not extant), furnace chimney, bell gable. Prokudin-Gorskii. 1911*

within sharply defined bays. The recessed portals are framed by carved archivolts (fig. 20), which provide a focal point to the central bays and complement the rounded forms of the *zakomary*. The nineteenth-century restoration of the roofline not only illuminates the relation between the *zakomary* and the interior vaulting but also fully displays the gilded cupola and drum (fig. 21), whose attached columns frame windows and strapwork containing fanciful beasts and half-figures. On the drum, only an image of Christ, two evangelists, and three saints with scrolls are considered twelfth-century work. The drum—particularly the lower part—was damaged during the 1830s restoration, and most of the medallions were replaced. [27, 242, 258] The cross is of iron, with gilded copper ornamental work and a copper dove at its crown.

In 1883 the installation of a calorific heating system (for winter services) led to the construction of a service building with a tall chimney just to the south of the cathedral. This small structure, which also supported a belfry, is visible in the Prokudin-Gorskii's photograph from the southeast. (fig. 22) Without his photographs, valuable, pre-

cise information would be lacking on the condition of this defining monument before the revolutionary cataclysm.

On the cathedral interior (fig. 23) carved details such as the crouching lions on impost blocks are preserved, but most of the frescoes have been destroyed. A further renovation of the interi-



23. *Cathedral of St. Demetrius, interior. View east toward apse. Brumfield. 18/7/2009*

or in 1840-47 led to the loss or overpainting of early medieval frescoes. Fortunately, studies of the cathedral carried out by Igor Grabar in 1918 uncovered some of the most valuable late twelfth-century frescoes. The central and south vaults beneath the choir gallery display a remarkable set of frescoes, probably painted around 1195, on the theme of the Last Judgement. The predominant scholarly opinion now assigns the major part of this work to a master from Constantinople, with frescoes by Russian assistants in the south vault. [14, 36-38; 18]

Although discussion of the paintings lies beyond the scope of this study, the quality of the composition and execution form a part of the artistic culture reflected throughout the building of St.



24. *Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west view. Prokudin-Gorskii. 1911*



25. *Cathedral of St. Demetrius, west view. Brumfield. 18/7/2009*

Dmitrii's. As Viktor Lazarev has noted, Vsevolod's mother was a Byzantine princess, Vsevolod himself spent seven years of his youth in Constantinople, and his brother Mikhail established in Vladimir a school with Greek clerics and a library with extensive holdings of Greek manuscripts. [14, 35] Although the library is long destroyed, its manuscripts suggest a source for the iconographic motifs of Vsevolod's own psalm in white stone. (figs. 24, 25)

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