

Traditions of Antique sculpture in external décor of the Russian Orthodox churches in the period of classicism

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In the period of Russian classicism the Russian church architecture took the forms of the classical architectural orders, and external décor of the churches was enriched by the new elements such as a zoophorus, a sculptured panel and a sculptured pediment. Thus the Orthodox church sculpture for the first time went beyond ornamental art with historical subjects being spread in it.

The series of sculptured panels on the facades of Kazan Cathedral go back to the type of the doric order frieze, that was undertaken through the Western European 18th century styles. The exhibition of the plaster casts of the Parthenon sculptures in Petersburg in 1820 contributed to the evolution of the types of a sculptured pediment and a zoophorus in the Russian monumental-decorative sculpture. Drawing on the example of the Parthenon pediments the project of facade decoration of St. Isaac's cathedral included the task of molding of the reliefs for the pediments in three dimensions. That was the new experience for Russian art.

The subjects of the Sacred History, that did not have iconography in Russian monumental-decorative sculpture, were interpreted in the décor of Kazan and St. Isaac's Cathedrals with the orientation on the examples of Catholic Italian art. This tendency was met with the reactions of the Eastern Orthodox church. The representation of the Eparchy in the construction commission of Kazan Cathedral obstructed the execution of many external sculptures according to the project. The control of the Most Holy Synod over the artistic works in St. Isaac's Cathedral was not contrary to the trend of the external décor of the cathedral, but restricted using sculpture in the decoration of the iconostasis.



Key words: monumental-decorative sculpture, Russian classicism, Christianity, Antiquity

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