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The Antependium of Nedstryn and the Exultation of the Cross

In the Museum of History in Bergen, an antependium is found with a peculiar iconography. The altar screen, dating to c. 1310, originates from the church of Nedstryn, Norway, and retells the legend of the Exultation of the Cross in eight medallions divided in two registers. In this contribution I will elaborate the North European iconological context of the legend of the Exultation. I will compare the antependium with analogue themes in miniatures, murals and retables, which hitherto hasn't been associated with the Nedstryn iconography. This will bring me to the following result: By means of the apocalyptic – eschatological interpretation of the very seventh – century event, Heraclius became an example for dynasties and genealogies tracing themselves back to the matrix of the Greek emperor, who restructured a region that we now call Central-Eastern Europe but won a radius of influence in the other parts of Europe too, such as in the North where the Nedstryn antependium is situated.