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**The Death and the Book**

The article discusses a particular iconography of the sculptural tomb of Eleonora of Aquitania, one of the most important and famous sculptures of the royal pantheon of the Fontevraud Abbey. It deals with a specific new type of a pantheon of the royal family which is established in the European West during the XIIth century. Special attention is paid to the attribute which characterises the particular iconography of this tomb: an open book which the deceased Queen, lying on a funeral bed, holds in front of her eyes. The book is evidently a vehicle of the pray addressed to God and to His Mother and can be interpreted also as a symbol of the Virgin and a sign of the eternal life. It is surprising enough that this feature of the funerary iconography seems to be very rare. Another example can be found in the XIVth and XVth centuries in the feminine tombs of the Portuguese nobility in the Lisbon cathedral. During the Middle Ages several tombs of ecclesiastics engraved with their images show them with books as an attribute of their career and faith. In the XIIth century appears a new type of the royal tomb with an effigy of a king lying on the funeral bed. It is probable that this type takes its origin in Spain, more exactly in the pantheon of kings of Navarra in Pamplona. A particular place is occupied by a discussion of the Eleonora's effigy and by a problem of the meaning of the small book which she holds open in front of her eyes. This iconography translates also a specific attitude to the death, not only as a sleep in which the deceased is immersed in the expectation of the future Resurrection, but also as an eternal state of being awoken, spent in prayer addressed to God and to his Mother. The book is here an essential funerary symbol conducting the deceased to the eternal life.