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Pictorial Lives. Narrative in thirteenth-century vita icons

TO DATE THREE SUGGESTIONS have been made with regard to the interpretation of 'vita icons', that is icons in which the central figure of a saint is surrounded by scenes from his/her life cycle: (a) the episodes depicted may reflect, but do not consistently follow, known texts;¹ (b) the scenes are not arranged in chronological order;² and (c) neither their creation nor their location is related to the tomb spaces or the relics of the saints which they depict.³

I believe that surrounding the central figure of a saint with episodes from their life is intended to shed light on their identity through the events which led to their sanctification. Consequently the choice of scenes must illustrate the faith of the person depicted and what it achieved: acts, miracles, martyrdom. I also think that vita icons are the visual expression of narrative works, in this case the Lives of Saints, and that therefore following the storyline of these narratives, i.e. depicting successive episodes, marking the key points in the narrative development in each Life, is of fundamental importance.

The 'plot', that is the structuring of the episodes in a story, is a basic element in any narrative.⁴ This plot or storyline is directly connected with time, the dimension within which for the most part the narrative develops.⁵ Similarly in the vita icons, the arrangement of the scenes must express the storyline and correspond to the chronological sequence of events, facilitating an understanding of the relationship between cause and effect given that, by definition, cause precedes effect. It is crucial to show the time sequence clearly; otherwise the scenes will seem like a series of random, unconnected events.

Thus, in terms of visual narratives, I have attempted

to look at nine of the fifteen earliest vita icons⁶ produced in the thirteenth century in either the Monastery of St Catherine's, Sinai, or in the Latin Kingdoms of Jerusalem and Cyprus; in other words all coming from the Eastern Mediterranean. I have chosen icons which either preserve the saint's life cycle intact, or, in cases where some scenes have been damaged, preserve enough details to permit identification. The vita icons concerned are: *St Catherine*, *St George*, *The Prophet Moses* and *St Panteleimon* from the Sinai Monastery; *St Prokopios* from the Patriarchate in Jerusalem; *The Apostle Philip* and *St John Lampadistis* from the churches dedicated to these saints in Cyprus and *St Marina* from the church of Ayia Marina in Kyperounda in Cyprus, which is now kept in the Museum of the Holy Cross in Kyperounda.

In what follows I shall present the life cycles depicted on these icons, outline the ways in which they can be read and the hagiographical texts on which they are based, showing how the order of the scenes assists the narrative.

1. *The vita icon of Saint Catherine* in the Sinai monastery has twelve scenes from the life of the saint arranged around the central figure of St Catherine (fig. 1).⁷ The inscriptions which accompany the scenes are misspelt.⁸ It has been suggested that in this icon scenes do not always follow the exact order of the narrative.⁹

The first episode in the cycle is inscribed 'the saint at prayer' and depicts Catherine kneeling with her hands in prayer position in the presence of an angel (fig. 2). The scene has been interpreted as the angel visiting Catherine in prison.¹⁰ This episode follows the imprisonment of the



Fig. 1. Vita icon of St Catherine. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).



Fig. 2. St Catherine praying. The first scene in the cycle on the vita icon of St Catherine. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

saint and it should be the fourth in the cycle. However, the scene does not depict the characteristic prison building, i.e. two towers linked by an arch with crenellations at the top, as in the eighth scene in which the Empress is depicted visiting the saint in prison (fig. 3). On the contrary, the buildings in the background of the first scene suggest a private space and lead us to conclude that the saint is praying in her own home. In my opinion, in depicting the saint's prayer, the painter is representing the phrase: "every day she [Catherine] would address prayers only to God in her own palace" [(ἡ Αἰκατερίνη) εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον παλάτιον... καθ' ἑκάστην μόνῃ τῷ θεῷ τὰς εὐχὰς προσανέμεινεν] from the Life of St Catherine in Ms. Par. Gr. 1180, ed. Viteau § 4 p. 45.¹¹ The inscription 'the saint at prayer' also supports this idea. The depiction of the angel in this first scene comes

from a conflation of two separate episodes from the Life: the saint's prayer at home and the appearance of the angel to the imprisoned saint, in order to strengthen her faith and increase her wisdom. The content of the first scene underlines the fact that Catherine was a Christian, endowed with wisdom and divine grace, qualities which would lead to her efforts depicted in the next scene, in which the Christian Catherine takes public action, intervening in an idolatrous sacrifice offered by Maxentios in the temple.

If the misinterpreted first scene is given its proper meaning, it is evident that the twelve scenes of the St Catherine cycle correspond to the Life entitled "Martyrion of the Glorious Virgin Martyr Catherine" [Μαρτύριον τῆς ἀγίας ἐνδόξου παρθένου μάρτυρος Αἰκατερίνης] contained in the tenth-century codex Par. Gr. 1180, ed. Viteau¹² [BHG



Fig. 3. The Empress falls at Catherine's feet in her prison cell. The eighth scene in the cycle on the vita icon of St Catherine. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

31]. A comparison of the text with the life-cycle in the icon of St Catherine shows that the artist followed the narrative of the text faithfully, with no inconsistencies in the sequence of events. The pictorial cycle is arranged as follows: top row from left to right, right-hand side top to bottom, left-hand side top to bottom and bottom row, left to right. The twelve scenes which make up the life-cycle of St Catherine on the Sinai icon correspond to the following extracts from the *Life* mentioned above:

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. Catherine praying at home (Viteau § 4 p. 45) (fig. 2).

2nd scene. Catherine interrupts Maxentios' sacrifice in the temple (Viteau § 6 p. 45).

3rd scene. Catherine is arrested and taken to the palace (Viteau § 7-8 p. 47).

Right-hand side [top to bottom]:

4th scene. Catherine debates with the rhetors (Viteau § 11 p. 51).

5th scene. The rhetors fall at Catherine's feet (Viteau § 13 p. 55).

6th scene. The rhetors in the furnace (Viteau § 13 p. 55).

Left-hand side [top to bottom]:

7th scene. Catherine, stripped of her imperial dress, is tortured by scourging (Viteau § 14 p. 57).

8th scene. The Empress falls at Catherine's feet in her prison cell (Viteau § 15 p. 57) (fig. 3).

9th scene. The eparch Chursasadem advises Maxentios in the presence of Catherine, to construct the wheel on which she is to be martyred (Viteau § 19 p. 61).

Bottom row [l-r]:

10th scene. Catherine on the wheel (Viteau § 20 p. 61).

11th scene. Catherine and the Empress debate with Maxentios (Viteau § 21 p. 61).

12th scene. The beheading of the Empress (Viteau § 21 p. 63) and of St Catherine (Viteau § 25 p. 65). In other words the last two episodes which bring the *Life* to a close are compressed into this one scene.

2. *The vita icon of Moses* from Sinai was originally kept in the chapel on the summit dedicated to the eponymous prophet (fig. 4).¹³ It was commissioned by the archbishop and abbot of the Sinai monastery, Neilos, who is depicted in the central space of the icon in an attitude of prayer at the prophet's feet (fig. 5).¹⁴ Moses' life-cycle has twenty episodes, beginning at the top of the left-hand border and finishing at the far right-hand side of the bottom row. The scenes in the vertical register are arranged in facing pairs around the central axis and read from left to right and from top to bottom.

The main stumbling block in the narration of the Moses cycle is the eleventh scene, which depicts one of the miracles Moses works with water (fig. 6). On the basis of its inscription – "*when the rock was split, water flowed*" – this scene has been identified with the episode on Mount Horeb when Moses struck the rock and water gushed out (Exodus 17: 1-6).¹⁵ But the circular spring in the foreground of the composition with its wide mouth, into which Moses plunges his rod, and which is clearly differentiated from the mountainous landscape in the background, is more likely to refer to



Fig. 4. The vita icon of the Prophet Moses. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).



Fig. 5. Neilos, Archbishop and Abbot of the Sinai Monastery, donor of the vita icon of the Prophet Moses. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

Fig. 7. The Prophet Moses praying to see the Promised Land. The nineteenth scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Prophet Moses. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

the turning of the 'bitter' water at the oasis of Marah into drinkable water (Exodus 15: 23-25). So, if this scene is dissociated from its erroneous inscription, then the sequence of the narration is faithfully followed in all twenty scenes on this vita icon. The inscription attached to the eleventh scene is associated with the miracle on Mount Horeb and must be due to the artist's efforts to adapt this scene to the holy place in which the icon was kept.¹⁶ There is a similar example in the nineteenth scene in which Moses prays to see the Promised Land (fig. 7). On the basis of the inscription – "Moses prays to see Jerusalem" – the city depicted on the right-hand side has been recognized as Jerusalem, though its name is never mentioned in Deuteronomy. However, the city which, according to Deut. 34, 1, should be depicted is Jericho. But the artist was inspired to show the special relationship between the monastery at Sinai and Jerusalem.¹⁷

The life-cycle of the Prophet Moses depicted on the icon from Sinai corresponds to the following passages from the bible:

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. Birth of Moses (Exodus 2: 1-2).

2nd scene. Moses' Exposure in the Nile and discovery by Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2: 3-5).

3rd scene. Pharaoh sits holding the child Moses on his knee (Midrash Rabbah Exodus 1: 26).

4th scene. The trial of Moses with the burning coal (Midrash Rabbah Exodus 1: 26).

5th scene. Moses slaying the Egyptian (Exodus 2: 11-12).

Vertical sides:

Left, 6th scene. Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3: 1-6).

Right, 7th scene. Moses before Pharaoh (Exodus 5: 1-5).

Left, 8th scene. The plague of hail (Exodus 9: 23-25).

Right, 9th scene. The crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14: 19-29) (fig. 8).

Left, 10th scene. Miriam and the Israelite women celebrating after the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15: 20-21).

Right, 11th scene. Moses turns the bitter waters of Marah into drinking water (Exodus 15: 23-25) (fig. 6).

Left, 12th scene. The miracle of the manna and the quails (Exodus 16: 13-31).

Right, 13th scene. Aaron officiating (Exodus 16: 32-34).

Left, 14th scene. Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law (Exodus 31: 18).

Right, 15th scene. Aaron and the golden calf (Exodus 32: 1-4).



Fig. 6. The Prophet Moses turning the bitter water of Marah into drinking water. The eleventh scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Prophet Moses. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).



Fig. 8. The crossing of the Red Sea. The ninth scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Prophet Moses. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

Bottom row [l-r]:

16th scene. Moses breaking the Tablets of the Law (Exodus 32: 19).

17th scene. Moses ordering the sons of Levi to slay the idolaters (Exodus 32: 27-28).

18th scene. Moses receiving the new Tablets of the Law (Exodus 34: 4-5).

19th scene. Moses praying to see the Promised Land (Deut. 34, 1) (fig. 7).

20th scene. The burial of Moses by angels (Deut. 34, 5-6).

3. *The vita icon of St Panteleimon* from St Catherine's, Sinai was originally kept in the church dedicated to the saint outside the walls of the monastery (fig. 9).¹⁸ The cycle is made up of sixteen episodes, which are accompanied by misspelt inscriptions.¹⁹ The narration begins top left with the meeting between Pantoleon (Panteleimon) and the Christian Hermolaos (fig. 10) and ends with the burial of the saint in the lower right-hand corner. The scenes on the vertical sides of the icon are arranged in facing pairs around the central axis and read from left to right and top to bottom.

The sixteen scenes in the cycle are thought to have created a new version of the saint's martyrion, based mainly on the Life which Symeon Metaphrastes compiled, but also on other lives, because some of the episodes do not correspond to the Metaphrastian text.²⁰ Moreover, based on the erroneous inscription in the second scene (fig. 11), "*St Panteleimon learning the art of medicine*", scholars have interpreted the fact that the artist chose to begin the cycle with Pantoleon meeting the Christian Hermolaos and his initiation into Christianity by him as a deviation from the Life.²¹ It has also been suggested that the scenes are depicted out of order.²²

The fifth scene (fig. 12), mistakenly inscribed "*the saint killing the snake*", depicts Pantoleon showing Hermolaos the snake which he has already killed, when the latter asks him to do it as a token of his faith in preparation for baptism. This episode is absent both from the Encomium written by Niketas David the Paphlagonian and from the Life compiled in honour of St Panteleimon by Symeon Metaphrastes. Linking this with other iconographical details indicates that the painter was following either the Passio A, that is the Life entitled "*Martyrion of the holy and glorious great martyr Panteleimon*" (*Μαρτύριον τοῦ*



Fig. 9. The vita icon of St Panteleimon. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).



Fig. 10. Pantoleon meets Hermolaos. The first scene in the cycle on the vita icon of St Panteleimon. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

Fig. 11. Hermolaos inducts Pantoleon into the Christian faith. The second scene in the cycle on the vita icon of St Panteleimon. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

ἄγιον καὶ ἐνδόξον μεγαλομάρτυρος Παντελεήμονος], which has come down to us in the eleventh-century Moscow codex 161 (Vladimir 379) ff. 135-45, ed. Latysev²³ [BHG 1412z], or John Geometres' *Encomium of the Great Martyr Saint Panteleimon in iambs* [Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν ἅγιον μεγαλομάρτυρα Παντελεήμονα διὰ στίχων ἰαμβικῶν], ed. Sternbach²⁴ [BHG 1415], which depends to a large extent on the Passio A.

The episodes in the cycle follow the sequence established in the above mentioned texts, except for the scene at the bottom of the right-hand column, which should be in the place occupied by the first scene in the bottom row. The artist has intentionally switched the places of the two scenes purely for reasons of space. The scene with Pantoleon in the stadium needs a tall space, whereas the scene where Pantoleon is being thrown into the sea requires breadth. The pictorial organization of these two scenes does not allow them to be placed in the correct positions: the first one could not be fitted into the horizontal space, while the second would not fit into a vertical space.

The episode of the idols' destruction depicted in the eighth scene shows Pantoleon instead of his father Eustorgios. According to the vita it was Eustorgios who destroyed the idols after having witnessed his son healing the blind man, the episode depicted in the seventh scene. The artist most probably copied an older painting but did not interpret it correctly and replaced Eustorgios' figure with Pantoleon's.

The episodes which make up the cycle of St Panteleimon on the Sinai icon correspond to the following passages from the Vladimir cod. 379 (Passio A) and the metrical encomium by John Geometres:

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. Pantoleon meets Hermolaos (Passio A § 2 p. 40.25-30 = John Geometres ll. 79-83) (fig. 10).

2nd scene. Hermolaos teaches Pantoleon about the Christian faith (Passio A § 2 p. 41.2-25 = John Geometres ll. 166-73) (fig. 11).

3rd scene. Pantoleon prays for the child to be revived (Passio A § 4 p. 42.1-9 = John Geometres ll. 174-96).

4th scene. Pantoleon resurrects the child (Passio A § 4 p. 42.9-10 = John Geometres ll. 197-207).

Vertical sides:

Left, 5th scene. Pantoleon shows Hermolaos the dead snake (Passio A § 4 p. 42.18-22 = John Geometres ll. 220-29) (fig. 12).



Fig. 12. Pantoleon shows Hermolaos the dead snake. The fifth scene in the cycle on the vita icon of St Panteleimon. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).



Fig. 13. The vita icon of St George. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

Right, 6th scene. Baptism of Pantoleon (Passio A § 5 p. 42.23-4 = John Geometres ll. 246-50).

Left, 7th scene. Pantoleon heals the blind man (Passio A § 7 p. 44.2-8 = John Geometres ll. 410-20).

Right, 8th scene. Pantoleon destroys the idols (Passio A § 6 p. 44.18-19 = John Geometres ll. 421-25).

Left, 9th scene. Pantoleon heals the paralytic (Passio A § 14 p. 47.2-4 = John Geometres ll. 668-70).

Right, 10th scene. Pantoleon burnt with torches (Passio A § 16 p. 47.27-8 = John Geometres ll. 735-43).

Left, 11th scene. Pantoleon in the boiling cauldron (Passio A § 17 p. 48.11-26 = John Geometres ll. 785-809).

Right, 12th scene. Pantoleon in the arena with the wild animals (Passio A § 20 p. 49.25-30 = John Geometres ll. 845-53).

Bottom row [l-r]:

13th scene. Pantoleon is thrown into the sea (Passio A § 18 p. 48.30-5 = John Geometres ll. 825-27).

14th scene. Pantoleon is saved while the executioners are crushed by the wheel (Passio A § 22 p. 50.19-22 = John Geometres ll. 883-89).

15th scene. Beheading of Panteleimon (Passio A § 26 p. 52.16-33 = John Geometres ll. 1030-33).

16th scene. Burial of Panteleimon (Passio A § 28 p. 53.9-13 = John Geometres ll. 1034-35).

4. *The vita icon of St George* from St Catherine's, Sinai has fourteen scenes around the central figure of the saint, each scene accompanied by an inscription (fig. 13).²⁵ It was commissioned by the monk Poimen, who is depicted in the central part of the icon in an attitude of prayer at the feet of the full-length figure of St George (fig. 14). The icon, which is now covered in several layers of varnish, was originally dated by the Soririous to the fifteenth century and, more recently by Doula Mouriki, to the thirteenth century.²⁶ This earlier dating is supported by certain iconographic elements which are found in 'crusader' icons from the second half of the thirteenth century. The narrative begins on the left-hand side of the top row with the saint distributing his wealth to the poor and continues first down the right-hand side and then the left, ending at the right-hand end of the bottom row with the saint's burial.

It is possible to identify the text which the life-cycle of St George on the Sinai icon is following on the basis of three episodes: the saint's ordeal by iron nails, depicted



Fig. 14. The monk Poimen, donor of the vita icon of St George. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

in the third scene (fig. 15), the trial by burning torches, depicted in the ninth scene (fig. 16) and the burial of the saint in the fourteenth scene (fig. 17) which ends the cycle. These three episodes are not contained in the so-called Normaltext²⁷ or in the Life written by Niketas David the Paphlagonian,²⁸ nor in the Life which Symeon Metaphrastes included in his Menologion.²⁹ But they are commemorated in the Life entitled: "*Martyrion of the glorious saint and great martyr George*" (*Μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐνδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου*), written in the tenth century by Theodore Daphnopates and preserved in two twelfth-century manuscripts, Par. Gr. 1529 ff. 184^v-208^r, ed. Krumbacher³⁰ [BHG 673] and Par. Gr. 1178 ff. 171^v-196^r, ed. Latysev³¹ [BHG 674].

All the episodes in the cycle are arranged in the same sequence as in Daphnopates' narrative except for the scene of the trial by burning torches which is the ninth scene in the cycle. According to the Daphnopates text, this ordeal follows the two miracles, the Raising of Tobit and the Raising of Glykerios' bull, depicted in tenth and eleventh place respectively, and before the destruction of the idols, which is depicted in twelfth place. The ordeal by burning torches has been put in this place deliberately (that is, before the two miracles which according to the Life preceded it) so as to complete the section with the ordeals and follow it up with the section made up of the three miracles.

The scenes in the life-cycle of St George on the Sinai



Fig. 15. Left: The ordeal by iron nails. Right: George being stoned in prison. The third and fourth scenes in the cycle on the vita icon of St George. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

icon correspond to the following passages in Daphnophates's text:

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. George distributes his wealth to the poor (Krumbacher p. 62.1-3 = Latysev § 8 p. 6.18-20).

2nd scene. George debating with Diocletian (Krumbacher p. 63.1-36 = Latysev § 8-11 p. 6-10).

3rd scene. George scourged with iron nails (Krumbacher p. 64.11-12 = Latysev § 13 p. 10.26-27) (fig. 15).

4th scene. George being stoned in prison (Krumbacher p. 64.14-22 = Latysev § 13 p. 10.30-11.2) (fig. 15).

Right-hand side [top to bottom]:

5th scene. George on the wheel (Krumbacher p. 64.34-65.6 = Latysev § 15 p. 11.26-12.12).

6th scene. George saved by an angel (Krumbacher p. 65.7-22 = Latysev § 16 p. 12.27-29).

7th scene. George in the lime pit (Krumbacher p. 66.37-67.10 = Latysev § 21 p. 15.19-22).

Left-hand side [top to bottom]:

8th scene. George scourged with whips (Krumbacher p. 69.10-11 = Latysev § 28 p. 19.28-29) (fig. 16).

9th scene. George burnt with lighted torches (Krum-

bacher p. 74.11-12 = Latysev § 42 p. 29.21-24) (fig. 16).

10th scene. The raising of Tobit (Krumbacher p. 69.13-70.5, esp. p. 69.28-70.5 = Latysev § 29 p. 20.26-21.11).

Bottom row [l-r]:

11th scene. The raising of Glykerios' ox (Krumbacher p. 70.26-71.4 = Latysev § 32 p. 22.18-23.12).

12th scene. George destroys the idols (Krumbacher p. 75.13-40, especially p. 75.35-40 = Latysev § 47 p. 32.8-27).

13th scene. Beheading of George (Krumbacher p. 77.35-6 = Latysev § 54 p. 36.22-24).

14th scene. Burial of George (Krumbacher p. 77.37-40 = Latysev § 54 p. 36.24-30) (fig. 17).

5. *The vita icon of St Prokopios* kept in the Patriarchate in Jerusalem is traditionally thought to have come from the alleged tomb of the saint in St Prokopios' church in Deir Abu Thor² (fig. 18). The life-cycle around the central figure of the saint consists of seventeen episodes from his life. The narrative begins at the top left-hand side (i.e. the beginning of the top row) with Diocletian bestowing on Neanias (Prokopios) the title of Duke of Alexandria,



Fig. 16. Up: George scourged with whips. Down: The ordeal by lighted torches. The eighth and ninth scenes in the cycle on the vita icon of St George. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).



Fig. 17. The burial of St George. The final scene in the cycle on the vita icon of St George. Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery (photo: Sp. Panayiotopoulos).

in which capacity he appears in the next nine scenes, and ends with the burial of the saint in the lower right-hand corner (i.e. at the end of the bottom row). The transition from the first part of the cycle, in which the saint is shown as Neanias, to the second, in which the saint appears as Prokopios comes in the eleventh scene and subsequent scenes develop the theme of his by now supernatural powers. Apart from the burial scene, which is inscribed "The Dormition" [Η ΚΗΜΙΧΗC], none of the scenes have inscriptions. Only the figure of the saint is accompanied by an inscription: "Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΣ" [Saint Prokopios]. The depiction of the ciborium of the Saint Sepulchre over the saint's tomb in the scene of his burial suggests that the artist saw this as a way of showing that the martyr's tomb was in Jerusalem;³³ according to tradition, the vita icon of Prokopios was placed next to his tomb.

All seventeen scenes in the cycle are in chronological order and correspond to the Life of the saint entitled "Martyrion of the holy and glorious martyr Prokopios" [Μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐνδόξου μάρτυρος Προκοπίου] preserved in the tenth-century codex Par. Gr. 1447 ff. 269-88, ed. Halkin³⁴ [BHG 1577d] and in the Life entitled "Life and Martyrion of St Prokopios and his disciples"



Fig. 18. The vita icon of St Prokopios. Jerusalem, Orthodox Patriarchate.

[*Βίος και μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου Προκοπίου καὶ τῶν συν ἀντιᾶ*], which has come down to us in the manuscript from the Athonite Vatopedi Monastery, Vatopedi 79, ff. 195-207, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus³⁰ [BHG 1577], also dated to the tenth century.

The life-cycle of St Prokopios on the Jerusalem icon is read in the following sequence: top row, right-hand side, left-hand side, bottom row. The episodes depicted correspond to the following passages in the two Lives.

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. Neanias receives the title of Duke of Alexandria from the Emperor Diocletian (Halkin § 2 p. 97.9-38 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 2 p. 3.1-20).

2nd scene. Christ appears to Neanias and shows him the symbol of the Cross with which he will conquer the unbelievers (Halkin § 4 p. 99-100.1-33 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 3 p. 4.19-30 and p. 5.1-17).

3rd scene. Neanias receives from the silversmith Markos the cross which he has asked him to make (Halkin § 5 p. 100-1.1-16 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 4 p. 5.20-30 and p. 6.1-28).

4th scene. Neanias is told about the infidel raids by the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Halkin § 6 p. 102.1-17 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 5 p. 7.2-9).

Right-hand side [top to bottom]:

5th scene. Neanias drives out the infidels (Halkin § 6 p. 103.14-30 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 5 p. 7.13-20).

6th scene. Neanias defends his faith to his mother Theodosia (Halkin § 7 p. 103.1-18 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 6 p. 7.24-30 and p. 8, 1-16).

7th scene. Theodosia betrays her son to Diocletian (Halkin § 7 p. 104.25-32 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 6 p. 8.17-24).

8th scene. Neanias' ordeal at the stake (Halkin § 9 p. 106.8-13 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 7 p. 10.12-15).

Left-hand side [top to bottom]:

9th scene. Neanias led to prison (Halkin § 9 p. 107.29-35 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 7 p. 10. 29-30).

10th scene. Christ visits Neanias in prison (10th and 11th scenes, Halkin § 10 p. 107-9.1-55 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 8 p. 11.4-29 and p. 12.1-5).

11th scene. Neanias led by an angel. The creator of the iconographic cycle, inspired by the story in the previous scene with Christ and the angels appearing in the prison, created this scene, probably wishing to show that after his baptism Neanias is introduced by the angel to an alto-

gether new state of affairs: sanctity.

12th scene. Prokopios 'dissolves' the idols in the temple (turning them to water) (Halkin § 11 p. 110.13-17 and § 12 p. 112.40-4 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 9 p. 12.28-9, p. 13.1-29 and p. 14.1-28).

Bottom row [l-r]:

13th scene. The soldier Archelaos dies attempting to kill Prokopios (Halkin § 22 p. 125.1-6 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 14 p. 21.8-15).

14th scene. Prokopios' ordeal at the altar (Halkin § 23 p. 127, 24-35 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 16 p. 23.23-31 and p. 24.1-4).

15th scene. Prokopios is led to the lighted furnace (Halkin § 24 p. 128.5-8 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 17 p. 24.22-30).

16th scene. Beheading of Prokopios (Halkin § 25 p. 130.35-7 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 19 p. 27.4-8).

17th scene. Burial of Prokopios (Halkin § 25 p. 130.37-40 = Papadopoulos-Kerameus § 19 p. 27.8-9).

6. *The vita icon of the Apostle Philip* is in the eponymous church in Arsos, Cyprus, where part of the saint's relics are preserved.³⁶ This is the largest extant vita icon in the group I am presenting in this study (fig. 19).³⁷ The life-cycle around the figure of the apostle is made up of eighteen scenes. The first scene depicts the conversion of Philip by Jesus (fig. 20). After that, the cycle includes Philip's apostolic mission to Asia, on which he was accompanied by his sister Mariamne and the apostle Bartholomew, the martyrdoms of the two apostles and finally Philip's burial (Fig. 21). In ten episodes of the cycle Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne are accompanied by the kid and the leopard in accordance with Acts VIII (Acta Philippi, ed. Bonnet § 94-101 pp. 36-39 and ed. Bovon *et. al.* § 16-21 pp. 266-274) (figs 22-25).

The holy personages are distinguished from other figures in the scenes not only by haloes but also by the more elaborate modelling of the faces. The inscriptions on the scenes are misspelt, as is the inscription accompanying the central figure. In the first scene the apostle is accompanied by the inscription: "Ο ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ" [Saint Philip]. This is intentional so that, in the subsequent scenes where he appears with Bartholomew, he can be differentiated from the latter on the basis of what he is wearing in the first scene and by the facial features he is given there. Due to their relatively large dimensions, the



Fig. 19. The vita icon of the Apostle Philip. Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.*

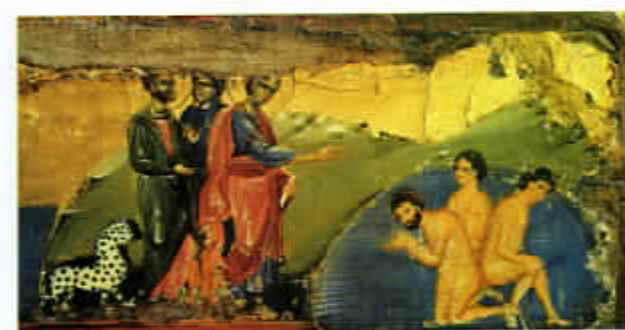


Fig. 20. The conversion of Philip by Jesus. The first scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Apostle Philip, Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.

Fig. 21. The burial of Philip. The eighteenth and final scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Apostle Philip, Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.

Fig. 22. Philip baptizes the ship's crew. The fourth scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Apostle Philip, Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.



Fig. 23. Philip debating with the Jewish High Priest Annas. The ninth scene in the cycle of the vita icon of the Apostle Philip, Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.

scenes surrounding the central figure are better executed than in other vita icons of the period.

The cycle begins on the left-hand side of the top row and finishes at the end (i.e. the right-hand side) of the bottom row. The scenes in the top and bottom rows follow a frieze-like progression, while the scenes on the vertical sides of the frame are arranged in opposing pairs around the central axis of the icon and read from left to right and top to bottom.

It is one of the most problematic cycles, both as regards identifying the episodes, and in terms of overall reading, mainly because the episodes come from the Apocryphal



Fig. 24. Philip traps the Jewish High Priest Annas in the earth and then plunges him into the underworld. The twelfth scene on the vita icon of the Apostle Philip. Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.



Fig. 25. Philip heals the blind Stachys. The fourteenth scene in the cycle on the vita icon of the Apostle Philip. Cyprus, Arsos, Church of Ayios Filippos.

Acts of Philip, but the time sequence they follow in the icon is completely different from that in the Acts.

The solution to the problem of how to read the cycle lies in the Abridged Version of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostle contained in the eleventh-century codex Mosquensis 161 (Vladimir 379) and in the fourteenth-century Par. Gr. 1551 [BHG 1528], partly edited by M. Bonner, entitled: *“On the Life and Miracles of the Martyr and Saint and celebrated Apostle Philip, one of the twelve apostles”* [Ἐπισημάνματα περὶ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῶν θαυμάτων καὶ τοῦ μαρτυρίου τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ πανευφήμου ἀποστόλου Φιλίππου ἐνὸς τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων].²⁸ In this text the

events which have been selected follow a different order from that in the original text of the Apocryphal Acts; and this sequence corresponds exactly with the order in which the episodes are arranged in the cycle on the vita icon.²⁹

It is also worth noting that, while in the text the narrative ends with the burial of Philip followed by the martyrdom of Bartholomew, the artist deliberately inverted the order of the last two episodes, thus ensuring that the cycle would end with the protagonist of the cycle, Philip. And in the last scene the apostle is depicted bound with bands of a dark blue colour and not white. This corresponds with the text, which mentions that he asked to be bound not in

white, like Christ, but in Syrian (blue) linen (fig. 21).

The episodes in the cycle of the Apostle Philip on the Arsos icon correspond to the following passages from the manuscript Par. Gr. 1551 (the text of the Moscow manuscript is unpublished).

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. Philip is converted by Jesus⁴⁰ (Bonnet p. 91.6-7) (fig. 20).

2nd scene. Philip raises the dead son of the Galilean widow⁴¹ (Bonnet p. 92.3-9).

3rd scene. Philip saves the ship from the storm during the voyage to Azotos⁴² (Bonnet p. 92.21-35).

4th scene. Philip baptizes the ship's crew⁴³ (Bonnet p. 92.38-40) (fig. 22).

Vertical sides:

Left, 5th scene. Philip heals the leprosy on Theokleia's face in Azotos⁴⁴ (Bonnet p. 93.15-19).

Right, 6th scene. Philip heals the paralysed hand of the servant of Ireos in Nikatera⁴⁵ (Bonnet p. 93.40-2).

Left, 7th scene. Philip heals the demoniacs⁴⁶ (Bonnet p. 95.12-21).

Right, 8th scene. Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne are persecuted by the Jews⁴⁷ (Bonnet p. 95.32-8).

Left, 9th scene. Philip speaking with the Chief Priest Annas⁴⁸ (Bonnet p. 96.6-45) (fig. 23).

Right, 10th scene. Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne are imprisoned by the Jews⁴⁹ (Bonnet p. 95.32-8).

Left, 11th scene. Philip raises the dead man⁵⁰ (Bonnet p. 98.9-12, 28-30).

Right, 12th scene. The burying of the Jewish Chief Priest Annas in the earth and his final plunging into the underworld by Philip⁵¹ (Bonnet p. 98.13-28) (fig. 24).

Left, 13th scene. Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne enter Hierapolis (Ophioryme)⁵² (Acta Philippi XIII, eds Bovon *et. al.* § 3 p. 313.1-4).

Right, 14th scene. Philip heals the eyes of the believer Stachys in Hierapolis⁵³ (Acta Philippi XIV, eds Bovon *et. al.* § 6 p. 327.1-21) (fig. 25).

Bottom row [l-r]:

15th scene. Imprisonment of Philip, Bartholomew and Mariamne in the Temple of the Viper in Hierapolis⁵⁴ (Bonnet § 122 [16] pp. 50-51).

16th scene. Martyrdom of Philip⁵⁵ (Bonnet § 125 pp. 54-55 and § 140 p. 73).

17th scene. Crucifixion of Bartholomew⁵⁶ (Bonnet § 137 p. 69).

18th scene. Burial of Philip⁵⁷ (Bonnet § 146 pp. 87-88) (fig. 21).

7. *The vita icon of St Marina* comes from the church dedicated to St Marina in Kyperounda, Cyprus⁵⁸ (fig. 26). According to the dedicatory inscription on the lower right-hand side of the central panel by St Marina's feet, the icon was made on the instructions of a monk called Markos.

The life-cycle around the central figure of the saint contains twelve episodes from her life. The narration begins in the top left-hand corner of the frame with the saint's meeting with the governor Olybrios, continuing across the top and down the right-hand side, then down the left, finishing at the right-hand end of the bottom row with the beheading of the saint. The four episodes in the cycle which take place in the prison and depict the appearance of the demon and his downfall (scenes 5, 6, 7 and 8) are not included in the saint's Life written by Niketas David the Paphlagonian in the tenth century,⁵⁹ nor in the text of the Life contained in the eleventh-century imperial Menologion.⁶⁰ However, these episodes are included in the Life entitled *Martyrion of the Holy and Glorious Martyr Marina* [*Μαρτύριον τῆς ἁγίας ναυρωδῶζον μάρτυρος Μαρίνης*] [BHG 1165] published by H. Usener.⁶¹ The twelve episodes of the life-cycle of St Marina correspond to the following passages from this Life:

Top row [l-r]:

1st scene. The meeting between Marina and the governor Olybrios (Usener p. 17.4-16).

2nd scene. Marina before Olybrios⁶² (Usener p. 18.34-19.10, or p. 19.14-21.12).

3rd scene. The scourging of Marina⁶³ (Usener p. 21.13-16).

Right-hand side [top to bottom]:

4th scene. Marina scraped with iron meat-hooks⁶⁴ (Usener p. 22.8-10 or p. 23.23-26).

5th scene. Marina in prison and the appearance of the dragon (Usener p. 23.36-24.18).

6th scene. Marina emerging from the mouth of the dragon (Usener p. 27.13-15).

Left-hand side [top to bottom]:

7th scene. The death of the dragon and the appearance of the demon (Usener p. 27.16-19).

8th scene. The demon is denounced and annihilated (Usener p. 29.13-30.16 and p. 36.35-40).

9th scene. Marina burned with torches (Usener p. 37.19-21).