

OUT of the great wealth of icons in Saint Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai about one hundred were selected, after the erection of a modern wing against the south wall, for a permanent home in a special room, marked "Picture Gallery." About twenty of them, by reason of their small size, early origin, high quality, or endangered condition of preservation, are exhibited in a glass

Reprinted with permission from *Cahiers Archéologiques*, XI (1960), pp. 163-184.

¹ I wish to express my sincere thanks to His Eminence, Archbishop Porphyrios III, his learned secretary, the Archimandrite Gregorios, and the late Pater Christophoros, the skevophylax and librarian, for their continuous support of the expedition organized by the universities of Michigan, Princeton, and Alexandria in the summer of 1958, whose investigations included the study of the icons. This will be the first publication of several essays on individual icons prior to their more comprehensive publication. [See subsequent publications by Weitzmann: "Thirteenth-Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai," *Art Bulletin*, 45 (1963), 179 ff.; "Fragments of an Early St. Nicholas Triptych on Mount Sinai," *Deltion Archaïologikēs Hetaireios*, 4th ser., 4 (1964), 1 ff.; "Eine Spätkommenische Verkündigungssikone des Sinai und die zweite byzantinische Welle des 12. Jahrhunderts," *Festschrift für Herbert von Einem zum 16. Februar 1965* (Berlin, 1965), pp. 299 ff.; "Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone des Sinai mit der Darstellung des Chairete," *Tortulae. Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten*, 30 (1966), 317 ff.; "An Encaustic Icon with the Prophet Elijah at Mount Sinai," *Mélanges offerts à K. Michalowski* (Warsaw, 1966), pp. 713 ff.; "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 20 (1966), 49 ff.; and "Byzantine Miniature and Icon Painting in the Eleventh Century," *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Oxford. 5-10 September 1966* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 207 ff., reprinted herewith, pp. 271 ff.]

case, and one of these is the icon which is the subject of the present study (Fig. 210).¹ It was first published by George and Maria Sotiriou in their recent book on the icons of Mount Sinai, in which an essential part of this extraordinary collection was made known for the first time. Here they proposed for the icon under consideration a date in the late ninth century and a localization in Edessa.²

It is divided into two zones, the upper of which, being higher and thus more important than the lower, depicts at the left the apostle Thaddaeus (Fig. 211) seated on a throne with a simple, draped back and with his name inscribed in red letters on the gold ground.³ He is dressed in a white tunic with a purple clavus and a white mantle, and his youthful head is directed toward the center just like that of King Abgarus opposite him (Fig. 212), whose identity is likewise established by an inscription. Dressed in a dark blue tunic and a chestnut-colored mantle, he sits on a throne of similar shape but with a more prominently displayed cushion. His dignified head is marked by a rather long and full beard and the Byzantine imperial crown with the pendulia, and on his feet he wears the pearl-studded purple shoes which are the prerogative of the Byzantine emperor. In his hands he prominently displays the Mandylion,

² G. and M. Sotiriou, *Icones du Mont Sinai* (Athens, 1956-58), 1: figs. 34-36, 2: 49-51.

³ [A color reproduction of the Thaddeus wing is to be found in Weitzmann, "Sinai Peninsula. Icon Painting from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century," in *A Treasury of Icons* (contributions by K. Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, K. Miatev, and S. Radojčić (New York, 1967)), pl. 11.]

Fig. 210 *Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's. Icon.*
Abgarus Story and Saints

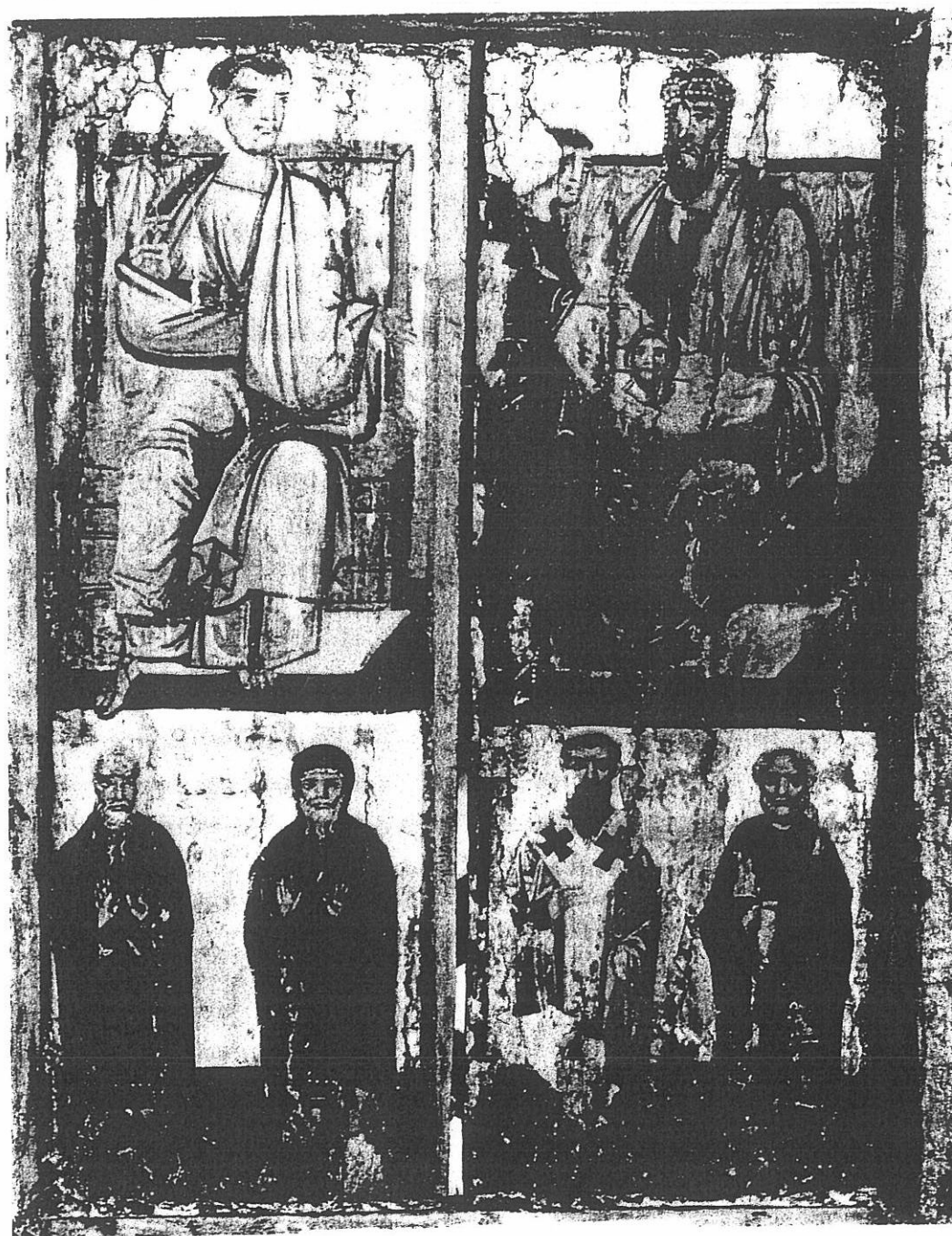


Fig. 211 *Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's. Icon. Abgarus Story and Saints (det. of Apostle Thaddaeus)*



Fig. 212 *Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's. Icon. Abgarus Story and Saints (det. of King Abgarus)*



the holy image of Edessa,⁴ which has just been delivered to him by a messenger in a dark blue garment to whom the name Ananias is given by some sources.⁵ In the lower row (Fig. 213) are

⁴ For the first and comprehensive art historical study of the Mandyliion consult A. Grabar, *La Sainte Face de Laon, le Mandyliion dans l'Art orthodoxe* (Prague, 1931). [Most recently, C. Bertelli, "Storia e vicende dell'Immagine Edissena di San Silvestro in Capite a Roma," *Paragone*, 217 (1968), 3 ff.]

⁵ The fullest account of the Abgarus legend, its various versions and critical evaluation, is given by E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder, Untersuchungen zur Christlichen Legende* (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 102 ff., 158* ff., 29** ff.

four standing saints: three are monks in light brown and chestnut-colored garb of whom the two at the left, inscribed Paul of Thebes and Antonios, wear, in addition, the so-called megaloschema, while the third at the extreme right, inscribed Ephraim the Syrian, holds a huge codex just like his neighbor Basil, the founder of organized Greek monasticism, who is depicted in bishop's vestments. The surface of the icon, particularly around the edges, is somewhat damaged through flaking, but there are no restorations—save for a slightly discoloring varnish.

Fig. 213 Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's. Icon. Abgarus Story and Saints. (det. of Four Monastic Saints)



The icon is set into a broad frame which, as the Sotirious have already noticed, is worked separately.⁶ In good Middle-Byzantine icons picture area and frame are as a rule worked in one piece, and the present frame of this icon is obviously of a rather recent date. If the frame were removed, one would immediately realize that the icon is made up of two separate vertical panels of equal size and, moreover, that these are two wings, apparently from a triptych. Unfortunately they are so tightly set in the frame that one cannot see the edges and analyze the mechanism by which the wings were once connected with the now-lost central plaque. Yet there are other triptych wings in the Sinai collec-

⁶ With the frame the icon measures 34.5 × 25.2 cm and each of the two vertical panels of the icon proper 28 × 9.5 cm.

tion that give the clue. There is a pair with the standing figures of Peter, Paul, John Chrysostom, and Nicholas which the Sotirious with good reason date as early as the seventh/eighth century.⁷ This, too, is set in a modern frame of which the lower part, however, is lost, laying bare the lower edges of the wings.

⁷ *Sotiriou, Icones*, 1, pls. 21, 23 and color pl. III; 2: 36 ff. For other examples of very early triptych wings consult O. Wulff and M. Alpatoff, *Denkmäler der Ikonenmalerei* (Dresden, 1925), p. 15, fig. 5 and p. 32, fig. 13. A painted wing found in Dura and depicting a Victory proves the existence of such triptychs in classical antiquity. See M. J. Rostovtzeff and P. V. C. Bauer, "Victory on a Painted Panel found at Dura," in *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the Second Season of Work* (New Haven, 1931), pp. 181 ff. and frontispiece and pl. I. Another panel from Berlin is reproduced here on pl. XXII.

Here one sees in the corners protruding pegs, made to fit holes in horizontal strips that were worked separately and nailed upon the top and bottom frame of the central panel. In this way the wings could be turned in front of the central panel instead of alongside it. This is exactly the mechanism common in Byzantine ivories that are contemporary with the Abgarus icon, a mechanism which because of its fragility and apparent impracticality has survived intact in only two instances.⁸

Aside from the narrow, high format, the organization in two superimposed scenes is also typical of triptych wings, as can be seen in a great number of Byzantine ivories. Most commonly they are filled with frontally standing saints, similar to those that occupy the lower zone of the Sinai icon. But how was the missing central part organized? By analogy with the ivories, our richest comparative material as far as contemporary triptychs are concerned, there are two possibilities: either it contained one single subject or it was horizontally divided in the same way as the wings. About the theme of the missing center of the Sinai icon there can be, in our opinion, little doubt: it must have contained a depiction of the Mandylion, the holy image that was not made by human hands—an ἀχειροποίητος. This image exists in a considerable number of copies,⁹ but what did it look like?

Dobschütz assumed¹⁰ that the various representations of the Mandylion, which differ considerably from each other, are ultimately not based on an autopsy of the famous relic, which apparently was very rarely to be seen without its protective cover, but were made on the basis of the legendary texts for the illustration of which the artists, while using earlier models, at the same time depended on the ideal of the Christ head that prevailed in their own time.

In this case one can justifiably assume that the Mandylion which Abgarus holds in his hands is but a miniature version of the bigger one in the lost central plaque. The head of Christ shows a comparatively round face, framed by somewhat loose strands of hair and a rather full, rounded beard. This Christ type is quite comparable to other tenth-century Christ heads,¹¹ while for the original relic, rediscovered in A.D. 544, we would assume quite a different type, i.e., the Syrian-Palestinian type with the pointed beard. The one point which the face of the Mandylion of the icon must have shared with the original is the absolute frontality, though this is a feature, of course, not confined to the Mandylion type of Christ. How the head of Christ began to change under the influence of the style of the time may be seen in eleventh/twelfth century representations of the Mandylion, chiefly

⁸ A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 2 (Berlin, 1930-34), pl. XXVIII, no. 72 (Berlin); pl. LIV, no. 155 (Liverpool).

⁹ Several copies are reproduced by Grabar, *Sainte Face*, pls. I-III, VII.

¹⁰ *Christusbilder*, p. 169.

¹¹ Compare, for example, the Christ head in the narthex of Hagia Sophia, presumably from the time of Leo VI. Reproduced most recently in A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantine. Dossier archéologique* (Paris, 1957), fig. 121.

Fig. 214 Alexandria, Greek Patriarchal Library. Cod. 35, p. 286. Mandylion



did not exist in the holy image. This, then, would be yet another indication that our pictorial representations are not based on a familiarity with the great relic kept in the imperial palace church.

Assuming, then, a representation of a Mandylion like that in King Abgarus' hands as the subject of the lost central panel of the triptych, we come back to the question: did it occupy the whole panel or simply the larger, upper half? While neither of the two possibilities can be discarded in principle, nevertheless we prefer the second alternative, because the Mandylion, normally, has a shape that is wider than it is high and, therefore, would better fit a two-part central panel. Moreover, Thaddaeus and Abgarus are both turning toward something between them, whereas the standing saints show no such orientation.

If the second alternative is accepted, then one has to raise the question as to the most likely subject in the narrower, lower strip of the central panel. In our opinion there can be little doubt that here were depicted other standing saints, four or rather five in number, in similar, frontal positions, thus giving an effect of a rhythmic alignment comparable to that in the three most splendid ivory triptychs of the tenth century.¹⁴ Yet, in spite of this similar, formal arrangement, the iconography must have been different from that of the ivories. The latter have an abbreviated set of Apostles, five in number, who form a liturgical unity with the Deesis above and with the other saints on the wings, illustrating

miniatures,¹² including the one of a hitherto unpublished eleventh-century menologion in the Greek Patriarchal Library of Alexandria (Fig. 214).¹³ All of them depict a more ascetic type with leaner cheeks and a more pointed beard, in conformity with the stylistic tendencies and general concepts of these centuries. At the same time what these miniatures have in common with the image on the icon is the accentuated line which sets off the neck from the collar of the tunic, a feature which, presumably,

¹² For example, in Vatican cod. Rossianus 251. J. R. Martin, *The Illustration of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus* (Princeton, 1954), p. 110 and pl. LXXXIV, no. 231; Grabar, *Iconoclasm*, p. 20 and fig. 67.

¹³ T. D. Moschonas, *Κατάλογοι τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης* (Alexandria, 1945), I Χειρόγραφα, 51-54.

¹⁴ Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, pl. X, no. 31 (Rome, Palazzo di Venezia); XI-XII, no. 32 (Vatican, Museo Cristiano); XIII, no. 33 (Paris, Louvre).

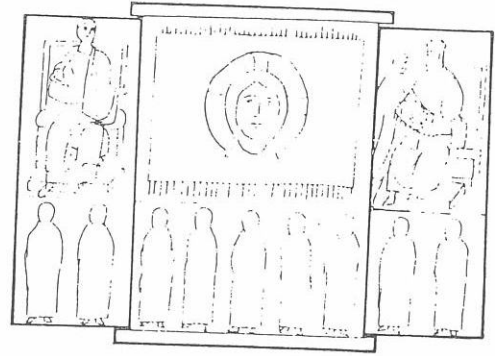
the prayer of intercession of the Greek liturgy.¹⁵ For the lost center of the Sinai icon we propose, instead, the depiction of other Church fathers. The main reason is the presence of Basil who, whenever grouped with other saints in Middle Byzantine art, usually appears together with John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus. Who the other two or three missing saints were—most likely bishops—is difficult to say. Nicholas is a very likely choice, but any additional suggestion must appear arbitrary. A rough sketch (Fig. 215) may help to visualize the general impression of the reconstructed triptych.

Such an arrangement of saints drawn up in a row with the Church fathers in the center and the monastic saints flanking them has its parallels in miniature painting. There is in the splendid lectionary in Dionysiu on Mount Athos (cod. 587) from the eleventh century a picture (Fig. 216)¹⁶ in which five Church fathers—the four in the front row clearly identifiable as Basil, Nicholas, John Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzus and the fifth, placed in the second row, most likely as Gregory of Nyssa—are flanked by monastic saints with crosses of martyrdom. Unfortunately the specific meaning of this miniature is not quite clear since it heads the lection of the Sunday before Christmas the title of

¹⁵ E. H. Kantorowicz, "Ivories and Litanies," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 56 ff.

¹⁶ For this manuscript see Weitzmann, "The Narrative and Liturgical Gospel Illustrations," *New Testament Manuscript Studies*, M. M. Parvis and A. P. Wikgren (eds.) (Chicago, 1950), p. 157 and *passim* (here given as cod. 740, but the more correct signature is 587) [reprinted herewith, pp. 247 ff.].

Fig. 215 Reconstruction of the Sinai Triptych



which, τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων (in other manuscripts given more precisely as τῶν ἁγίων προπατέρων), was apparently misinterpreted by our illustrator as Church fathers rather than as forefathers. Other manuscripts correctly illustrate Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this place.¹⁷ Another picture with an assembly of various saints appears on folio 40^v in the Dionysiu Lectionary as an illustration of All Saints Day, but here Church fathers and monks are joined by a third group, the soldier saints, who are lacking in the first mentioned miniature of the Dionysiu Lectionary and, in all likelihood, were not included in the Sinai icon. There is no point in trying to push the comparison between icon and miniature any further. The purpose of introducing the latter is merely to aid our visual impression of what the Sinai icon must have looked like in its original state and to define the iconographical layout within a larger framework.

¹⁷ As, for instance, in the eleventh-century lectionary in the Vatican (cod. gr. 1156, fol. 273^r).

Fig. 216 *Mount Athos, Dionysiu. Cod. 587, fol. 126^r. Holy Fathers*



NARRATIVE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE ABGARUS LEGEND

The handing over of the Mandylion to King Abgarus by a messenger (Fig. 212) is a storytelling feature which suggests that the icon is dependent on a narrative illustration of the Abgarus legend. It is to be expected that our richest pictorial source for a lengthier depiction of the Abgarus story should be neither frescoes, where it is rare, nor icons, where usually the image of the Mandylion alone occurs, but miniature painting. Here it is important to realize that the stimulus to a rich and diversified literary as well as pictorial narration was provided by the transfer of the famous relic to Constantinople in 944. Shortly thereafter, perhaps for the first anniversary on 16 August 945, or not long thereafter, a feast homily was written which in the titles of many copies, including the menologion of Alexandria (Fig. 214), is attributed to

the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos. Dobschütz, who edited this text, argues that it was not written by the emperor himself but surely by a court cleric under his close supervision.¹⁸ About the same time or shortly thereafter a variant of the story was written for the menaeon, and with these two texts a firm tradition was established now that the bringing of the Mandylion to the capital had become an important calendar feast. Yet while menaea in general are rarely illustrated—no illustration of the Abgarus story is preserved in any of those known to us—there are several Metaphrastian menologia in which the imperial feast homily was incorporated with a set of pictures. In all probability this narrative picture cycle was made for the first publication of the homily or very soon thereafter, i.e., quite likely before the homily was incorporated into the Metaphrastian menologion. Whether this cycle, even in part, harks back to an older Edessene tradition or whether any such tradition existed at all, of which no trace is left,¹⁹ is impossible to say, while on the other hand there is much to be said for the hypothesis that the pictures were made for the new homily for the same purpose as the text itself, namely to propagate the newly established feast.

Aside from the manuscript in Alexandria in which the Mandylion is the only decoration of the feast homily (Fig. 214), there are two more menologia that possess a set of narrative scenes. The one in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale cod. gr. 1528) from about the second

¹⁸ Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, pp. 160 ff. and pp. 39** ff.

¹⁹ Grabar, *Sainte Face*, p. 23.

Fig. 217 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Cod. gr. 1528, fol. 181^v. Abgarus Sends Letter and Christ Teaching



half of the eleventh century²⁰ contains three episodes which, damaged as they are, nevertheless still leave the layout of the compositions clearly recognizable. In the first (Fig. 217) Abgarus, on a sickbed, sends a letter to Christ which he hands over to a messenger. King Abgarus is depicted like a Byzantine

²⁰ H. Omont, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1886-98), 2:80; K. Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 120 ff. and pl. LXI, no. 129.

Fig. 218 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Cod. gr. 1528, fol. 182^r. Baptism of Abgarus



emperor, attended by two court officials in front of a house suggesting the palace and an enclosed garden. All this breathes an air of court setting and court art. In the second, Christ on the throne teaches to a crowd gathered around Him, while the painter with the Mandylion in his outstretched hands stands at a respectful distance. In the third (Fig. 218) Thad- daeus baptizes King Abgarus in a font while a servant—like the angels in Christ's baptism—holds a towel in his covered hands. Another menologion in Moscow (Historical Museum, cod. 382), from the year 1063,²¹ has four scenes

²¹ A. Vladimir, *Sistematicheskoe opisanie rukopisi Moskovskoi Sinodalnoi Biblioteki* (Moscow, 1894), 1:575; *Exempla codicum graecorum*

Fig. 219 Moscow, Historical Museum. Cod. 382, fol. 192^v. Abgarus and Mandylion



litteris minisculis scriptorum, etc. ed. G. Cereteli and S. Sobolevski (Moscow, 1911-13), I, pl. XIX; *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts to the Year 1200*, K. and S. Lake (eds.) (Boston, 1936), 6, pls. 408-11; V. Lazarev, *Istoriia Vizantiiskoi Zhivopisi* (Moscow, 1947), 1, pp. 109 and 313; and 2, pl. 132. I am very grateful to Professor Sirarpie Der Nersessian for giving me permission to publish the photograph she owns of the Moscow miniature.

which are simpler and confined to fewer figures (Fig. 219).²² The first shows once more King Abgarus on the sickbed, sending out the messenger, but there is only one court official and the architectural setting is omitted altogether. In the second, Christ, sitting on a hillock, is writing a letter while the messenger with crossed arms is facing Him, standing in an attentive pose; in the third, the messenger holds the Mandylion enfolded before Christ who sits on a folding chair, surrounded by the citizens of Jerusalem. The fourth, of which no photograph was available, depicts the bringing of the veil to Abgarus (Fig. 220). The Paris and the Moscow manuscripts agree only in the first scene and differ in all subsequent ones. Der Nersessian ascribed these differences to different redactions, but, in our opinion, there is another explanation possible, namely that there existed one archetype with a rather lengthy narrative cycle from which the copyists in Moscow and Paris made different selections, while copying in only one case, at the very beginning, the same episode.

There is evidence for the existence of an archetype with a rather extensive cycle. The Morgan Library in New York possesses a unique scroll (cod. 499)

²² For a discussion of this and related manuscripts see S. Der Nersessian, "La légende d'Abgar d'après un rouleau illustré de la bibliothèque Pierpont Morgan à New York," in *Actes du IV^e Congrès internationale des Études byzantines in Bull. de l'Inst. Arch. Bulgare, X* (1936), p. 105; idem., "The Illustrations of the Metaphrastian Menologium," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert M. Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), p. 229.

Fig. 220 Moscow, Historical Museum. Cod. 382, fol. 192^v. Abgarus and Mandylion



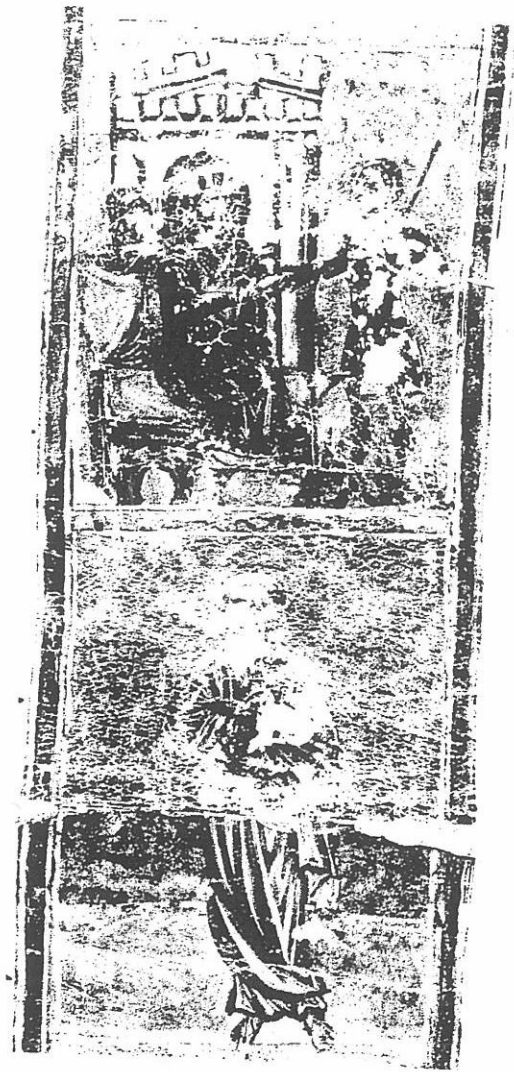
that contains the exchange of letters between Abgarus and Christ concerning the depiction of Christ's face. This text that tells the Abgarus legend in an abbreviated form²³ was written about 1032, the year when this autograph letter of Christ also was sent as a relic to Constantinople.²⁴ In the Morgan scroll this *Epistola Abgari* is illustrated with no less than fourteen miniatures which were first published and discussed *in extenso* by Der Nersessian, who dated the scroll in the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century.²⁵ The cycle begins with a miniature in

²³ E. von Dobschütz, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Abgar und Jesus," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 43 (1900), pp. 422 ff.

²⁴ [Cf. the narrative scenes on the thirteenth/ fourteenth century Byzantine frame in San Silvestro in Capite, Rome. Bertelli, *Imagine Edissena*, figs. 7-11.]

²⁵ Der Nersessian, "Legende d'Abgar."

Fig. 221 New York, Morgan Library. Cod. 499, pict. III. Thaddaeus



which King Abgarus gives the letter destined for Christ to a messenger (Fig. 221) and it ends with the messenger, after his return, handing over the Mandylion to Abgarus (Fig. 222). The former corresponds to the initial miniature in the Moscow and Paris menologia, save that Abgarus in the scroll is sitting on a

Fig. 222 *New York, Morgan Library. Cod. 499, pict. XIV. Abgarus and Mandylion*



bench-like throne and not lying on a sickbed, and the final miniature with the handing-over of the Mandylion has its parallel in the fourth miniature of the Moscow menologion.²⁶ One gets the impression that just as the *Epistola Abgari* is an abbreviation of the lengthier feast homily, so is the miniature cycle, rich as it is, reduced as compared with the archetype behind the Moscow and Paris menologia, since in the *Epistola* there is no place for the Baptism of Abgarus (Fig. 218).

What, then, is the relation between this narrative tradition and the Sinai icon? The scene of the handing-over of the Mandylion to King Abgarus is the very

²⁶ Since I have not seen the manuscript the extent of the agreement of formal details cannot be discussed. [The fourth scene, is herewith reproduced through the courtesy of M. Tschepekina, Fig. 220.]

one with which the cycles of the Moscow menologion and the New York scroll (Figs. 220 and 222) end. There are formal differences which can be explained, however, by the icon-painter's dual purpose of condensing the narrative model into a steeper format that is higher than it is wide and of giving to the main protagonist a more hieratic appearance in conformity with the icon tradition, i.e., of casting a temporal event into forms that suggest greater permanency.

First of all, in order to orient the flanking figures on the triptych wings toward the now missing center, the icon-painter was forced to depict Abgarus in mirror reversal, looking toward the left, whereas in the narrative miniatures he almost always turns to the right, since the action normally moves in that direction. This change of orientation affected the placing of the messenger; in the miniatures he approaches or leaves from the right side, but in the icon he is moved to the opposite side. Furthermore, by reason of the changed format, the artist had to condense the scene and consequently placed the Mandylion, which in the model is held by the messenger, in the hands of Abgarus. The abruptness of this change can still be seen in some rough spots which the artist did not succeed in smoothing over. It will be noticed that Abgarus holds the Mandylion only with the left hand, there being no space left for the right. The hand seen in the upper corner of the Mandylion is that of the messenger; it does not hold the relic but is extended in a gesture of speech and protrudes from an arm that is much too short. The whole figure of the messenger is very tightly

squeezed, because the icon-painter clearly wanted to place the king in the very center of the composition, whereas in the miniature king and messenger balance each other. Still another change, resulting from the same desire for a more iconic effect, is that Abgarus is seated on a throne rather than lying on the sickbed (Fig. 222). But since in the miniature tradition the seated type also occurs at times (Fig. 221), the icon-painter might have been inspired by some such scene of the same cycle. In both miniature and icon, King Abgarus wears the imperial Byzantine crown, in the latter even with the typical pendulia. Yet, since in Byzantine art any king or ruler—biblical, legendary, or historical—may be characterized by the regalia of the Byzantine emperor, no particular significance can be attached to this point.

Opposite King Abgarus we see Thaddaeus (Fig. 211), one of the seventy disciples, who preached in Edessa, according to some tradition, converted Abgarus and the Edessenes to Christianity, and baptized the king, as depicted in the final miniature of the Paris menologion (Fig. 218). He sits on a throne like that of Abgarus, blessing with the right hand and extending the left toward the Mandyliion we believe to have formed the center of the triptych. The forcefulness of the gesture of the left hand, which in comparison to the right one is much too small, makes us believe that it results from the icon-painter's intent to adjust the figure to the present context. The basic concept is that of an author portrait, and originally Thaddaeus may well have held a scroll or a codex in his left hand. An isolated figure of Thaddaeus in the form of an

author portrait exists in the tradition of the narrative cycle and occurs in the Morgan scroll directly after the introductory miniature (Fig. 221). Indeed, here he is depicted holding a codex in his left hand. It is quite conceivable that the icon-painter actually made the alteration from a standing to a seated figure for no other reason than to create a companion figure to King Abgarus enthroned. The idea of such a transformation is supported by the rather weak organic relationship between the upper and the lower parts of the body. The making-up of a human figure from heterogeneous parts is not infrequent in miniature painting of the Macedonian Renaissance. Unfortunately the face of the apostle in the Morgan miniature is badly flaked, but to judge from the scene of Abgarus' baptism (Fig. 218) Thaddaeus was depicted in miniature and icon alike as beardless and very youthful.

Now, if the icon wings depend, indeed, as we have tried to demonstrate, on the narrative tradition as manifested in the illustrated manuscripts, then certain conclusions will have to be drawn which will make a date of the icon in the ninth century and its origin in Edessa highly unlikely. If we are right that the miniature tradition started with the feast homily, attributed to Constantine Porphyrogennetos and written at the earliest in 945, then this would also be the earliest possible date for the icon; furthermore, it would bring all derivative monuments, including the icon, into the orbit of Constantinopolitan art. Yet, the dating and localizing of the Sinai wings should not be based exclusively on their iconographical relation to the miniature tradition but on independent, stylistic evidence.

THE DATE OF THE SINAI ICON

As was said at the beginning, the Sotirious have dated the Sinai icon at the end of the ninth century, i.e., before the Mandylion was brought to Constantinople. They base this date on stylistic similarities with the miniatures of the Cosmas Indicopleustes in the Vatican (cod. gr. 699), the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 510), and the homilies of John Chrysostom in Athens (National Library, cod. 210). But since the date of the latter is controversial and a tenth- rather than a ninth-century origin a high probability,²⁷ the case for a ninth-century date of the icon would have to rest on comparisons with the other two manuscripts, one of which, the Gregory, is dated between 880 and 886, while the other, the Cosmas, appears to be slightly earlier, but not before the second half of the ninth century.

For comparison with the enthroned Abgarus the Sotirious pointed particularly to the figure of Solomon in the Judgment scene of the Paris Gregory.²⁸ In both icon and miniature we deal no doubt with very articulate figures in which the classical heritage of organic body treatment is strongly felt. Yet there are essential differences too. In the Solomon figure the garment clings to the body, revealing the shape of the legs,

²⁷ P. Buberl, *Die Miniaturhandschriften der Nationalbibliothek in Athen* (Vienna, 1917), p. 5, No. 2 and pls. II-III; Weitzmann, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1935), p. 61 and pl. LXVII, 399; pl. LXVIII, 401.

²⁸ H. Omont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale du VI^e au XIV^e siècle* (2d ed.; Paris, 1929), pl. XXXIX.

while in the figure of King Abgarus the garment is slightly billowing, dissociating itself from the body underneath in such a way that the folds gain a greater fluency. It looks as if it were the artist's intention to increase the voluminosity of the figure beyond its corporeal limitations. This tendency is even stronger in the Thaddaeus figure. The motif of the arm in the sling is, of course, a common motif of any classical revival style. But while in many figures of the Paris Gregory an articulated arm appears under the sling of the mantle, in the case of the Thaddaeus the sling is bulging, and the same is even more true for that part of the mantle that falls down from the left shoulder. Here certain tendencies begin to develop which in the later tenth century are again arrested, only to reappear with even greater vigor in the thirteenth century.

The peculiar emphasis or even slight over-emphasis on three-dimensional values, so apparent in the Sinai icon, has its closest parallels in miniature-painting of about the middle of the tenth century. The best representative of this phase is the Gospel book in Stauronikita on Mount Athos (cod. 43) which on the basis of script and ornament can be dated quite precisely at about that time.²⁹ Particularly in the figures of Matthew (Fig. 180) and Mark (Fig. 203), the plasticity of the rounded bodies and the enveloping drapery in which the hard, broken folds (which are so strong in the Paris Gregory, the Vatican Cosmas, and again in illuminated manuscripts from the end of the tenth century) are to a very essential degree eliminated, point-

²⁹ Weitzmann, *Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, pp. 23 ff. and pls. XXX-XXXI.

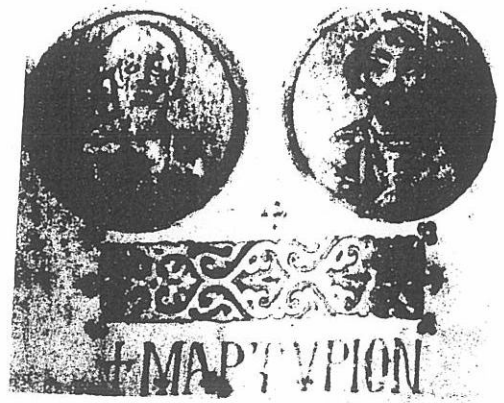
ing, in our opinion, to a date for the Sinai icon not before the middle of the tenth century. As for the exaggerations of the drapery motifs in the icon, one might point to the two miniatures of an Isaiah manuscript in the Vatican (cod. gr. 755) from the second half of the tenth century, one with the standing prophet and the other with the scene of his martyrdom,³⁰ as even closer parallels.

Yet while the figures of Thaddaeus and Abgarus share with the Byzantine miniatures cited above a high degree of plasticity, they are at the same time painted with a broader brushstroke. In this respect they reflect even more strongly the flavor of the classical tradition than the miniatures just quoted, in which linear design counteracts the painterly effects. On occasion, however, one also meets the soft, painterly style in tenth-century miniatures. In the Athos codex Vatopedi 456,³¹ there are two medallion busts of the martyrs Gurias and Samonas (Fig. 223), dressed in very soft blue and red tunics, whose flesh color—light steel-blue and pink—is very smooth without any sharp highlights, as is also the treatment of the hair. This Vatopedi manuscript, on the basis of its script, a rather stylized minuscule, and its ornament, a golden fretsaw ornament on blue ground, can be dated fairly precisely around the

³⁰ A. Muñoz, *I codici greci miniati delle minori biblioteche di Roma* (Florence, 1905), p. 24 and pl. 6; Weitzmann, *Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, p. 12 and pl. XII, no. 62.

³¹ S. Eustratiades and Arcadios, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in the Library of the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mt. Athos* (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), p. 91; Weitzmann, *Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, pp. 20 ff. and pl. XXV, No. 140; XXVI, no. 142.

Fig. 223 Mount Athos, Vatopedi. Cod. 456, fol. 221^r. Gurias and Samonas



middle of the tenth century and localized in Constantinople.³² Thus all our comparisons with Byzantine miniatures suggest for the Sinai icon, from the stylistic point of view, a date not earlier than the middle of the tenth century.

The other problem concerns the suggestion by the Sotirious that the Sinai icon may have been made in Edessa. If this were true then one would have to assume that the classicizing style, typical of Constantinople and so well expressed in the Thaddaeus figure, had spread from the capital to eastern Syria without being blended with East Byzantine local tradition. Since our knowledge of icon-painting of this period is much too fragmentary, some light can be thrown on this problem only by illustrated manuscripts, about which we are somewhat better informed. We introduced

³² In the original layout miniatures were not contemplated, and the few that were added later could only be accommodated in the upper margins. Yet their addition cannot have been made much later since the inscriptions alongside the medallions show a stylized minuscule very similar to that of the text proper.

above the Gospel book *Stauronikita* 43 as the most characteristic Constantinopolitan Renaissance manuscript of the middle of the tenth century. It can be shown that its particular set of evangelist pictures quickly spread into the eastern provinces; a copy made close to the middle of the tenth century is preserved in the lectionary fragment in Leningrad (cod. 21) which may have been made in the region around Trebizond.³³ As closely as these copies of the evangelist portraits follow, iconographically and stylistically, Constantinopolitan models, they also show reflections of a local provincial tradition that is visible in the hardening and linearization of the folds—thus revealing the fading of the classical flavor. Would one not expect in a manuscript made in Edessa, a place still further removed from the capital and, besides, located on Moslem territory, an even stronger infiltration of local and probably even Islamic elements? The evangelist portraits of a Gospel book in Paris (*Bibliothèque Nationale*, cod. gr. 48) help us to envisage what Greek art on Islamic territory was like at this period,³⁴ though admittedly their particular style may reflect only one of many possibilities of interpenetration of Byzantine and Islamic elements.

To illustrate this point I may be permitted a slight deviation for which I find a justification in that it involves a parallel problem relating to Edessa. It concerns the codex *Vatopedi* 456, already introduced (p. 238). Textually it is

³³ Weitzmann, *Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, pp. 59 ff. and pls. LXVI, 392 and LXVII, 398 (here the older bibliography).

³⁴ *Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, p. 72 and pl. LXXXII, 516–517.

affiliated to that group of hagiographical texts which Ehrhard³⁵ called the *fahrespanegyriken*. Of its twenty-seven homilies, twelve are on christological feasts, three on John the Baptist and the remaining twelve on feasts of various saints. Here a marked emphasis is noticeable on the three confessors and martyrs and patron saints of Edessa, Gurias, Samonas, and Abibos, to whom no less than five homilies are dedicated. Moreover, when a few miniatures were added in the upper margins, as already mentioned, they were confined exclusively to the homilies on the Edessene saints, thus giving an even stronger emphasis to this section of the manuscript. The two pre-Metaphrastian texts of the martyrion of Gurias and Samonas³⁶ and of the martyrion of Abibos³⁷ are decorated with bust medallions of the saints, the former with those we have already discussed (Fig. 223) and the latter with that of the youthful deacon Abibos (Fig. 224), who wears a lightly colored gray-white dalmatic with the stole over the left shoulder. The third homily is the encomium of Arethas, archbishop of Caesarea, which deals jointly with all three martyrs³⁸ and is

³⁵ A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche*, 1 (Leipzig, 1938), Vol. IV, 3 ff. Here I found no mention of the *Vatopedi* codex, which has no exact parallel to any of the types described by him.

³⁶ O. von Gebhard and E. von Dobschütz, "Die Akten der Edessenischen Bekenner Gurjas, Samonas und Abibos," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 37 (1911), 2 ff.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 132 ff.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 210 ff.

Fig. 224 Mount Athos, Vatopedi. Cod. 456, fol. 232^v. Abibos



headed by a medallion portrait of the author (Fig. 225) inscribed ὁ μακάριος ὁ πρωτόθρονος.³⁹ It is not only the earliest but, as far as our knowledge goes, the only portrait of this prominent pupil of the great scholar Photios to whom classical scholarship owes so much with regard to the preservation of good classical texts. All the more deplorable is the poor condition of this badly flaked miniature, which shows an aged bishop with pinkish flesh and gray hair and beard—particularly if we realize that Arethas died some time after 932 and that this miniature portrait was made about a generation later, when the memory of his actual features might still have been alive. The fourth homily deals with the miracle⁴⁰ in which the three

³⁹ For the title πρωτόθρονος consult Dom. DuCange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis* (Lyon, 1688), s.v. θρόνος.

⁴⁰ Von Gebhard and von Dobschütz, *Akten der Edessenen Bekenner*, pp. 148 ff.

Fig. 225 Mount Athos, Vatopedi. Cod. 456, fol. 240^r. Arethas



saints, after their death, save an Edessene woman; a captain of the Goths had bigamously married her and later buried her alive in the tomb of his lawful wife, who had been poisoned by the Edessene woman after having first poisoned the latter's son. This dramatic story, which reads like a Greek novel, reaches its climax when the three Edessene saints free the woman from the prison tomb and bring her miraculously back to Edessa and to her mother. This homily likewise has a miniature (Fig. 226) which, however, contains nothing that could be related to the miracle story as just told. It is made up of three ingredients: a procession of clerics, the last of whom is a deacon with pyxis and censer; a little shrine, presumably a reliquary, which the leader of the procession holds in his outstretched hands; and a church building with an entrance at the left and an apse at the right. These are the elements of which representations of a

Fig. 226 Mount Athos, Vatopedi. Cod. 456, fol. 253^r. Translation of Relic



transfer of relics are composed.⁴¹ Now the fifth text, according to the catalogue of the Vatopedi manuscripts, is described as "Translation of the head of Abibos to the monastery of the martyrs Abibos, Gurias and Samonas" and a remark is added that the beginning is missing.⁴² We have been unable to find a reference to such a text in the bibliography about the three saints and it is, perhaps, not printed; but there can be little doubt that the miniature would perfectly fit a text of this description, and that here obviously we have to do with the misplacement of a scene, destined for the fifth homily but erroneously attached to the fourth.

Taking together all the textual and the pictorial evidence, what scholar would not have been tempted to conclude that the Vatopedi manuscript was made in the locality where the cult of the three confessors and martyrs was centered,

⁴¹ See for instance, *Il Menologio di Basilio II: Codex Vaticanus Greco 1613* ("Codices e Vaticanis selecti," 8 [Turin, 1907]), pls. 341, 344, 353, 355.

⁴² Eustratiades and Arcadios, *Greek Manuscripts of Vatopedi*, περί της μεταφορᾶς τῆς κάρας τοῦ μάρτυρος Ἀββίβου εἰς τὴν μονὴν τῶν μαρτύρων Ἀββίβου, Γουρία καὶ Σαμωνᾶ (ἀνευ ἀρχῆς).

i.e., in Edessa? Yet the script, ornament, and style of the miniatures speak, as we have tried to demonstrate, for an origin in Constantinople. There is, of course, still the alternative that the manuscript, while made in the capital, might have been commissioned by and destined for the Church of the Three Confessors in Edessa. There were two establishments in this East Syrian metropolis dedicated to them: one a martyrion of the fourth century on a hill outside the walls, to which a monastery was later added, and the other in the city proper.⁴³ Although such a possibility cannot be excluded entirely, it must at the same time be pointed out that Constantinople also had a chapel dedicated to the three martyrs of Edessa which was located near the forum Constantini,⁴⁴ and as early as 536 there existed in the capital a monastery of Abibos, an establishment of Syrian monks,⁴⁵ and consequently the Vatopedi manuscript could have been made for either one of them. So it seems that the cult of the Edessene martyrs had early taken root in Constantinople and acquired new importance in the tenth century, when, at its beginning, Arethas wrote his homily and when, at

⁴³ Von Gebhard and von Dobschütz, *Akten der Edessenischen Bekenner*, p. LXII; see also A. Baumstark, "Vorjustinianische kirchliche Bauten in Edessa," *Oriens Christianus*, 4 (1904), 171 ff.

⁴⁴ Von Gebhard and von Dobschütz, *Akten der Edessenischen Bekenner*, p. LXII; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, 3 (Paris, 1953), 84.

⁴⁵ As against von Gebhard-von Dobschütz, Janin argues that Abibos is not the martyr of Edessa but rather the name of the founder of a monastery by this name.

its end, Simeon Metaphrastes incorporated the story of the three saints in his hagiographic corpus.

It is perhaps more than mere coincidence that the two great cults of Edessa, that of the Mandylion and that of the three confessor-martyrs, had gained widespread interest in the capital in the tenth century. Of this interest we now possess two almost contemporary pictorial testimonies: one is the Sinai icon and the other is the Vatopedi codex. In the case of the Mandylion the point of departure, as already mentioned, is the bringing of the relic to Constantinople in 944 or, even more precisely, the writing and illustrating of the pseudo-Constantinian feast homily in or shortly after 945. If our dating of the Sinai icon on stylistic grounds not before the middle of the tenth century and its placing within the orbit of the Constantinopolitan style are accepted, then our thesis that the Sinai icon presupposes the narrative picture cycle of the feast homily receives very strong support. But there exists, as we believe, one even more conclusive piece of evidence for linking the Sinai icon with Constantinople and more directly with the imperial court.

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE VII

Comparing the heads of Thaddaeus and Abgarus (Figs. 211 and 212) one will notice a marked difference between them: while that of the former is rather impersonal and would fit other apostles, like Philip or Thomas, quite as well, that of the latter with the impressive beard and pensive look (Fig. 227) shows character and personality and gives the impression of a portrait head. The painter's emphasis on the crown and the

Fig. 227 *Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's. Icon. Abgarus Story and Saints (det. of Head of Abgarus)*



exact rendering of the pendulia with the triple pearls suggest that he actually used an emperor's portrait as model. If he chose what, a priori, seems to be a reasonable assumption, that of the contemporary emperor, it could be, in accordance with the dating of the icon by style, only Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. Pictorial evidence and historical considerations strongly support this identification.

A survey of the coins of this period reveals that only two emperors wore such stately beards, Leo VI the Wise and his son Constantine Porphyrogenetos, i.e., the two litterati on the throne. Within the Middle Byzantine period, Leo was the first to wear this type of long, rounded, and cultivated beard.⁴⁶ But since he is

⁴⁶ W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, 2 (London, 1908), 444 and pl. LI, 8.

Fig. 228 London, British Museum. Solidus.
Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos



too early for this icon and also has no particular connection with the Mandylion, the only alternative is Constantine. The closest parallel is with a solidus (Fig. 228)⁴⁷ which dates within the short period from 27 January to 6 April of the year 945, after he had imprisoned the two young sons of Romanos I, Constantine and Stephen, and before he had made his own young son Romanos II his co-emperor, i.e., the short period during which, at almost forty years of age, he became the sole ruler of the empire. The almost equal length and fullness of the beard compares well with that of Abgarus in the icon.

This very coin in the British Museum led A. Goldschmidt and me to identify as the same personage the portrait of an emperor inscribed Constantine on a Byzantine ivory relief in Moscow (Fig. 229).⁴⁸ It was again the shape of the beard that was decisive in making this identification, which generally seems to

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 462 and pl. LIII, 7.

⁴⁸ Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, p. 35, and pl. XIV, no. 35.

Fig. 229 Moscow, Historical Museum. Ivory.
(det. of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos)



have been accepted.⁴⁹ Seen in three-quarter pose and looking pensively from under heavy brows, the ivory portrait shows an even closer similarity to the emperor head of the Sinai icon. The Moscow ivory depicts Christ placing the crown on the emperor's head, an action symbolizing monarchy as a divine institution. It is generally assumed,⁵⁰ however, that Constantine Porphyrogenetos was crowned in 911 when he

⁴⁹ A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936), p. 116 and pl. XXV, no. 1; H. Peirce and R. Tyler, "Three Byzantine Works of Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 2 (1941), 17 ff. and pl. 18 A.

⁵⁰ S. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (Munich, 1952), p. 209.

was only five years old and when Leo VI, his father, was much interested in having the dynastic succession secured in this manner, i.e., two years before Constantine became emperor in 913 at the age of seven. It is true that a Byzantine emperor, even when crowned as a child, will not be represented as such but as a full-grown man for reasons of great dignity, as can be seen in the coronation ivory of Romanos II and Eudokia in Paris,⁵¹ where they are represented as of mature age, although in reality they were six and four years old. To satisfy the sense of greater dignity the change of size alone would have sufficed, whereas the long beard clearly points to the emperor's advanced age. Actually the close similarity with the London coin suggests that the Moscow ivory, too, was made in the year 945 in order to commemorate not the first coronation of the emperor in his childhood but the event of his sole rulership.⁵²

The comparison of the London coin with the Moscow ivory makes us believe that for the head of King Abgarus not only was a portrait head of Constantine Porphyrogennetos used but the very one which is connected with his sole rulership in the year 945. From the historical point of view one could not wish for a more opportune date. As may be recalled, it was in this or one of the years

⁵¹ Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, pp. 15 ff., 35 and pl. XIV, no. 34.

⁵² The same line of argument, to be sure, must have induced Beckwith to suggest in the catalogue of the Byzantine Exhibition in London (*Masterpieces of Byzantine Art* [London, 1958], p. 33, no. 63) the date ca. 945 for the Moscow plaque. The catalogue of the same exhibition in Edinburgh (p. 32, no. 63) had proposed a date ca. 920.

immediately following that the feast homily dealing with the transfer of the Mandyllion from Edessa to Constantinople and into the palace chapel was written at the instigation of this very emperor. What might have been the reason for the painter to go as far as to equate King Abgarus with the emperor Constantine? Let us recall the historical circumstances under which the transfer of the famous relic took place.

In 944 John Curcuas, the great general of Romanos I, laid siege to the city of Edessa without being able to conquer it. He made a pact with the Emir whereby the Mandyllion was given to the imperial army for a price of 12,000 silver pieces, while the Byzantines returned their Muslim prisoners. In great triumph the relic was brought to Constantinople where it arrived on August 15, the feast day of the Koimesis. So far, every action connected with the transfer of the Mandyllion was made at the initiative of Romanos I Lecapenos, Constantine's energetic and pious co-emperor. Does this, then, not speak against the identification of the emperor on the icon as Constantine and should one not rather expect Romanos to be represented as the receiver of the holy image? In the chronicle of John Scylitzes, of which an illustrated fourteenth-century copy exists in Madrid, there is a miniature (Fig. 230)⁵³ which indeed depicts the historical event of Romanos, followed by the patriarch and other dignitaries, receiving with veiled hands the Mandyllion.

⁵³ Grabar, *Sainte Face*, p. 24 and pl. VI, no. 5.

Fig. 230 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional. Cod. 5.3.N.2, fol. 131^r. Romanos Receiving the Mandylion



A few months after this event, on 16 December, Romanos was dethroned by his two sons, Constantine and Stephen, and imprisoned in the monastery on the island of Prote, only to be followed a few weeks later, on 27 January 945, by the two usurpers themselves whom Constantine Porphyrogenetos had succeeded in expelling, thus achieving finally his independent rulership. Perhaps in the very same year, and very probably for the first anniversary of the Mandylion's transfer to Constantinople, the feast homily celebrating this event was written. While Constantine may not, as some manuscripts claim (Fig. 214), be the author, there can be little doubt that it was written not only on his initiative but with the explicit desire to claim the credit for the relic's transfer, which historically belongs to Romanos, for himself. Among the many miracles that, according to the feast homily, took place during the transport of the relic there is the story of the healing near the Theotokos monastery of Eusebiu in Bithynia of a demoniac who is supposed to have predicted the impending sole rulership of Constantine.⁵⁴ In the

⁵⁴ Von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 79**.

light of these historical events the Sinai icon can have only one meaning: to represent Constantine in the guise of King Abgarus as the new recipient of the Mandylion. Thus the icon was made with the same intention as the writing of the feast homily: to disseminate the idea of Constantine as the pious emperor whose spiritual concern is the collection of famous relics in the palace chapel of the Virgin of the Pharos.⁵⁵

The Sinai icon is hardly the archetype of the newly invented Mandylion triptych which we believe to have been made not only at the instigation of the emperor but most probably even in a workshop controlled by him. After all, the emperor's interest in painting is not only well-documented, but the sources tell us that he was a painter of renown himself.⁵⁶ Yet the small size of the triptych wings and the fact that the style, though purely Constantinopolitan, is not of the very first quality speak against their being the original creation. Since their stylistic analysis indicated a date not long after the middle of the tenth century, they must be very early and presumably faithful copies.

This raises a new problem: does the Sinai triptych, as we have reconstructed it, reflect the archetype in its entirety or is the correspondence perhaps restricted

⁵⁵ The transfer of the relic of the hand of John the Baptist in 956 from Antioch to Constantinople, i.e., to the treasury of the Pharos church in the palace, is one of the other instances that shows Constantine's sustained interest in the collection of famous relics. J. Ebersolt, *Sanctuaires de Byzance* (Paris, 1921), p. 80, n. 4.

⁵⁶ Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll* (Princeton, 1948), p. 88.

to the upper zone only? It will be noticed that the part related to the Abgarus story is, through the feast homily, iconographically linked with Constantinople, whereas no such relation exists with regard to the saints in the lower zone.

A triptych, consisting of only the Mandylion in the center and the figures of Thaddaeus and Abgarus on the flanking wings, constitutes a perfect unity in concept and form, and it seems, therefore, quite conceivable that the lower zone is an addition made for the present replica. What could have been the purpose of such an addition? Ephraim the Syrian's chief place of activity was Edessa; Paul of Thebes and Anthony are two of the holy fathers of the Egyptian Desert, the latter being the patriarch of the monastic and the former of the eremitical life; and Basil wrote the monastic rules that still govern Eastern monasticism. From this selection one might deduce that the triptych was made as a gift for an Eastern monastery.

It is, of course, a tempting speculation that it may actually have been made for Sinai. One must remember that Sinai is an imperial foundation of Justinian which persisted as a stronghold of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in the surroundings of monophysite Christianity. Here gifts from Constantinople should be expected. The choice of the monastic saints, at least in part, could be explained in relation to Sinai. Anthony and Basil had special chapels within the monastery, of which that of Anthony still exists, while the chapel of Basil was in that part of the complex which is now occupied by a modern wing. The Abgarus icon is a very competent piece of painting, but

it does not reach the high level that one might expect of a personal gift of an emperor. Even so, it is, from the stylistic point of view, a touchstone since it is the first icon which with a fair degree of certainty can be dated around or shortly after the middle of the tenth century, thus becoming the focal point for further attributions and datings of icons of a similar style.⁵⁷ Equally important is its iconographic value since it has given us not only the earliest representation of the Abgarus legend and of the Mandylion but also a new portrait of the art-loving emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos.

⁵⁷ [For other tenth-century icons see Weitzmann, *Treasury of Icons*, pp. ix ff. and pls. 13-16 and especially, Weitzmann, "An Encaustic Icon." For the Macedonian Renaissance cf. Weitzmann, *Geistige Grundlagen und Wesen der Makedonischen Renaissance* (Cologne and Opladen, 1963), especially p. 41, translated and reprinted herewith, pp. 176 ff.]