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NOTES FROM THE FIELD IN ÖLÜDENIZ, MUĞLA, T.C

Flying Angel, Ceiling Fresco Decoration, Tomb, Karacaören Island, Fethiye (Photo: T. Ohashi)
NOTES FROM THE FIELD
IN ÖLÜDENIZ, MUĞLA, T.C.
(with an excursion by Mika Yoshimatsu)

TSUJI Shigebumi

As for the Turco-Japanese expedition to the Late Antique and Early Byzantine site in Ölüdeniz on the Lycian coast of the Mediterranean, almost a decade has passed since the publication of our first preliminary report in 1995. Although our field work has been consistently carried out over these years at the site, little has been published on it apart from a series of short reports and papers. Lately, our activity has been focused on the excavation of Church III on the top of the island of Gemiler Adası, revealing magnificent floor mosaics representing a set of fauna and flora. Sooner or later a comprehensive description of the floor decoration will appear in our second preliminary report.

The present paper is not intended to provide an exhaustive view of the latest results of our field work. Instead, I will reconsider a few monuments, which have already been discovered at our site, to interpret them in art historical terms. It is my hope that this short contribution will shed new light on the fundamental art historical issues regarding the Byzantine site on this beautiful Mediterranean coast of Southern Turkey.

I The Starry Sky: ‘Dome of Hyperouranios’?

Although badly damaged, the fresco paintings decorating the interior of the small tomb on the island of Karacaören strike us with their high artistic quality. The paintings are distinguished by fluent brush work, and, above all, by the splendid illusionistic effect brought forth through the most delicate hue and tone. While the style of the fresco decoration has already been discussed by Kazuo Asano with reference to the date of the painting, special attention may be paid here to the representation of the nightly sky on the vaulted ceiling. Against the
dark blue background, four angels, probably each carrying a spear on their shoulders, are flying up from the four corners of the ceiling toward a large medallion in the center of the composition. It is difficult to recognize what kind of motif was originally represented in the medallion (Color Plate).

In fact, the state of the preservation of the fresco is deplorable. Although the masonry of the vault is barely preserved, the major part of the painted plaster has fallen off. What we can discern from the present state is at best the lower part of the two angels and the sky in the background. The former, however, impresses us with the description of their translucent drapes. The subtle change of tone makes it possible to recognize not only the different layers of drapes but also the body of angel in lively flesh color underneath the lucid garment. The same subtlety in color as well as the vivacious brush work prevails in the depiction of the nightly sky that is dotted with a number of stars. They resemble large steering wheels drawn in circles, and in ensemble they enliven the dark blue sky as if they are really flickering.

It seems that the motif of a starry sky was especially favored by the fresco painters who were active in the Ölüdeniz area through the fifth and sixth century, even possibly until the beginning of the seventh when the Arab invasion devastated the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor. Beside the tomb decoration on Karacaören, there are a few remnants of fresco painting decorating the interior of the church on the Ölüdeniz bathing beach. The historical importance of the church may be surmised first by its location facing the quiet inlet of Ölüdeniz proper. For, according to the medieval portlane and the biography of St. Nicholas of Sion, this must have been the town of Symbola, the social, economic and religious center of this deep bay area that flourished during the Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine period.

The assumption can be further confirmed by the size of the church that exceeds most of the other churches in this area. Moreover, the artistic quality of the remaining fresco is, though very fragmentary, certainly overwhelming with its subtle tone and convincing modeling. In this regards the fresco paintings in the Ölüdeniz Beach church, especially that which remain on the wall of the south lateral apse, do surpass those on Karacaören island described above. To our great regret, most of the tall central figure has been lost. Still, we can more or less recognize the outline of the figure, which once reached the top of the apse
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against the background of dark blue starry sky (fig. 1 and 2).

A starry sky as the background of a theophanic scene is not unusual in the early Christian and pre-Iconoclastic Byzantine art. One may immediately quote the well-known icon from Mt. Sinai, which represents Christ in the guise of the Ancient of Days seated on a rainbow in mandorla against the nightly sky richly studded with stars. The figure of Christ on the Sinai icon has an especial bearing on the monuments in the Öludeniz area, because it carries an inscription of EM (MANOYHA) that is equally found by the bust of Christ Pantocrator painted above the north doorway of Church II on Gemiler Adasi (fig. 3 and 4).

Probably, the best known instance of the starry sky as the background of a theophanic scene is the dome decoration of the so-called Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (fig. 5 and 6). As has been discussed at length by Nordström and others, the cross rising from the east against the background of the starry sky in the dome may reflect the memory of the miraculous appearance of the cross in the sky in 333. However, I must make an especial note on a single formal / iconographical detail of this famous mosaic program, which hitherto has seldom attracted scholars' attention.

The summit of the mosaic decoration, the highest zone occupied by the cross and the stars, is clearly separated from the lower zone by a set of four semicircles formed by the top of the four arches supporting the dome. Under the arches, eight apostles, two on each wall respectively, stand and raise their hands and eyes upwards, thus adoring the rising cross above them. At the foot of the paired figures of the apostles, there is a crater / fountain filled with water, and two doves rest on and nearby the edge. It must be noted here that these images in the lower zone adorn the inside of the four walls that form a square tower supporting the dome on the top. In terms of architecture the tower's function is much the same as that of a tambour, another more widely practiced method of supporting a dome.

Immediately above the heads of the paired figures of the apostles there is spread what we may call the canopy of the second heavenly sphere. Its shape apparently derives from that of an ancient tabernacle, which was designed to freely open and close by string, or, chain perhaps. The summit of the canopy is shaped in the form of a head of a dove vertically flying down from the top. This is an obvious reference to the Holy Spirit that descends from the highest heaven into the lower. What could have been the dove's wings is turned into a golden cloud that is spread
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along the semicircular line of the periphery of the arch.

I am particularly attracted by the background of this second register. While the 'dove/cloud' as well as the chains of pearls hanging down from the top of the canopy seems as if made of some glowing ethereal material, the most part of the background remains dark. Only are the figures of apostles and the stage on which they stand lit by light. The second heaven, or the apostles’ register, is unmistakably dominated by the darkness, that is shed into it from above through the canopy of light. In short, here are two different kinds of emission from the highest celestial sphere: one is the darkness of the starry sky and the other the light. Both are issued from above into the lower zone, and, to our surprise, it is only against this dark background that the light gains its effect.

In contrast to the complete darkness of the most elevated zone and the so-to-speak crepuscule of the second zone, the lowest zone of the interior decoration of the Mausoleum has very little shade and darkness: one of the two lunettes represents Christ in Imperial attire herding a flock of sheep, and the other St. Lawrence marching toward the burning fire with the grill on which he is to consummate his martyrdom. The two other walls are decorated with exuberant vegetation of acanthus growing out of amphorae. The motif is inhabited by four more figures of apostles, while a pair of deer approach the amphorae to quench their thirst. It is yet to be proved that the floor was used as a burial place, though today there is a set of large sarcophagi. Another inference about the function of the floor suggests that there was once a baptismal fons. Be that as it may, one may safely surmise that, from a theological view point, the lowest zone of the entire mosaic program deals with death and resurrection.

To sum, the mosaic program of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia as a whole is illuminated, stage by stage, with varying degrees of light/darkness. The three superimposed registers are depicted in such a way that the highest one is filled with complete darkness and with a glowing golden cross and the stars. The upper half of the second register is shadowed by the darkness that is emitted from above. The lowest zone which is occupied by the motifs of fauna and flora is dominated by light and fire.

The mosaic decoration of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is not the only instance of such a representation of the emanation of darkness from above. Perhaps, a more explicit case is found in the theophanic scene decorating the
central dome of the church of Ağac Altı in Ihlara, Cappadocia (fig. 7). In his meticulous description of the figure of Christ standing in mandorla, Mr. Ko states that ‘the figure of Christ is represented in full-length, with his head oriented toward the west. He is depicted against radiating decorative motifs, which are dark colored and studded with stars’.

However, I should like to add one more detail to Mr. Ko’s description. Namely, the five radiating ‘decorative motifs’, which rather resemble large flower petals, are not only studded with stars and beads but also emanating from the figure of Christ and gushing beyond the irregular outline of the mandorla. Some of them even touch the figures of angels below. One might even say that the dark starry sky flows out of the higher sphere into the lower zone, which is occupied by a file of angels, the second in rank in the celestial hierarchy.

In most of the Byzantine representation of the Supreme Being shedding His supernatural power, it is light that is emitted from him. However, in the two preceding examples, one in Ravenna and the other in the valley of Ihlara, it is characteristically not light but darkness that originates in the highest register of hierarchy. Thanks to the elaborate study of the fresco program of the church of Ağac Altı by Mr. Ko, we now have a long list of early Christian and Byzantine dome decoration with the eschatological appearance of Christ. However, if we focus our attention on this specific point, i.e., the emanation of darkness instead of light from the highest sphere, the parallel examples are not too many.

A unique monument in this regard has recently been introduced to me by Prof. H. Torp. In the mosaic decoration of the church of S. Clemente in Rome, the top of the apse is occupied again by an elaborate motif of ‘heavenly canopy’. The highest borderline of the motif meets the edge of the large arch that forms the summit of the quarter dome of the apse. The fringe of the canopy motif is marked, here again, by a lucid cloud spread along the mosaic band of the arch.

From the summit of the canopy motif, there is suspended a golden cross, from which a dark stream stems down, passing through the layers of decorative motifs, until it meets a corona held by the hand of God. This, in turn, is immediately followed by the upper end of the crucifix, again in dark color and inhabited by doves. A very similar design is found also in the apse decoration of S. Maria in Trastevere, which is dated slightly later than that in S. Clemente. In S. Clemente, most probably the relic of the True Cross was buried under the mosaic surface,
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where the image of the Crucifix is represented. Since the relic is said to have been brought from the Holy Land, it may not be unlikely that this particular motif of the heavenly canopy and the dark ray descending from it may have been of Eastern Mediterranean origin. This, however, remains a matter of conjecture.

* * * * *

Now one may be reminded of the fact that the Platonic and subsequently Neo-Platonic philosophical tradition provided ancient artists with a sufficient conceptual ground for the representation of the hierarchy of cosmic beings. Namely, Plato and his followers often conceived their ontological hierarchy in the form of a ladder by which a soul ascends to reach the perfect contemplation of the supreme being, i.e. *idea* in Plato or the One in Plotin. The latter even used a metaphor of edifice as the image of his ontological hierarchy. The top of such an edifice is occupied by the One, whence its essence, Logos, flows out and reaches the lower ontological spheres. One may safely assume that such a philosophical and cosmological image of the procession of the higher beings and the corresponding ascent of the soul may well have offered a good conceptual framework for the artists of the Classical Antiquity.

In the fourth century, the ontological hierarchy was increasingly elaborated by later Neo-Platonic philosophers like Iamblichus, causing the so-called ‘telescoping’ of the ontological distance between the lowest and the highest being. Most importantly, it was at this time that Christian thinkers also began to develop their own anagogical interpretation of the Biblical writings on the tradition of Platonism and Neo-Platonism. *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* edited by A.H. Armstrong in 1970 presents us an excellent survey of the development of philosophical thoughts of both pagan and Christian thinkers through the fourth and fifth century.

Among these philosophers, the most significant for our present discussion is no doubt Gregory of Nyssa. According to his anagogical *Interpretation of the Song of Songs or the Life of Moses*, “created light, the first physical manifestation of the Divine Will, is inherent from the beginning in the particles of matter. From there it flows upwards to the Firmament or First Heaven. Fire belongs to this First Heaven which divides the sensible and intelligible. The Second Heaven
above the Firmament is filled with water that is unintelligible and invisible. Thus it divides all the visible from the invisible. The Third Heaven to which St. Paul was rapt comprises all those things which cannot be explained in words."

The stages of soul's ascent are described more often in a poetical manner by Gregory. According to J. Daniélou, to the first stage belongs the illumination (φωτισμὸς), which is none but the fundamental notion underlying the rite of baptism. Therefore, this sphere of light is also the sphere of death and resurrection. The second stage is now described as the sphere of crepuscule (νεφέλη). The praxis that corresponds to this stage is contemplation. It is through this contemplation that an illuminated soul, who is now one of the sons of light, recognizes the underlying reality (ὑπόστασις) of things and understand them as symbols. The final stage of the soul's ascent is called darkness (γνώφως), where the soul finds the consummation of her love in her endless pursuit of her beloved in the darkness of the Third Heaven beyond everything intelligible.

Daniélou devoted his book on Gregory of Nyssa mostly to interpreting Gregory's theory of the ascent of the soul. However, according to Armstrong, the potentialities of all things sprang instantaneously from the Divine Will on the day of creation. Being regarded as a single seminal power, these potentialities are the Logos. Therefore, the Logos develops successively into all the phenomena which can and will constitute the world. Even if the Logos' descent from the Divine will may be described as such, it must have been a difficult task for an artist of the Late Antiquity to visualize such an emanation of the Divine Power. In other words, he could hardly have evaded a twofold task imposed on him: in the Gospels the Divine Power of Christ is, more often than not, described as light. However, the mystagogical interpretation by his contemporaneous Church Fathers regarded the highest being as the complete darkness, the night of all the intelligible.

It has already been pointed out above that, in the mosaic program of Galla Placidia, it is not only light but also darkness that descends from the summit of the celestial hierarchy into the lower register. In this regard the apse mosaic of the monastery church of St. Catherine in Sinai, donated by Emperor Justinian in 565-566, seems to present a bold solution. Namely, Christ hovering above the summit of Mt. Tabor is represented as if an ethereal being, cladded in a translucent garment of light. The almond-shaped mandorla behind him consists of at least three concentric zones colored in blue, the darkness of which gradually fades

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out toward the outer circle. The same holds true with rays of light emanating from the body of Christ: near the figure of Christ, their dark blue color can hardly be differentiated from that of the mandorla in the background. Only when it reaches the outermost periphery, does it turn into white.

Now one may safely conclude that, from the late fourth down to the middle of the sixth century, the Christian representation of theophany was influenced by the theological/cosmological notion that the spiritual cosmos should consist of a triadic strata of light, crepuscule, and darkness. The notion was created in the philosophical milieu of the Cappadocian Fathers and obviously under the strong influence of Neo-Platonic theology of the age. The nightly sky dotted with a number of stars represents the highest sphere beyond which there is nothing sensible nor intelligible. That such a mystagogical interpretation of the spiritual cosmos must have been visualized at an early date, especially in a variety of vaulted ceiling decoration, can be convincingly proved by a few surviving monuments, including the examples already discussed, and by the copies and reconstructions of the lost original.

So far, one of the earliest examples may be found in the dome decoration of the so-called Rotunda of Hagios Giorgios in Thessaloniki. According to the reconstruction by M.G. Sotiriou and N.Gioles, the circular zone below Christ in mandorla is occupied by about 24 winged 'angels'. It is all the more intriguing that, except for the one standing on the east-west axis, all the other angels are represented in an unusual posture of running clockwise in haste. Such a file of celestial being is, as is well-known, mentioned by Plato in *Phedrus*, 247B, where he narrates the ascension of purified souls, using, most interestingly, a metaphor of celestial dome:

“But when they (= gods, spirits, and purified souls) go to a feast or a banquet, they proceed steeply upward to the top of the vault of heaven (’ἀκραν ὑπὸ τὴν ὑπερουράνιον ἀψίδα πορεύονται πρὸς ἀναντες’) ... when they reach the top, pass outside and take their place on the outer surface of the heaven (ἡνὶ ἀν πρὸς ἀκρῷ γένονται, ἐξῳ πορευθεὶσαι ἐστησαν ἐπὶ τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ νῶτῳ, ...), and when they have taken their stand, the resolution carries them round, and they behold the things outside of the heaven (ὅπερ ἐστὶν τὸ κατὰ ἐξῳ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.)”

Most likely, this Platonic passage inspired Gregory of Nyssa in his interpretation
of *Hexameron*, and interestingly enough again, the author applies more concrete images to describe the form and image of the heaven and souls. He states that the form of the dome of heaven is spherical and the souls are given wings and climb out to the back (or 'surface'? ) of the *hyperouranion*.

Thus, there is little doubt that a dome decoration such as seen in H. Giorgios in Thessaloniki was inspired by the cosmology of the early Church Fathers who took over the Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophical tradition. The author of the corpus of the Pseudo-Dionysius undoubtedly inherited from the Cappadocian Father his spiritual cosmology tinged by the perennial Platonic tradition. However, as Armstrong correctly points out, “the ascent of soul... is in the Dionysian system procured by the efficacy first of the rites and ceremonies of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, then of the orders and operations of the Celestial.” Mr. Ko may be right in recognizing a reflection of Dionysian hierarchic system in the dome decoration of Ağac Altı, specifically in the number of the angels in the second periphery. However, as has been ascertained above, the Cappadocian dome decoration still adheres to the earlier tradition. In this regard, Armstrong continues his remark appropriately that “in the *EH* the ps.-Dionysius is less concerned with the description of the rites than with their *theoria*, the isolation of their intelligible significance.”

The present issue is yet to be scrutinized with more subtlety, especially by carefully comparing the Gregorian and Dionysian imageries. Nevertheless, it seems possible to assert that, with their remarkable adherence to the representation of the starry night sky, the fresco decorations in the Ölüdeniz coastal area reveal the continuation of the Late Antique, or, more specifically, pre-Dionysian imagery of spiritual cosmos. A vision of theophany with starry sky may well occur even after the Iconoclasm. However, considering the predominance of the image in the fifth and, at latest, sixth century, the above observations may contribute to placing the Lycian monuments in the context of the history of Late Antique and Early Byzantine period.

II Boat Protected by an Icon

Church II on the island of Gemiler Adası in Ölüdeniz may belong to the earliest phase of the history of architecture on the island. The building is provided with
a rather unusual 'ambulatory' surrounding the exterior of the apse. The entrance
to the vaulted tunnel is found immediately next to the north end of the synthonon,
and the passage curves around along the exterior wall of the apse. However, it
never reaches the other end of the apse: at about three-quarters of the way round
it ends at a point where there is a kind of alcove cut into the bed-rock. Since
there remain traces of cement around the opening of the alcove, it seems that
there once was a sort of grill that kept the visitors from reaching the inside of
the alcove, very possibly in order to protect the relic inside.

The side walls of the tunnel are irregularly plastered. While there is no
systematic wall decoration, Father Ruggieri discovered in 1997 a few grafitti
images incised on the plastered wall surface. What he published then were a few
ships and a narrative scene with a human figure approaching another who is
crouching and asleep. Father Ruggieri tentatively identified the scene as that of
St. Nicholas appearing in the dream of Emperor Constantine.

Without knowing the preceding report by Father Ruggieri, the present author
undertook a careful investigation of the grafitti on the wall in 1998, and succeeded
in revealing more than 12 grafitti incised on the wall. The majority of them are
boats, large and small, and some with sails, while the others represent peacocks,
unidentifiable human figures, etc. The boats consist of a few different types.
Without exception, they are provided with a set of two very large steering-oars,
and most of them have a single large square sail. This is a general characteristic
of the late Roman and Early Byzantine sail-boat. However, interestingly enough,
there is one example which has two sails, the one large mid-ship square sail and
the other smaller fore-sail at the prow. Although this particular sail system
belongs to a little later historical phase of the history of Byzantine sailing boat,
the square — not a lateen — form of the fore-sail seems to indicate its relatively
earlier date.

The largest, and perhaps the most interesting ship was found on the left wall
near the entrance of the tunnel. It has a remarkably large square sail and a set
of enormous steering oars. The latter is depicted just as large as the ship itself
(fig. 8). What attracts one's attention is the small human figure near the prow
(fig. 9). The figure is male and a little larger than half-length. It lacks any
realistic description of costume. Only does the image strike us with its rather
queer headdress and countenance. It is formed not so much like an almond as a
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gourd. The head is apparently bald, and the eyes are piercing like those of vulture. The massive lower half of the face suggests that it is heavily bearded. In general, the image does resemble those busts of saints in the Coptic icons or in the fresco paintings decorating chapels in Bawit (fig. 10).

The most intriguing feature of the image is that there are two parallel faltering lines that rise from his right shoulder. It seems as if the graffito maker, who apparently had no artistic discipline, tried very hard to add an arm to the original iconic figure. This must be the result of his attempt to enliven and urge the 'saint' to raise his hand in the gesture of command or benediction. Very likely, the model which the naïve graffito maker had in mind was an icon where a large bust of a saint was depicted frontally, but his hand had not been raised as the local devotee expected.

It has been mentioned that Church II on Gemiler Adasi is obviously related, or even dedicated, to a saint called OIOC NIKOAAO[C], because his fresco image with his name inscribed is represented to the lower left side of Christ Immanuel on the small lunette above the north doorway of the church. Therefore, we may safely surmise that this graffito may be called the earliest extant representation of Saint Nicholas stilling the raging water. However, one must admit simultaneously that this is not so much a narrative representation of the hagiographical scene as mere depiction of a boat that carries the saint’s icon. The narrative feature, the ‘raised hand’, is obviously ad hoc, which the graffito maker added to the iconic image in his ardent devotion to the veneration of the saint. That the devotional/votive image of the saint was conceived originally as an icon rather than a portrayal with narrative connotation can be proved by another graffito more recently discovered (fig.11). This one is undoubtedly a copy of an iconic portrayal of a saint, whose headtype is very much like the one we found on the sailing boat graffito.

To conclude our observation on the graffiti in the ‘ambulatory’ of Church II, we would like to briefly consider what the iconographical model of the graffiti images could be like. So far, the images of the ‘saint’ incised on the wall indicate that they are not derived from an extensive hagiographical vita cycle, but from an icon without any visual reference to the historical content. However, one must be very cautious in assuming that there never existed a cyclic representation based on the saint’s biography, because, as Father Ruggieri observed, there is an
obviously narrative depiction of a human figure hovering in the air and addressing to another who is seated and asleep (See fig. 11 above).

Mika Yoshimatsu concludes her excursion at the end of the present paper that there seems to have existed no established iconographical model that could have served for the earliest extant narrative representation of St. Nicholas stilling the water in the twelfth century. I would like not only to follow her conclusion but also to suggest that the earliest extant miracle scene could be created after the scene of Christ stilling the water, that often appears in the Middle Byzantine narrative cycle of *vita Christi*. To tell the truth, we are facing a sort of dilemma with regard to the date of the origin of the *vita* cycle of St. Nicholas. One must scrutinize into this issue with more convincing evidence in future.

* * * * *

I would like to conclude our two preceding notes with a short remark on the monuments we discussed with an especial reference to the visibility of the decoration in their original state. Namely, the major examples quoted here were created under the unique condition that, without the help of artificial lighting device, such as a torch or a lamp, the interior was hardly visible due to the darkness that must have filled the space. The interior of the tomb on Karacaören was completely dark when the small ‘window’ for offering, if there was any, was shut down. As for the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the interior is still today almost completely dark. Visitors must throw a few coins to turn on the switch of lighting system and look at the wall decoration. In its original state, only the floor space of the interior could be lit by a dim light of lamps and candles. The mosaic decoration of the highest dome could only faintly reflect the faltering lights placed on the floor. Finally, the interior of the ‘ambulatory’ tunnel of the Church II on Gemiiler Adasi, especially at the end of the passage, must have been also filled with darkness. Therefore, those grafitti could be executed, and recognized, too, only under the dim light of the lamps carried by the pilgrims.

Perhaps, the darkness of the hyper heaven which Gregory of Nyssa discussed so enthusiastically was not a mere metaphor. The mystical space of Christian rites, say the place of baptismal rite, often took place in the darkness at midnight. Therefore, it was practically φωτισμός, the rite of light. Was the nightly sky out
of the window filled with scintillating stars, when St. Augustin was elevated to the hyper heaven, together with his mother Monica, in their ecstasy in a small inn chamber in Ostia?

"Impendente autem die, quo ex hac vita erat exitura provenerat, ... ut ego et ipsa soli staremus incumbentes ad quandam fenestrum, unde hortus intra domum, quae nos habebat, prospectabatur, illie apud Ostia Tiberina, ubi remoti a turbis post longi itineris laborem instaurabamus nos navigationi. conloquebamus ergo soli valde dulciter; et praeterita obliviscientes in ea quae ante sunt extendi, ...erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in id ipsum, perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia, et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram. et adhuc ascendebamur, interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua, et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, . . . ." (Confessiones, Book 9, X)

Notes

1) Sh. Tsuji, (ed.), The Survey of Early Byzantine Sites in Ölüdeniz Area (Lycia, Turkey); the First Preliminary Report (= Memoire of the Faculty of Letters, Osaka University, XXXV), (Osaka, 1995) (Hereafter First Preliminary Report).


4) The present paper is supplemented by an excursion by Ms. Mika Yoshimatsu (Lecturer of Art History, Otemae University from 2002). She kindly discusses for me the earliest extant representation of the Sea Story of St. Nicolas. I am much obliged to her generous collaboration.

5) The issue at stake here was once discussed more than thirty years ago by the present author at the seminar held by the Japan Art History Society in Tokyo. Cf. Bijutsushi (=Journal of Japan Art History Society), LXXVII, Vol. 20, 1, (1970), 40. At that time, however, my discussion could not refer to the monuments now...
discovered in Ölüdeniz.

6) First Preliminary Report, 90–92, Color Plate IX.

7) K. Asano., “The Byzantine Sites on Gemiler Adasi and Karacaören (Lycia, Turkey),” Philokalia, X (1993), 92–113, has tentatively dated the tomb decoration between the late sixth and early seventh century. The present author is inclined to date it rather earlier, partly due to the iconographical characteristics which are to be discussed subsequently.


10) On the combination of the inscription of Emmanuel with starry sky, cf. the note with pertinent bibliography by Tomoyuki Masuda in the First Preliminary Report, 70.

11) According to Tomoyuki Masuda’s drawing, the Christ Emmanuel on Gemiler Adasi is also accompanied by a few stars in the background. First Preliminary Report, 66–67 and Illustration 2.


13) The incident is reported by Eusebius of Caesarea, et al. Ibid. 27. More about the cult of the cross is discussed by A. Grabar, Martyrium, II (1946), 275ff.


15) The most recent and comprehensive bibliography with regard to this problematic church decoration in Ihlara valley is now found in: Ko Seong-Jun, “The Study of the Wall Painting in the Rock-Cut Monastery Chapel of Ağaç Altı Kilisesi (Ihlara Valey),” (Unpublished Master’s thesis submitted to Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, 1998). I am much obliged to the author for his kind permission to read his thesis and quote it here.

16) Ibid., 12 and note 2.

17) I owe this invaluable comment on the mosaic decoration in S Clement to Prof. Hjalmar Torp on the occasion of the XXth International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Paris, 2001. I am also grateful to Ayuko Sugimoto for her kind permission to read her unpublished Master’s thesis, which was submitted to Kanazawa College of Arts in the spring of 2000: “The Burial of God; an Observation on the Apse Mosaics of S.Clemente in Rome”.

18) A. H. Armstrong, (ed.), The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy, (Cambridge, 1970). For the generations of the philosophers from Iamblichus down to the Ps-Dionysius Areopagites, see esp. 272–472. The intricate process of the Christianization of the Neo-Platonic tradition from Origen to the fifth century, a fundamental discussion is to be found in: E. Ivánka, Plato Christianus, (Einsiedeln, 1964), esp. 99–289.

19) As for the ascent of soul in Gregory of Nyssa, we still owe a great deal to the now classic work by J. Daniélou, Platonisme & théologie mystique, (Paris, 1944).

20) Armstrong, op. cit. 447.

21) G. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, (Ann
Arbor, 1975).
23) Ms. Fujino Miyauchi has kindly reminded me that the cosmological illustration in one of the Beatus manuscripts also contains a circular zone where winged figures are represented in the same running posture. This may also reflect the program of a Late Antique dome decoration.
24) Regarding Gregory of Nyssa’s adaptation of Platonic cosmology, more specifically the nature of the celestial beings, see Daniélou, op. cit., 151ff, esp. 154.
26) Ko, op. cit., 33 et seq.
27) A few fourth-fifth century coins have been found in and around the church during our expedition, including those of Valentinian II et al. They will be discussed in our forthcoming second report.
28) Ruggieri, V., “ΛΕΒΙΣΟΣ-ΜΑΚΡΗ-ΜΑΡΚΙΑΝΗ e S.Nicola: note di topografia Licia”, (Our footnote 9 above), esp. 146-147. Unfortunately all the three drawings of the graffito illustrating Father Ruggieri’s article are printed reversed.
29) Pryor, J.H., Geography, Technology, and War, (Cambridge, 1994 [paperback edition]), 25-39. A sail-boat with the second smaller sail at prow existed already in the Late Roman period, as seen in the ‘Ulysses and the Sirens mosaic’ in Bardo, Tunis. [Cf. T.B. Stevenson, Miniature Decoration in the Vatican Virgil, (Tübingen, 1983), fig. 131.] Since, however, this graffito of the ship with two sails is decorated with a crescent motif at the top of the mast, it may be that this belonged to an Islamic owner later than the beginning of the seventh century.
31) I am grateful to Tomoyuki Masuda for his informing me of the subsequent graffiti he found and photographed during our campaign in 2001.
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EXCURSION

Text and Image in the Hagiographical Cycle of St. Nicholas:

SEA STORIES

YOSHIMATSU Mika

A hagiographical narrative cycle presents a particular interest as to the relation between text and image. However, the problem of the vita cycle of St. Nicholas, one of the most popular and important saints in the Christendom, in the Byzantine painting seems somewhat intricate. In the following I will examine the narrative cycle of the life of St. Nicholas with special reference to the relationship between the text and image. I would like to examine the relevant motifs and analyze the arrangement of the scenes in the cycle. Are they really well planned and coordinated?

The choice of the scenes and the arrangement of the episodes

More than 20 episodes are referred to in the 25 Greek texts of St. Nicholas. Some are popular, and some are not. Among the 45 monuments (including 9 icons), we can see a variety of scenes, more than 40. The episode which is selected most frequently is the scene in which St. Nicholas appears to Constantine in the story of Acts of Stratelatis. The second is the sea story and the third, the birth of the saint.

In the cases of extensive vita cycles, which usually have 8–20, no image can be found in the same intelligible order, not to mention chronological one. We do not know how and why these scenes are selected. And it is difficult to find out any rule to form such a diversified arrangement of the episodes. What is the reason for this randomness? Among the stories of the saint, the Acts of Stratelatis is a good example to illustrate this point.

The story of the Acts of Stratelatis consists of several, up to six, scenes. In the text of the Acts of Stratelatis, which dates back to between 450 and 580 A.D., the plot can be divided as follows: St. Nicholas saves three generals from execution (a); Three generals in prison (b); St. Nicholas appears to Constantine (c) (fig. 14);
St. Nicholas appears to Ablabius (d); The three generals come before Constantine (e); The three generals thank St. Nicholas (f).

Now I would like to examine specific scenes that are chosen and represented on the margin of an icon. An icon from Mt. Sinai (fig. 12), the earliest extant example of the *vita* cycle, has 16 small scenes from the life of St. Nicholas, which surround the bust portrait of the saint. The marginal scenes, at first glance, seem biographical, because the upper left corner is occupied by the birth scene of St. Nicholas, and, on the diagonally opposite side, the lower right corner, there is a scene of the saint's death. However, a close examination of the scenes reveals that there is little relationship between the arrangement of the text and that of these images.

As to the story of *the Acts of Stratelatis*, 6 episodes are depicted in the Sinai icon (fig. 13). However, the scenes are arranged in random order. The same holds true with other monuments. While texts are based on a consistent plot, the images show no clear intention to represent the story as a consistent group, nor to arrange the plot in chronological order. Still, it may be said that there is a single rule for the arrangement of the episodes: themes such as the birth, schooling, consecration, death, which, generally speaking, are thought to be essential for a man of clerical career, are arranged in a more or less understandable manner. These scenes borrowed their iconography from a well-established traditional formula, while the other episodes, which are unique to the biography of St. Nicholas, are inserted haphazardly among them.

**The sea stories: texts**

There are 25 different hagiographical texts of the life of St. Nicholas. Less than half of them, say 10 texts, refer to the sea story. This is not a large number if we consider the importance of St. Nicholas as a very popular sailors' patron.

The story has four different episodes:

a) the Journey to Jerusalem
b) the Sailor's Story
c) the Miracle of Artemid
d) the Story of a ship-wreck

The texts containing these sea episodes are as following:
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Vita Nicolai Sionitae\(^{(a)}\), Vita per Michalem\(^{(b, c)}\), Methodius ad Theorunum\(^{(b)}\), Encomium Methodii\(^{(d)}\), Vita compilata\(^{(b, c, d)}\), Vita per Metaphraste\(^{(a, b, c, d)}\), Vita acephala\(^{(c)}\), Encomium Neophyti\(^{(b, c, d)}\), and Vita Lucio-Alexandrina\(^{(a, c)}\).

In the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, one of the oldest and best known texts, we can find, aside from the seafaring story, the birth, the schooling, the consecration, the felling of cypress, the healing of the blind, the distribution of alms, the healing of a demoniac, and the saint’s death.

Of the episode of ‘the Journey to Jerusalem’ chosen from this vita, the following motifs included there are to be specifically analyzed: two of Nicholas’ attendants; ship; sailors; mid-sea; prayer; devil; a two-edged knife (in the devil’s hand); rigging; a great storm at night; wind and waves. The story is told in full and the plot is vivid and more realistic than any other of the hagiographical texts.

\textit{The sea story: Image}

Of the 45 monuments (including 9 icons), 27 represent the sea story.

They are seen in both icons and frescoes. In the wall paintings, the scenes of the sea-story are not assigned to specific locations in the entire decorative program, that is, whether they are found near the entrance or not. Moreover, as we have seen, the position of this scene in icons has no relation to the narrative sequence of the episodes in the texts.

In the most significant example, the Sinai icon (fig.12), which I mentioned above, 16 relevant scenes are found on the margin, and one border is occupied only by the sea-story scenes (fig.13). The scenes are more or less related to those which belong to the episode of the Journey to Jerusalem, because the figure of the devil is essential in this episode. We can discern several figures of devils on the mast of the boat (fig.15). Yet other motifs are very simple: a sailboat, a saint, a man with oars, and schematic coiled waves. The figures of the two attendants and sailors, a two-edged knife, rigging, and a great storm are not drawn here. No fish are seen in the water as is often the case with other sea-stories of Christ or other saints. The scene in the Sinai icon is quite simple and motionless. This is not due to limited space on the border. The same holds true with fresco paintings that occupy a much larger space.

It should be noted that the same posture of the saint is repeated. Although the
text explicitly states that St. Nicholas prayed twice for many hours on the ship as he bent his knees, these features are not depicted here. In a number of instances, the saint is represented seated at the stern with his arm raised upward in blessing. He has a gospel book in his left hand. This image of St. Nicholas is almost the same as his icon portrait or the image that occupies the center of his hagiographical icons.

Therefore it is safe to say that the figure of the saint in the narrative scene also functions as an icon. It is, as it were, 'the icon within icon' like 'the picture within picture'. In some examples, the size of the saint is much larger than the other crew. This must be emphasized, because, in the rest of the scenes, the figure of the saint is well proportioned in comparison to the others. So the figure of St. Nicholas in the sea scene, whose posture resembles an icon portrait, is quite distinguished from those in the other scenes.

**Conclusion**

As to the cycles of St. Nicholas, we can find little correspondence between texts and images. In fact, the marginal scenes of the hagiographical icons follow a random order, and so do the fresco cycles. The images seem to have no intention of following a narrative sequence. The texts provide dramatic details and realistic psychological depiction, while the image adheres only to simple and diagrammatic representations.

**Notes**

34) According to Ševčenko's catalogue, of 45 monuments, this episode can be seen in 29 cycles. Ševčenko, 1983, 115–116.
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Fig. 1 Fresco Decoration, South Lateral Apse, Ölüdeniz Beach Church, Fethiye

Fig. 2 Drawing of Fig. 1

Fig. 3 Drawing, Christ Immanuel and Saints, Fresco Decoration, Church II, Gemiler Adası, Fethiye

Fig. 4 Detail of Fig. 3
Fig. 5  Interior, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

Fig. 6  Mosaic Decoration, Dome, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

Fig. 7  Fresco Decoration, Dome, Church of Ağa Caltı, İhlara, Cappadocia

Fig. 8  Sail Boat with ‘Saint’s’ Figure, Graffiti, Church II, Gemiler Adası, Fethiye
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Fig. 9  Detail of Fig. 8, ‘Saint’

Fig. 10  Icon of Bishop Abraham, Bawit, National Museum, Berlin

Fig. 11  A Seated Saint and a Dream Scene, Grafitti, Church II, Gemiler Adasi, Fethiye

Fig. 12  Icon of Saint Nicholas, Mount Sinai
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Fig. 13 Arrangement of Narrative Scenes
Scene 6: Sea Story
Scene 7-11 and 5: Acts of Stratelatis

Fig. 14 Dream of Emperor Constantine,
Detail of Fig. 12

Fig. 15 Sea Story,
Detail of Fig. 12