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Mary and her Books in the Kokkinobaphos
Manuscripts: Female Literacy or Visual Strategies of
Narration?

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MARY AND HER BOOKS IN THE KOKKINOBAPHOS MANUSCRIPTS: FEMALE LITERACY OR VISUAL STRATEGIES OF NARRATION?

Christianity, a religion of the Word of God revealed to men by his prophets, conveyed by the Scriptures and made flesh in Christ himself, developed a profound system of communication which was articulated through visual signs as well as the verbal medium of *logos*. A comprehensive vehicle of communication accessible to a limited audience that occasionally combined visual signs with words was the book. Yet, as Michael Camille has demonstrated, ‘this does not mean that books cannot function as highly charged and purely pictorial signs in the images and pictures themselves’¹. Along this line, it is my wish to look more closely at the multifaceted function of the book as a symbol within the format of the Byzantine book itself. As my case study I will use two twelfth-century lavishly illustrated Byzantine manuscripts recounting the apocryphal life of the Virgin Mary – the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1162 and Bibliothèque nationale, Paris. gr. 1208)². Therein, the exposition of Mary’s early life is arranged in six sermons composed by the twelfth-century

monk Iakovos of the Kokkinobaphou monastery³. The two manuscripts are almost identical and were commissioned in the same Constantinopolitan scriptorium⁴.

The circumstances under which the two books were manufactured are not entirely clear; indirect evidence suggests that both copies were written and illustrated during the lifetime of Iakovos himself who was the author of the homilies and the designer of their illustration⁵. The Vatican copy of the homilies was executed in the 1140s and antedates the Paris copy⁶. It was completed under the direction of the monk and was intended for the religious instruction of a female recipient of the secular elite, the Komnenian noblewoman Eirene the *Sevastokratorissa*, with whom the monk was in frequent correspondence serving as her spiritual advisor⁷. The copy of the illustrated homilies in Paris was commissioned in the early 1150s, most probably for Iakovos’s own personal use⁸.

An intriguing feature in both manuscripts is the recurring representation of Mary with a book as either closed or open.

¹ M. Camille, “Visual Signs of the Sacred Page: Books in the *Bible moralisée*”, *Word and Image* 5/1 (1989), 111-30, esp. quotation on p. 111.

² C. Stornajolo, *Miniature della Omilie di Giacomo Monaco (cod. Vatic. gr. 1162) e dell’Evangelario Greco urbinato (cod. Vatic. Urbin. gr. 2)*, CVS, series minor 1, Rome 1910 (hereafter: *Omilie*). H. Omont, *Miniatures des homélies sur la Vierge du moine Jacques (MS grec 1208 de Paris)*, Bulletin de la société française de reproductions de manuscrits à peintures 2, Paris 1927 (hereafter: *Miniatures*). I. Hutter and P. Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar des Mönchs Jakobos von Kokkinobaphos, Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1162*, CVS 79, Vatican City 1991 (hereafter: *Marienomiliar*).

³ For the text see *Jacobi Monachi ex Monasterio Coccinobaphi Orationes Encomiasticae in SS. Virginem Deiparam*, PG 127, cols 543-700, incomplete and with numerous mistakes.

⁴ Hutter and Canart, op.cit., 17. J. C. Anderson, “The Illustrated Sermons of James the Monk: their Dates, Order and Place in the History of Byzantine Art”, *Viator* 22 (1991), 69-120, especially 83-5 (hereafter: “The Illustrated Sermons”).

⁵ Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 14; see also K. Linardou, “The

Couch of Solomon, a Monk, a Byzantine Lady and the Song of Songs”, in R.N. Swanson, ed., *Mary and the Church. Studies in Church History* 39 (2004), 73-85, esp. 74-5 (hereafter: “The Couch of Solomon”).

⁶ K. Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited: the Internal Evidence of the Books”, *Scriptorium* 61/2 (2007), 384-407 (hereafter: “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited”); see also ead., “Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books: the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts (Vaticanus graecus 1162 and Parisinus graecus 1208) and their Illustration”, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Birmingham 2004, chaps 2 and 3, 192-227, 241-4 (hereafter: “Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books”). For a different dating of the manuscripts see Anderson, “The Illustrated Sermons”, 83-5.

⁷ Linardou, “Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books”, chap. 4, 248-86; see also ead., “Η σεβαστοκρατόρισα Ειρήνη, οι ανέκδοτες επιστολές του μοναχού Ιακώβου και οι εικονογραφημένες ομιλίες του Ιακώβου της Μονής Κοκκινόβαφου”, *26ο Συμπόσιο ΧΑΕ*, Athens 2006, 51-2.

⁸ Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited”. Ead., “Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books”, chaps 2 and 3, 195-9, 244-7.

As we shall see, it is most certain that some depictions of Mary with books echo an apocryphal tradition that recorded her literacy and of which Iakovos, the author of the homilies, was aware. It is also tempting to assume that such a repetitious illustration of Mary holding books reflects a special interest on the part of the commissioner of the manuscript, the *Sevastokratorissa*⁹, who was a celebrated patroness of art and *belles lettres*, and thus may have taken a particular pleasure by underlining the literacy of Mary, the archetypal model for any Christian woman.

Yet, despite the reasons that may have influenced the inclusion of such representations, one should not disregard the fact that the books were primarily employed to serve the process of visual narration of which they were an integral part. Their depiction is not explicitly required by the content of the homiletic text, but serves to facilitate the mechanism of narration and reinforce the theological argument of the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts by adding multiple layers of symbolism and visually clarifying the sophisticated exegetical syllogism of the author of the homilies. Signs like the open inscribed codices in the hands of Mary are constantly transforming in response to exegetical context and situation. In effect, books are mainly employed as a medium of communication between Mary and the beholder of the manuscript, as a connecting link between the image and the text, thus enhancing the interaction between the verbal and the visual, and finally allegorically, as representations of the dogmatic term Word Incarnate, namely as visual exegesis of the Incarnation of Christ.

The fourth sermon of the collection is dedicated to a series of events in the life of Mary after her Presentation and describes her sojourn in the temple of the Lord and her betrothal to Joseph. It contains three representations of books.

Two of them depicting the young girl with a book in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish temple betray extra-textual influences of apocryphal character other than the Protevangelion that record Mary's engagement with reading during her sojourn there. Yet, beyond this subtle visual hint at Mary's literacy, one can also discern a net of complicated functions of the book as a visual sign being susceptible to multiple interpretations.

The first references describing Mary's sojourn in the Jewish temple are to be found in the *Ankyrotos* of Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, Cyprus (c. 315-403)¹⁰. Later, a certain monk, Epiphanius of the monastery of Callistratus in Constantinople (late eighth or early ninth century), wrote a biography of Mary where he records that she was first instructed the Jewish letters by her father Joachim and that she continued her studies in the temple¹¹. She also developed skills that were traditionally associated with women, namely the spinning and weaving of wool, linen and silk. An Italian writer named Paschalis Romanus who resided in Constantinople, was commissioned by Enrico Dandolo, Patriarch of Grado (1130-1182), to translate Epiphanius's work into Latin during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)¹², a testimony that proves an interest in Epiphanius and thus knowledge of his work during the mid-twelfth century in Constantinople. Given the fact that Iakovos was a knowledgeable theologian and evidently well-acquainted with earlier homiletic and apocryphal material referring to the *Theotokos*¹³, it is almost certain that he was aware of the work of the monk Epiphanius.

According to the Protevangelion and the homiletic text of the monk¹⁴, after her *Eisodia* Mary grew older day by day and spent her time in the innermost part of the sanctuary in the company of angels and priests until she became twelve

⁹ J. C. Anderson, "Anna Komnene, Learned Women, and the Book in Byzantine Art", in Th. Gouma-Peterson, ed., *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York and London 2000, 125-56, esp. 141-5 (hereafter: "The Book in Byzantine Art").

¹⁰ PG 43, col. 124. M. J. Kishpaugh, *The Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple: A Historical and Literary Study*, Washington, D.C. 1941, 22-3.

¹¹ *Epiphaniū Monachi et Presbyteri Sermo de Vita Sanctissime Deiparae et de ipsius annis*, PG 120, cols 185-214, esp. col. 192B. I am indebted to Professor Judith Herrin for drawing my attention to the text of Epiphanius. For a different tradition that records Anna instructing Mary see P. Sheingorn, "The Wise Mother: the Image of Saint Anna Teaching the Virgin Mary", *Gesta* 32/1 (1993), 69-80.

¹² Kishpaugh, *op.cit.*, 36-7 and n. 48.

¹³ For Iakovos's compositional techniques and the use of his sources see E. M. Jeffreys, "The Sevastokratorissa Eirene as Literary Patroness: The Monk Iakovos", *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress. Akten* 2.3 (=JÖB 32/3), Vienna 1982, 63-71, esp. 66-7. M. J. Jeffreys, ed. and tr., "Iakovos Monachos, Letter 3", in A. Moffatt, ed., *Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Byzantina Australiensia 5, Canberra 1984, 241-57. C. Laga, "Entering the Library of Jacobus Monachus. The Exemplar of Jacobus' Quotations from the *Commentary on the Songs of Songs* by Gregory of Nyssa", in K. Demoen and J. Vereecken, eds, *La spiritualité de l'univers byzantin dans le verbe et l'image*, Instrumenta Patristica 30, Turnhout 1997, 151-61. See also Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 12-4.

¹⁴ The fourth sermon of Iakovos remains unpublished except for a brief extract incorporated in Migne's compilation. See the analysis below.



Fig. 1. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 90r. The oracular response given to Zacharias.

years old. At this point a dilemma arose among the priests about Mary's future (Protevangelion 8.2). As a young woman in puberty her presence in the Holy of Holies was considered impure and illegal according to the Jewish law. Since Zacharias was the high priest of the temple and thus responsible for both the ceremonies of the sanctuary and the young woman herself, the assembly of the priests decided that he should enter the Holy of Holies and ask God to give them the answer they were seeking (Protevangelion 8.2-3). On fol. 90r (Fig. 1) the young girl is represented seated by the sanctuary supporting an open inscribed book on her knees, while Zacharias, the high priest, receives the oracular

response to their petition¹⁵. An interesting detail indicated only in the Vatican copy of the homilies is the Annunciation scene incised on the closed *bemothyra* of the sanctuary¹⁶. The laconic inscription on Mary's book, *καὶ ἔπη*, completed as *καὶ ἐπήκουσέν μου*, is difficult to decipher. It may allude to either Psalm 3.5: 'I cried to the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his Holy Mountain', or Psalm 117.5-6: 'In my affliction I called on the Lord and he heard me, so as to bring me into a wide place. The Lord is thy helper and I will not fear what man shall do to me'. Thus, the layers of interpretation of Mary's book are multiple and go well beyond the obvious reference to her literacy¹⁷.

¹⁵ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 90r; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 120r. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 13. Omont, *Miniatures*, 17. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 51-2. For the iconography of the scene see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en Occident*, vol. 1, Brussels 1964; revised edition 1992, 169 (hereafter: *Iconographie*).

¹⁶ For this iconographical detail see A. Grabar, "Deux notes sur l'hi-

stoire de l'iconostase d'après des monuments de Yougoslavie", *Recueil de travaux de l'institut d'études byzantines* 7 (1961), 13-22, figs 1-8, esp. 16-7, fig. 4, where he discusses the development of the Byzantine *iconostasion* and mentions the Annunciation scene on the *bemothyra* of Vat. gr. 1162.

¹⁷ For later visual examples that hinted at Mary's instruction in the

It is important to note that this is the first time Mary communicates with the beholder of the manuscript. The inscribed codex is meaningfully directed to the reader/viewer: as Zacharias receives God's reply about her fate, the young virgin quotes a Psalm that expresses her confidence in God, who has always protected her and kept her safe. The designer of the illustration is apparently trying to convey the idea that Mary is convinced that her fate is in the hands of God. Moreover, the Annunciation scene on the closed *bemothyra* of the sanctuary combined with the representation of the book and its content constitutes a visual indication that verifies Mary's distinguished future and her paramount role in the Incarnation. In this context the book she holds in her hand is transformed into a visual metaphor of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. Seen as such, the right half of the specific miniature becomes a pre-announcement/revelation of Mary's canonical Annunciation that follows. In this sense, the rhetoric of the visual is more revealing and eloquent than Iakovos's text.

A similar combination of the canonical Annunciation scene with a representation of Mary holding an open inscribed book is found in an illustrated Psalter and New Testament manuscript of the eleventh century, Dumbarton Oaks Collection MS 3, on fol. 80v (Fig. 2)¹⁸. The juxtaposition of the two scenes indicates two consecutive moments: the Salutation of Gabriel at the top and Christ's conception at the bottom. The open book that Mary supports on her knees, while she tellingly points at its content is a visual metaphor of the conception of the Word/Christ.

Finally, it appears that the combination of Mary seated by the sanctuary with the incised Annunciation scene on the *be-*

mothyra betrays knowledge of a relatively unknown annunciation to her recorded only in apocryphal literature of apologetic nature. In the biography of Mary by the monk Epiphanius an interesting narrative detail is recorded. When Mary completed the twelfth year of her life in the temple of the Lord and while she stood by the sanctuary praying in the middle of the night, the voice of God was heard out of the Holy of Holies and revealed to her that she will become the mother of His Son¹⁹. The same annunciation to Mary by God is recorded in the apocryphal Gospel of Bartholomew where after Christ's Ascension Mary recounted to the Apostles her sojourn in the House of the Lord and the same mysterious annunciation to her by God²⁰. Although these details are not mentioned in the homiletic text, Iakovos must have been aware of this tradition, which he chose to incorporate in the visual account of the books. The image betrays extra-textual influences and supplements visually the text of Iakovos.

A couple of folios ahead, Iakovos abruptly interrupts the apocryphal narration in order to explain the decision of the priests to provide Mary with a protector/fiancé in accordance with God's demands²¹. The divine plan of redemption, namely the Incarnation of God's Son by a virgin, had to remain a secret from the lord of darkness and his supporters. The designation of a protector for Mary was meant as a disguise to deceive the devil. And indeed the secret was kept safe and Satan was unable to comprehend the mysteries of Mary. As a result, all his attempts to tempt her as he once succeeded to do with Eve remained futile²².

The miniature (fol. 92r) illustrating this part of the fourth sermon is unique and conveys the idea of Mary's triumph

temple see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne "Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin", in P. Underwood, ed., *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 4, Princeton 1975, 181-3 (hereafter: "Iconography"). S. Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography of the Frescoes of the Pareclousion", in Underwood, op.cit., 317. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie*, 157-8.

¹⁸ S. Der Nersessian, "A Psalter and New Testament Manuscript at Dumbarton Oaks", *DOP* 19 (1965), 155-83, esp. 171-2, fig. 22. A. Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalter in Byzantium*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques 13, Paris 1984, 96, fig. 336. Cf. Anderson, "The Book in Byzantine Art", 139-41, fig. 8.

¹⁹ PG 120, col. 193B.

²⁰ E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, tr., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols, translated into English by A. J. B. Higgins, Philadelphia 1963, vol. 1, 493-4, chap. 2, § 15-22.

²¹ This extract of the fourth sermon is edited at the end of the Migne

edition, *Ex quarto Jacobi monachi sermone in Deiparae Desponsationem excerptum*, PG 127, cols 697-700.

²² See Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 52-3. According to a Pseudo-Chrysostomic homily on the Annunciation, which provides a similar explanation to that of Iakovos, the evil one was aware of the mystery of the virgin birth because of Isaiah's prophecy that pre-announced the Incarnation of the Son of God by a virgin (Isaiah 7.14). As a result, Satan stalked all virgins in order to prevent the realisation of the prophecy: *In Annuntiationem gloriosissimae Dominae nostrae Deiparae*, PG 50, col. 793. Iakovos's comments might have been inspired by this tradition as documented in this earlier homily. For more references to such homiletic material and a discussion of the specific miniature in a different context see V. Foskolou, "The Virgin, the Christ-child and the Evil Eye", in M. Vassilaki, ed., *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, Aldershot 2005, 251-8, esp. 252-3.

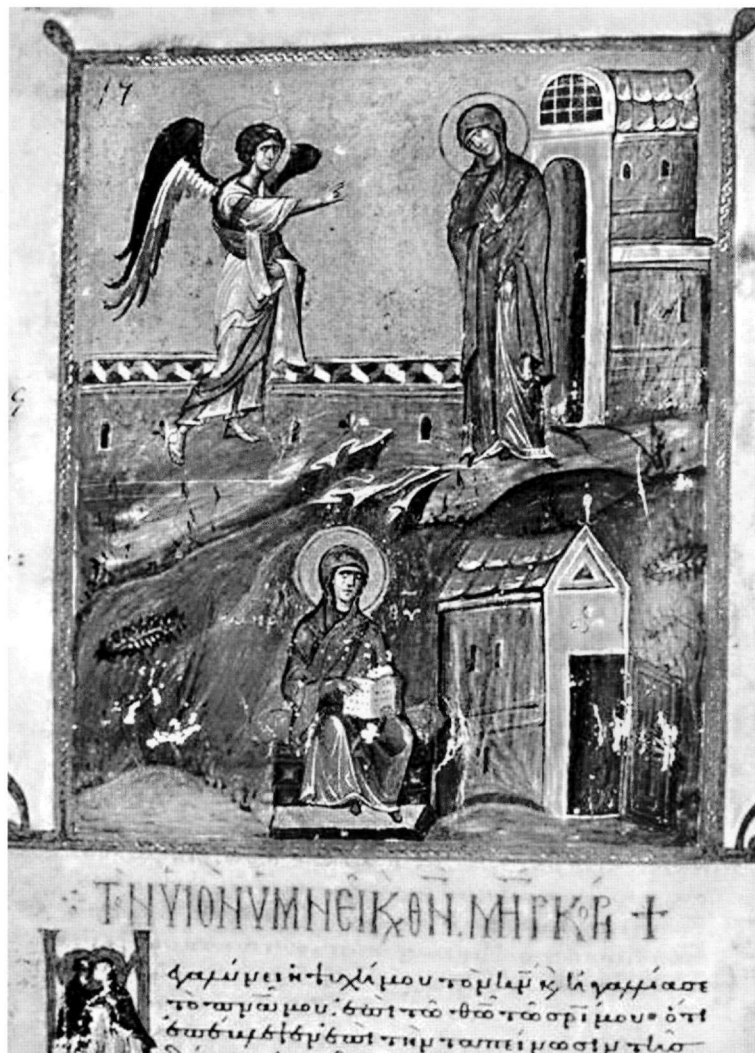


Fig. 2. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Collection MS 3, fol. 80v. Annunciation headpiece introducing Mary's Canticle (Benaki Museum photographic archive).

over Satan as does the text (Fig. 3)²³. On the top register, Mary sits by the veiled altar on a backless throne and supports an open inscribed book on her knees. The sixty archangels arranged in a dense group around her allude to the sixty valiant warriors of the Song of Songs and their depiction in the prefiguration miniature of the Couch of Solomon introducing the fourth sermon²⁴. These divine bodyguards see to Mary's protection. The inscription on her book records Psalm 9.7: 'The swords of the enemy have

failed utterly'. The words of the Psalmist intended for the beholder of the manuscript with whom Mary communicates once again, confirm the outcome of the struggle between the demons and the angels that takes place in the lower part of the composition. The 'swords of the enemy' mentioned on Mary's book should be perceived as the temptations she was put through by Satan that have been accordingly omitted from the picture. What we see is the conclusion of the episode: the Satan's malpractices remained ineffective and

²³ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 92r; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 123r. Stornajolo, *Omīlie*, 13. Omont, *Miniatures*, 18. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 52-3.

²⁴ See also Linardou, "The Couch of Solomon", 77-83, fig. 3.



Fig. 3. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 92r. The triumph of Mary over Satan.

now he is entirely defeated by Mary's mighty protectors. The composition is completed on the top left with the figure of the unsuspecting child-verger who suspends the oil lamps for the illumination of the temple. This graphic detail enhances the contrast between those who comprehend, i.e. the beholder of the manuscript, and those who do not – the young servant of the temple²⁵. What is invisible to him is visible to us. The readers of the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts

are in the privileged position of witnessing the young girl's mysteries not only in words but also in images.

At the end of the fourth sermon, Joseph was persuaded to accept Mary and take her with him under his protection. The description of her departure in Iakovos's text is brief (Protevangelion 9.3). Its visual counterpart on fol. 105r is, however, exhaustively detailed (Fig. 4)²⁶. On the top we see the farewell scene between Mary the high priest Zacharias and the rest of

²⁵ See Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 53.

²⁶ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 105r; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 142r. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 14. Omont, *Miniatures*, 18. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 56-7. For

the iconography of the scene see Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Iconography", 186. Ead., *Iconographie*, 179-81.



Fig. 4. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 105r. Mary's departure from the temple towards the house of Joseph.

the temple priests, while Joseph is already walking towards the exit with his stick and a book in his hand. In the lower register the farewell episode is repeated between the couple and a group of people, and finally Mary and Joseph walk away. The newly appointed protector of the young virgin still holds the book and carries a wood saw on his shoulder. Apparently, the codex does not belong to Joseph the humble carpenter, but to Mary. It is the very same book that kept her busy during her sojourn in the temple and is now entrusted in the hands of

her protector. In this case the depiction of the book is a narrative detail that anticipates imminent developments: it predisposes the beholder to what will follow. Mary will use it again extensively in the last sermon of Iakovos's collection as a sign of her supernatural pregnancy and as a means of defence against her distrustful enemies, against the people who see but do not comprehend hers and God's mysteries.

In the sixth sermon recounting Mary's life after the Annunciation²⁷, namely the delivery of the *porphyra*, the Visitation

²⁷ The Migne edition contains only the first half of the sixth sermon of Iakovos: *PG* 120, cols 660-697, where it is erroneously identified as the

fifth sermon. The remaining homily stays unpublished.



Fig. 5. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 137v. Mary gets ready for the delivery of the porphyra.

to Elizabeth, the doubts of Joseph and finally the public demonstration of her innocence, one notices a proliferation of representations of Mary holding books (six out of nine examples). Primarily the book Mary holds should be perceived as an allegorical representation of the Word Incarnate/Christ, while it occasionally transforms into a defensive practice of Mary against the false accusations first of her protector, Joseph, and then of her co-patriots.

Such an interpretation is supported by the content and symbolism of the prefiguration miniature (fol. 133v) introducing the sixth sermon of Iakovos. The specific composition combines a figurative representation of the Old Testament

tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant with the narrative episode of Aaron's election as the high priest²⁸. The typological frontispiece of the sixth sermon prefigures Mary mainly as the bearer, 'container' of Christ²⁹. The homiletic text of Iakovos provides us with an extensive account of Mary's life after the Annunciation and during her early pregnancy. The selection of a combination of prefigurations that specifically exalted Mary as the bearer of Christ seems straightforward: the Virgin who became the 'container' of the Incarnated Word is equated and juxtaposed with the biblical containers of God's providence that she replaced³⁰. Along the same line, the representations of Mary carrying a book through-

²⁸ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 133v; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 181v. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 15. Omont, *Miniatures*, 21. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 69.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of this frontispiece see K. Linardou, "Reading two Byzantine Illustrated Books", 153-7. See also Hutter and Canart, *op.cit.*, 69.

³⁰ For a discussion of the concept that the New Covenant replaced the Old Testament as applied to earlier visual examples see K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters*, Cambridge 1992, 49-52.



Fig. 6. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 139r. Mary's journey towards the temple.

out the sixth sermon allude to her supernatural pregnancy and the mysterious Incarnation. They bring forward the same notion of her being the bearer, 'container' of the Incarnated Word (visually translated into a book) and she is acclaimed God's beloved and chosen one.

As soon as Mary received the message of Gabriel and the news about the unexpected pregnancy of her cousin Elizabeth, she decided to visit her immediately. Nevertheless, her first priority was the delivery of the *porphyra* to the priests of the temple. Therefore, she diligently finished her work and prepared for her visit to the temple (Protevangelion 12.1)³¹. The first miniature of the sixth sermon is inserted at this point (fol. 137v).

The miniature is arranged in two registers (Fig. 5)³². In the bottom zone we watch Mary and Iakovos as they leave the house or perhaps the city of Nazareth. In her left hand she holds the basket containing the *porphyra* that extends towards the boy who walks in front of her. An odd pictorial detail of the composition is the book Mary takes with her. In Iakovos's text, attached beneath the miniature, it is stated explicitly that Mary carried protectively in her hands 'the symbols of the royal dignity' and that she secretly and inexplicably wove in her body the imperial flesh to clothe the King of all creation³³. In the picture, the imperial purple of the flesh is represented as the *porphyra* within the little bas-



Fig. 7. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 144v. The way towards Elizabeth.

ket that Mary hands over to Iakovos, while the anticipated King, the Incarnated Word, is visually translated into a closed book that Mary holds affectionately against her chest. Iakovos's theological syllogism has been imaginatively incorporated into the picture.

On fol. 139r (Fig. 6)³⁴, we watch Mary as she walks in haste towards the temple in order to deliver the *porphyra* to the priests. She walks and talks to God. Her monologue starts directly beneath the miniature and reads: 'You, my Lord, saying, have even arranged in the best way the outcome of the things that have already reached me, and you preserved your handmaiden blameless, and as a director, you look over the difficult accomplishments of the future'³⁵.

The composition is very simple, almost minimal, except for the detail of the inscribed book that Mary presents to the reader/viewer of the manuscript. The inscription on it reads the beginning words of her monologue as they are recorded in Iakovos's text beneath the miniature: σὺ δέσποτα λέγουσα. By using the inscribed book in the hands of Mary the designer of the illustration enhanced the correspondence between the text and its illustration in a remarkable way. Text and image have been combined in an interactive pattern that recalls – forgive the anachronism – the illustration of modern comics.

After the deliverance of the *porphyra* and the glorification

³¹ PG 127, cols 661B-664A-B.

³² Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 137v; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 187r. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 15-16. Omont, *Miniatures*, 21. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 70.

³³ PG 127, col. 664B.

³⁴ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 139r; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 189v. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 16. Omont, *Miniatures*, 21. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 70-71.

³⁵ PG 127, col. 665B.



Fig. 8. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 164v. The return of Joseph.

speech of the high priest Symeon, Iakovos continues with the Virgin's visit to Elizabeth. But before her arrival there, we see more of her journey on fol. 144v (Fig. 7)³⁶. Mary and the youngest son of Joseph, little Iakovos, are depicted against the plain golden background. The boy proceeds and Mary follows. Once again, she carries with her a closed book. Her gaze and gesture are directed towards the blessing hand of God emerging from an arc of heaven above her. The inclusion of God's hand and the closed book are interpreted by Iakovos's comments, which follow directly beneath the miniature: Mary rejoiced at the words of the high priest. The content of his speech testified that he was indeed aware of her mysteries and in particular her supernatural pregnancy. Mary was indeed God's protégée and she bore within her the

Word beyond substance³⁷. In the picture God's favour is indicated visually with his blessing hand and the Word/Christ is signified with the closed book, which contains the Word of God. The miniature translates in visual terms both the narrative and the complex theological comments of Iakovos.

On fol. 164v (Fig. 8)³⁸, Joseph returns home after a long absence and as he enters the house he notices Mary's pregnancy. In a monologue recorded below the miniature, he explains his alarm³⁹. Mary is represented seated and with her left hand she supports an open inscribed book with the words of the Psalmist (Psalm 86.3): 'Glorious things have been spoken of thee, O city of God'. She is identified as the mediator of the Incarnation⁴⁰. Moreover, the way she presents the book to the viewer and Joseph designates the prophetic

³⁶ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 144v; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 196v. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 16. Omont, *Miniatures*, 22. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 72.

³⁷ PG 127, col. 673A.

³⁸ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 164v; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 217v. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 17. Omont, *Miniatures*, 22. Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 76.

³⁹ From this point onwards the sixth sermon remains unpublished.

⁴⁰ See Hutter and Canart, *Marienomiliar*, 64 and 76. The association of Mary with the Holy City as *Hagia Sion*, is considered one of her typological epithets and it refers to the Incarnation of Christ. For parallel verbal formulae in homilies see for example Andrew of Crete on the Nativity of



Fig. 9. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 166r. *The inquisitive inspection of Joseph.*

words of the Psalm as both a testimony of her innocence and a guarantee of her purity. She uses the words of her ancestor in her defence against Joseph's inquisitive look.

The indirect defensive practises of Mary continue on fol. 166r (Fig. 9)⁴¹. Joseph could not help but ponder Mary's condition. He kept watching her whenever her attention was diverted and pretended to be asleep so that he might avoid her attention. Mary is depicted seated opposite him directing meaningfully towards Joseph the open book she holds. The inscription on it records a Psalm of David (Psalm 44.12), which reads: 'Because the King has desired thy beauty; for he is thy Lord'⁴². The prophetic words of her ancestor become the answer to Joseph's wary attitude.

Finally, on fol. 179r (Fig. 10)⁴³, we watch the 'delinquent' couple's violent arrest by the servants of the temple. The miniature is a vivid composition punctuated by emotions of anguish and fury. On the top register the Virgin is represented still seated on her wooden stool, trying to avoid the violent gestures of the servants. In her left hand she holds an open book, which contains the first words of Isaiah's prophecy, Isaiah 7.14: 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son and thou shall call his name Emmanuel'. The words of Isaiah, the prophet of the Incarnation *par excellence*, are employed by Mary for her defence against the violence of the servants. She is not an ordinary woman, but the one who bears the Son of God, as the

Mary, *In Sanctam Nativitatem praesantae Dominae nostrae Dei Genitricis, semperque virginis Mariae*, PG 97, col. 869B; John of Damascus, *In Sanctissimae Dominae nostrae Deiparae natalem diem*, PG 96, col. 684D. For hymnography see S. Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, Paris 1930, 70.

⁴¹ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 166r; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 219v. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 17. Omont, *Miniatures*, 22-3. Hutter and Canart, *Mariemiliar*, 77.

⁴² According to Hutter, this verse stems from David's prophecy for the election of God's Bride (Psalm 44.11-18). Its use in the liturgy works as a prefiguration of Mary's Annunciation: Hutter and Canart, *Mariemiliar*, 77.

⁴³ Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 179r; Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 238v. Stornajolo, *Omilie*, 17. Omont, *Miniatures*, 23. Hutter and Canart, *Mariemiliar*, 79-80.



Fig. 10. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 179r. The arrest of Mary and Joseph by the servants of the temple.

prophecy of Isaiah foretold⁴⁴. Moreover, the citation from Isaiah, which mentions the pregnancy of a virgin, seems to have influenced an iconographic detail of the miniature. For the first time since Mary's pregnancy was mentioned, we have a visual indication of her situation. Her violent movements uncovered her belly, which is depicted as round and swollen⁴⁵. This is the culmination point of a long visual process expanding throughout the sixth sermon, which ap-

parently aims both to convey and to advocate the idea of Mary's incomprehensible pregnancy. The designer of the illustration mobilised various methods in order to meet his theological objective; the representation of books was evidently a most flexible and effective one. The beholder of the manuscript can partake in the mysteries and secrets of Mary, which remain incomprehensible to non-believers.

In conclusion, the representations of books in the Kokki-

⁴⁴ See also Hutter and Canart, *Mariemiliar*, 80-1.

⁴⁵ The painter that worked for the illustration of Vat. gr. 1162 tends to render the drapery of the garments around the belly of both male and female seated figures in a manner that exaggerates the swelling around this part of the body. Nevertheless, in this specific miniature the ar-

range of Mary's tunic around her belly differs i.e. her garment is stretched around her belly, and does not reproduce the 'manneristic' approach of the drapery that is typical of the miniaturist's style. In fact, it appears to have been rendered intentionally as such in order to signify explicitly the condition of the young woman.

nobaphos manuscripts principally served the progression of visual narration. They were also employed in order to enhance the theological message of the books, thus promoting not only the intellectual insight of their designer, Iakovos, but also the skills of the recipient, Eirene the *Sevastokratorissa*.

Apart from flattering an educated patroness, they presuppose that she had the necessary skills to decipher images, namely visual literacy. In order for her to discern the sophisticated visual strategies contained therein she had to master the art of 'reading' the images along with the text.

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Η ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΒΙΒΛΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΣΤΙΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΗΜΕΝΕΣ ΟΜΙΛΙΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΙΑΚΩΒΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΚΟΚΚΙΝΟΒΑΦΟΥ: ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙΑ ΕΓΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣΥΝΗ Ή ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΕΣ ΕΙΚΑΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΑΦΗΓΗΣΗΣ;

Στην παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζεται η λειτουργία του βιβλίου ως πολυσήμαντου εικαστικού συμβόλου μέσα στις μικρογραφίες δύο εικονογραφημένων βυζαντινών χειρογράφων, των μέσων του 12ου αιώνα, τις ομιλίες του μοναχού Ιακώβου της Μονής Κοκκινοβάφου (*Vaticanus graecus 1162* και *Parisinus graecus 1208*).

Οι συνθήκες κάτω από τις οποίες δημιουργήθηκαν τα συγκεκριμένα χειρόγραφα δεν είναι απόλυτα ξεκάθαρα, ωστόσο έμμεσες μαρτυρίες μας επιτρέπουν να συμπεράνουμε ότι ο Ιάκωβος όχι μόνο συνέγραψε τις έξι ομιλίες που είναι αφιερωμένες στην εξιστόρηση του πρώιμου, απόκρυφου βίου της Θεοτόκου, αλλά επιπλέον σχεδίασε την εκτενή εικονογράφησή τους. Κατά την άποψή μου, ο βατικανός κώδικας προηγείται χρονικά του παρισινού και πρέπει να φιλοτεχνήθηκε στα τέλη της δεκαετίας του 1140 για τη σεβαστοκρατόρισα Ειρήνη, μια αιγιματική μορφή της αυτοκρατορικής αυλής του Μανουήλ Α΄ Κομνηνού. Ο παρισινός κώδικας αντιγράφηκε από το χειρόγραφο της Ειρήνης στις αρχές της δεκαετίας του 1150, πιθανότατα για τον συγγραφέα των ομιλιών Ιάκωβο.

Ένα ιδιαίτερα ενδιαφέρον στοιχείο των χειρογράφων αυτών είναι η απεικόνιση – συνολικά εννέα φορές – της Παναγίας να κρατεί ένα βιβλίο. Είναι σχεδόν βέβαιο ότι οι απεικονίσεις που εξιστορούν τη ζωή της νεαρής παρθένου στον ιουδαϊκό ναό, απηχούν μια απόκρυφη παράδοση απολογητικού χαρακτήρα, η οποία καταγράφει την εγγραμματοσύνη της Μαρίας και την ενασχόλησή της με την ανάγνωση των ψαλμών κατά τη διάρκεια της παραμονής της εκεί. Το πιθανότερο είναι ότι ο μοναχός Ιάκωβος γνώριζε αυτή την παράδοση, την οποία ωστόσο επέλεξε να ενσωματώσει όχι στο κείμενό του αλλά στις μικρογραφίες του χειρογράφου.

Οι κώδικες στα χέρια της Μαρίας επιστρατεύθηκαν πρωταρχικά για να εξυπηρετήσουν τη διαδικασία της εικαστικής αφήγησης. Η απεικόνισή τους δεν απαιτείται από το περιεχόμενο των ομιλιών, αλλά διευκολύνει τους μηχανισμούς αφήγησης και ενισχύει το δογματικό περιεχόμενο των χειρογράφων, προσθέτοντας πολλαπλά επίπεδα συμβολισμού στην ανάγνωση των μικρογραφιών. Σύμβολα, όπως οι ανοιχτοί και κλειστοί κώδικες στα χέρια της Θεοτόκου, μετασηματίζονται συνε-

χώς, ανάλογα με τα συμφραζόμενα του κειμένου αλλά και της εικαστικής αφήγησης. Έτσι, τα βιβλία επιστρατεύονται ως ένα μέσο επικοινωνίας ανάμεσα στη Μαρία και τον αναγνώστη του χειρογράφου, ως συνδετικός κρίκος ανάμεσα στο κείμενο και την εικόνα, και τέλος αλληγορικά, ως αναπαραστάσεις του δογματικού όρου Ενσαρκωμένος Λόγος, δηλαδή ως εικαστικές αποδόσεις του μυστηρίου της Ενσάρκωσης.

Εξίσου δελεαστική είναι η υπόθεση ότι οι απεικονίσεις

της Παναγίας με ένα βιβλίο στο χέρι αντικατοπτρίζουν και απηχούν το ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον της παραλήπτριας του κώδικα, της σεβαστοκρατόρισσας Ειρήνης, μιας γυναίκας δηλαδή που υπήρξε παραγγελιοδότρια έργων της κοσμικής λογοτεχνίας στην Κωνσταντινούπολη του 12ου αιώνα, και γι' αυτό το λόγο ίσως και να την ενδιέφερε να υπογραμμισθεί η εγγραμματοσύνη της Παρθένου.