

## Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας

Τόμ. 29 (2008)

Δελτίον ΧΑΕ 29 (2008), Περίοδος Δ'. Στη μνήμη της Άννας Μαραβά-Χατζηνικολάου (1911-2005)



### Η εικονογραφία του Ιώβ

*Christopher WALTER*

doi: [10.12681/dchae.607](https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.607)

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

WALTER, C. (2011). Η εικονογραφία του Ιώβ. *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*, 29, 69–72.  
<https://doi.org/10.12681/dchae.607>



# ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

## The Iconography of Job

---

Christopher WALTER

Περίοδος Δ', Τόμος ΚΘ' (2008) • Σελ. 69-72

ΑΘΗΝΑ 2008

## THE ICONOGRAPHY OF JOB

When I was living in Athens from 1982 to 1993, I was fortunate in making the acquaintance of the late Anna Marava-Chatzinikolaou and her colleague Christina Toufexi-Paschou, whom I helped with the translation into English of the third volume of their *Catalogue of the Illuminated Byzantine Manuscripts of the National Library of Greece*. However, I also received much advice from Madame Chatzinikolaou for my own research projects. It is principally for this reason that I am grateful that this brief contribution to the *Festschrift* which is being published in memory of her has been accepted.

My subject is the iconography of a miniature which appears in four illuminated manuscripts of the *Book of Job*: Vatican gr. 749, f. 25 (Fig. 1), Patmos cod. 171, f. 51 (Fig. 2), Vat. gr. 1231, f. 54v and Barocci 201, f. 33v. As can be seen from the illustrations, the first two are in a good state of preservation. On the other hand the third and fourth miniatures are too damaged to merit reproduction.

Before attempting to analyse their iconography, two preliminary observations should be made. Only two illuminated manuscripts of the *Book of Job* have been published. One is codex 3 in the library of Mount Sinai<sup>1</sup>. Besides the biblical text it contains *Scholia* and the *Protheoria* of Olympiodorus. The authors of the volume date the manuscript to the late eleventh century. Job is represented sitting on a dung-hill on f. 26, f. 28v and f. 30v<sup>2</sup>, but the Adversary, who is characteristic of the miniatures to be studied in this article, is absent. The authors write that fifteen illuminated manuscripts of the *Book of Job* are known. The only other one which has

been published has been dated to the ninth century and may have been illuminated in Rome<sup>3</sup>.

Its miniatures do not resemble those to be studied here. Weitzmann and Galavaris name few of the known illuminated manuscripts of the *Book of Job*. However, they mention Patmos cod. 171, which does concern us here, only adding that its date is controversial<sup>4</sup>.

The second observation concerns the wording of the text which is illuminated, chapter 2, verses 7-9. Since the manuscript is in Greek, one might assume that it derives from the *Septuagint*<sup>5</sup>, according to which 'Job is sitting on a dung-hill outside the city' (ἐκάθετο ἐπὶ τῆς κοπρίας ἔξω τῆς πόλεως)<sup>6</sup>. However, he is represented in Vat. gr. 749, f. 25r, one of the miniatures (Fig. 1) with which this article is concerned, seated on a *bench*. Moreover, in the translation of the passage, it is said that he is being threatened by the *devil*, a doubtful rendering of διάβολος in ancient Greek. The word only recurs twice elsewhere in the *Septuagint*: *Zechariah* chapter 3, verse 1, where it is again translated as *devil* but with a footnote giving *accuser* (the correct translation) and *I Chronicles* chapter 21, verse 1, where it is translated (with no alternative) as *devil*. In fact, in ancient Greek contemporary with that of the *Septuagint*, διάβολος regularly meant *accuser* or *adversary*, an accurate translation of the Hebrew *satan*. Later, particularly in the *New Testament*, *satan* became the proper name or personification of evil. Notoriously in translations of the Bible one cannot rely on total accuracy or hope for consistency in the use of such words as *devil* and *satan*. However, in the text illustrated in Vat. gr.

<sup>1</sup> Kurt Weitzmann and George Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Illuminated Manuscripts. I: From the IXth to the XIIth Century*, Princeton 1990, 99-104, description of the miniatures, figs 296-327.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-104.

<sup>3</sup> André Grabar, *Les manuscrits grecs enluminés de provenance italienne (IXe-XIe siècles)*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques, Paris 1972, 18-20, figs 1-10.

<sup>4</sup> Weitzmann and Galavaris, *op.cit.*, 105, note 11.

<sup>5</sup> I use the edition by S. Bagster and J. Pott, London - New York (no date).

<sup>6</sup> The use of the word κοπρία is surprising, since in the corresponding passage in Hebrew the word *haafar* (transliteration provided by Alain Marchadour) meaning *dust* is used. This, or a corresponding word, was used in translations, possibly depending on the *Vulgate* rather than the *Setpuagint*. Thus the demotic Greek *Old Testament* supplies στάχτες (ashes).



Fig. 1. *Job and the Adversary*, Vat. gr. cod. 749 (f. 25).

749 and Patmos cod. 171 the meaning of the word διάβολος is certainly *adversary*.

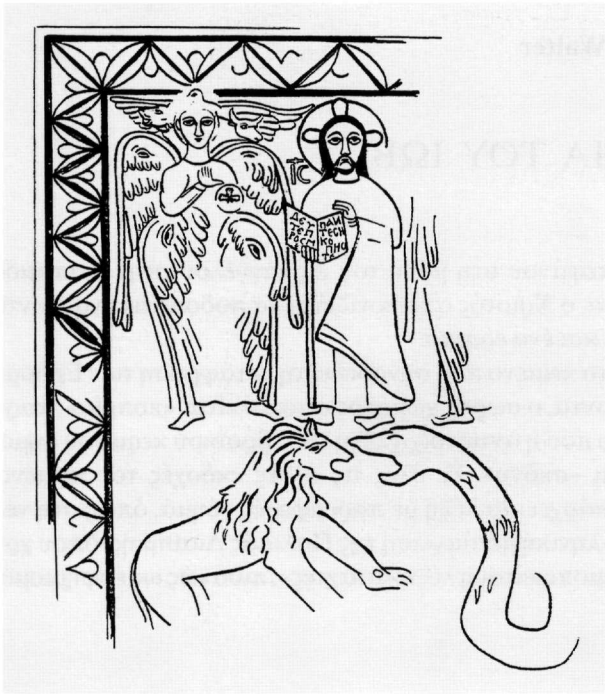
To turn at last to the iconography of the miniatures, its overall sense corresponds clearly to the text in Vat. gr. 749 apart from the fact that Job is not sitting on a dung-hill. He is almost naked, covered with small boils (spots recalling some disagreeable disease like small pox). He is scratching them, but with his hand, not as in the text a potsherd (ὄστρακον). His wife stands to his right, her head resting on her right hand in a gesture of sorrow and her left hand extended towards Job in a speaking gesture. In verse 9, she asks him, 'How long will you hold out?'. In Patmos cod. 171 (Fig. 2), Job's wife does not figure in the miniature.

To the left is the Adversary, represented similarly in both these miniatures as an alarming monster. Its body resembles that of a snake, but with two heads, one at each end. In the Patmos miniature a horn or antler protrudes from the upper head. From the centre in each miniature is an animal like a lion but apparently integrated into the body of the monster. The three muzzles are open and menacing Job. There is no phrase in the text which might inspire the representation of the Adversary in this way. In fact the explanation must be that the artist knew of other texts in which the words διάβολος or *satan* occurred. Moreover in later versions of the *Old Testament* and regularly in the *New Testament* they took on a far stronger meaning than in the *Book of Job*. The following passage from the *Apocalypse*, chapter 12, verse 9,

which concerns the celestial war at the end of time may be cited as an example: 'The great dragon (δράκων) was thrown down, that serpent (ὄφις) of old that led the whole world astray, whose name is Satan (ὁ Σατανάς), or the Devil (Διάβολος)'.



Fig. 2. *Job and the Adversary*, Patmos cod. 171 (f. 51).



The artist must also have known representations of such monsters which recur commonly in scenes where they are overcome by an archangel or a warrior saint. John Damascene wrote an account of the morphology of dragons<sup>7</sup>. Saint Theodore Tiron and Saint George were the principal killers of the monsters. In representing them, it seems that Byzantine artists could give free play to their imagination<sup>8</sup>. However, I know no other examples of monsters combining the features of a serpent and a lion. The nearest example which I can cite is illustrated here (Fig. 3). It is in the church of Saint Stephen in the Monastery of the Archangel, Cappadocia<sup>9</sup>. Here, in fact, Christ is trampling a lion and a serpent. The two beasts are represented separately, but at least they have features similar to those of the Adversary in miniatures of Job.

Fig. 3. Christ trampling a lion and a serpent. Hagios Stephanos, Monastery of the Archangel, Cappadocia.

<sup>7</sup> John Damascene, *De draconibus*, PG 95, 1600-1601.

<sup>8</sup> Among the accounts of them may be cited P. Boulhoul, "Hagiographie antique et démonologie. Notes sur quelques passions grecques", *AnBoll* 112 (1994), 262-263. I have discussed them cursorily in articles on Saints George and Theodore, especially "The Cycle of St George in the Monastery of Dečani", *Dečani et l'art byzantin au milieu du XIVe*

*siècle*, Belgrade 1987, 347-357, and "Saint Theodore and the Dragon", *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology*, edited by Chris Entwistle, Oxford 2003, 95-106.

<sup>9</sup> Nicole Thierry, *La Cappadoce de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*, Turnhout 2002, 125, schema 41, fiche 15. The author has kindly authorised the reproduction of her drawing.

Christopher Walter

## Η ΕΙΚΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΙΩΒ

Τα βυζαντινά χειρόγραφα του *Βιβλίου του Ιώβ* σπάνια είναι ιστορημένα. Γνωρίζω τέσσερα παραδείγματα, από τα οποία μόνο οι κώδικες Vaticanus graecus 749 και 171 της Πάτμου είναι σε σχετικά καλή κατάσταση. Και στις δύο περιπτώσεις, μία μικρογραφία, που χρησιμοποιείται ως προμετωπίδα, εικονογραφεί το Κεφάλαιο 2, στίχ. 7-9: Ο Ιώβ, καθισμένος σε θρανίο ή σε σωρό χώματος, απειλείται από το διάβολο ή έναν αντίπαλο, που απεικονίζεται ως τρομακτικό τέρας με τρία κεφάλια. Σε μια ανάλογη παράσταση στη εκκλησία του Αγίου

Στεφάνου στη μονή του Αρχαγγέλου στην Καππαδοκία, ο Χριστός απεικονίζεται να ποδοπατεί ένα λιοντάρι και ένα ερπετό.

Στο κείμενο που συνοδεύει τη μετάφραση των Εβδομήκοντα, ο σωρός χώματος αποκαλείται «κοπρία», παρόλο που η αντίστοιχη λέξη του εβραϊκού κειμένου σημαίνει «σκόνη». Σε όλες τις άλλες εκδοχές του κειμένου υπάρχει μία λέξη με παρεμφερές νόημα, όπως στη νεοελληνική μετάφραση της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης, όπου χρησιμοποιείται η λέξη «στάχτες», πιθανώς ως ευφημισμός.