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ΘΕΙΚΗ ΤΡΟΦΗ: ΜΑΣΤΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΑΛΕΣ ΣΤΙΣ ΜΙΚΡΟΓΡΑΦΙΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΙΑΚΩΒΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΝΗΣ ΚΟΚΚΙΝΟΒΑΦΟΥ

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DIVINE NOURISHMENT: ON BREASTS AND BOTTLES IN THE MINIATURES OF IAKOBOΣ KOKKINOBAΦHOS*

In recent years, scholars interested in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts have become more attuned to the richness of the two illustrated codices known as the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, one preserved in the Vatican Library (gr. 1162; hereafter referred to as V[aticanus]) and the other in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gr. 1208; hereafter referred to as P[arisinus]). Both contain the six homilies on the life of the Virgin written by Iakobos.*

The article suggests that the bottle-shaped breast motif, reminiscent of the Galaktotrophousa, and appearing in a series of images in the well known illustrated copy of the Kokkinobaphos homilies (Vatican City, Bibl. Apost. Vat., gr. 1162), was employed as an iconographical building block in the construction of an ideal visual Marian model. On a typological level, it is contrasted with the less voluminous, naturalistic, breast of Eve, possibly alluding to her role in bringing death on earth and to her “cursed,” joyless, motherhood. The article’s premise is that the different pictorial approach reflects the Eve-Mary antithesis voiced in Iakobos’s text.

Keywords
Middle Byzantine, Constantinople, Illuminated manuscripts, Iakobos Kokkinobaphos, Eirene the Sebastokratorissa, Galaktotrophousa, Breast feeding.

* This article sprung from an ongoing project on the representation of the female body in Byzantine art and its cultural implications, which I hope to complete in the near future. I would like to thank Maria Parani for a careful reading of this article’s draft as well as for her insightful comments.


2 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 11, Paris 1927 (hereafter: “Miniatures”). For a discussion of both manuscripts, see recently K. Linardou, “Reading Two Byzantine Illustrated Books: The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts (Vaticanus graccus 1162 and Parisinus graccus 1208) and Their Illustration”, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham 2004; a monograph on the mss is in preparation. At the time of writing the article, Linardou’s dissertation was unavailable for consultation, but, the author was gracious enough to answer some of my queries and sent me her publications as well as a copy of her forthcoming “Depicting the Salvation: Typology...
bos, an otherwise unknown monk of the Kokkinobaphos Monastery. As both books were produced in the same Constantinopolitan workshop, it is most probable that they were illustrated within a short span of time under the supervision of the monk himself: V in the 1140s and P in the early 1150s. It has been cogently shown that V was commissioned by the noblewoman Eirene the Sebastoktotorissa (ca. 1110-1151/52), sister-in-law of the emperor Manuel Komnenos and wife of the Sebastoktotoras Andronikos Komnenos (1108/9-1143), one of the most active literary patrons of her time; the monk Iakobos acted as her confidant and spiritual counselor. In contrast, Linardou argues that P was created for Iakobos’s private use, whereas Evangelatou suggests that this book may have been commissioned by Eirene as well. Both codices present numerous iconographic peculiarities, which were already noticed in the past. The present article will investigate another, hitherto unstudied, feature appearing in some miniatures— the bare female bottle-shaped breast. I will explore its meaning based on the relevant apocryphal and homiletical materials as well as on what is known about those who commissioned the manuscripts.

V shows a unique setting of The First Bath of the Virgin in the same frame as The Debate of the Elders of Israel. The midwife on the left is seated, bathing the naked and gold-haloed newborn Maria. A young maidservant on the right assists with the divine bath. The scene takes place against an architectural background indicative of a neutral domestic interior; however its domesticity is deceptive owing to the presence of the canopy, actually a ciborium, under which the bath is being given. Hutter suggests that the architectural element bespeaks the sacrificial aspect of the scene, since the era of Christ is announced through Anne’s conception and Mary’s birth (Fig. 1). She also notes the single bottle-shaped breast with its prominent nipple protruding from the midwife’s raised sleeve as if appended to her back, dismissing this anomaly as an artistic mistake.

Yet, a careful reading of the textual sources indicates that...
this visual motif may find justification in the Greek version of the apocryphal Pseudo-James, which renders μασθὸν ("her breast") when recounting the episode of Anna giving her breast to the child. The suckling organ is further hinted at in the phrase παρ' ἐλπίδα θηλάζουσαν ("unhoped-for suckling") in Iakobos's homily, relating Anna's summoning of the twelve tribes at the birth of the Virgin to rejoice in her motherhood. However, the texts fail to elucidate the (mis)placement of the peculiar visual motif. Moreover, the rare examples of Anna nursing the infant Mary are all of a later date; surviving only in monumental art outside of Constantinople, they cannot provide a comparable platform. Therefore, we can only speculate at this time that the breast was ascribed to the midwife since suckling the infant in a well-to-do household (illustrated by the sumptuous interior of the miniature) would have been one of her tasks.

The Birth of John the Baptist, where Elizabeth, with bottle-shaped breast, nourishes the nimbed child sitting in her lap, also appears exclusively in V. Not only does the breast seem to be detached from her flat chest, thereby precluding the possible existence of another breast, but it is also disproportionately large (Fig. 2). The miniature illustrates Luke 1:58: "And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her". Conforming with the text, Mary, Elizabeth's cousin, appears twice in the miniature – once conversing with the High Priest Zacharias, and again standing beside him when he sings a hymn in her honor. How do the images of the nursing Elizabeth or that of the midwife bathing Mary differ, or how do they resemble other images in Byzantine art? What is the main message they convey? How are they related to other themes in the Kokkinobaphos homilies?

Visual images of mothers nursing one breast and suckling their infants are quite rare. One revelatory example is the figure of Zipporah, Moses' Egyptian wife, offering one of their children a round and ample breast protruding from her dress. The breast is not only located in its natural anatomical place, but its realistic rendering is also complemented by the roundness of the other breast, which, although concealed, is suggested by shading of her dress (Fig. 3). Comparison of the Kokkinobaphos depictions with the Zipporah image can provide insights into the depiction and function of breasts in Byzantine art.

Fig. 1. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 1162, Homilies of the Monk James of Kokkinobaphos, Constantinople, 1130s, fol. 29r: The Birth of the Virgin (photo: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana).

Fig. 2. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 1162, Homilies of the Monk James of Kokkinobaphos, Constantinople, 1130s, fol. 159r: The Birth of St. John the Baptist (photo: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana).

14 "In the seventh [ninth] month Anna brought forth... And she lay down. And when the days were fulfilled, Anna purified herself from her childbed and to the child, and called her Mary" (Protoevangelion of James 5.2); E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha, vol. 2, ed. W. Schnellemecher, English trans. R. McL. Wilson, London 1966, 377.
15 In Deiparam 2:5 (PG 127: 573C).
16 In Deiparam 2:5 (PG 127: 573C).
importantly, the absence of a second breast, which consciously disengages this female organ from its usual connotations20. On the other hand, the bottle-shaped breast in the Kokkinoi manuscripts may be visually related to the Coptic iconic formula of the Virgin Galaktotrophousa ("She who nourishes with milk"). The image shows the Virgin seated hieratically, offering her bottle-shaped breast to


23 Fol. 14r: Άναπαυσις τῆς Παρθένου ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ; P does not have the inscription; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienmonolit*, 72-73.

24 On the changes Paradise undergoes in Byzantine mentality and art, both before the iconoclasm, and following it, see H. Maguire, “Paradise Withdrawn”, in idem, *Image and Imagination in Byzantine Art*, Aldershot 2007, 23-35.
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Fig. 4. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 1162, Homilies of the Monk James of Kokkinobaphos, Constantinople, 1130s, fol. 147r: The Rest of the Virgin on Her Way to Elizabeth (photo: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana).

...the sterility of my daughters in the grace of fertility”31. Yet, her visual rendering is most peculiar and does not conform to contemporary depictions, such as the one in the Athens Homilies of Saint Chrysostom, where Gaia holds a male figure in her right extended hand (Fig. 5)32. Facing front, with the bottom part of her torso missing, Gaia’s full breasts are portrayed quite naturalistically, reminiscent of earlier occurrences, such as the personification of the Earth supporting the foot of the mounted Justinian on her right hand appearing on the sixth-century Barberini ivory33. Consequently, the full breast of the personification in the Kokkinobaphos can be understood as reflecting not only the Earth’s abundance, but also Mary’s ability to nourish. This interpretation fits well with Hutter’s suggestion that the insertion of The Rest of Mary into the cycle of miniatures was done in accordance

31 A smaller sized personification of Gaia forms the horizontal shaft of the letter G, the initial of her name opening her monologue; In Deiparam 6.28 (PG 127: 676 677).
32 Athens, gr. 211, fol. 34v. The depiction was understood to be related to the parable of the ten drachmas and the prodigal child following Luke 15: 8 10, 11 32. André Grabar interpreted the male figure as Adam and the personification as Terra; Les manuscrits grecs enluminés de provenance italienne (IXe-XIe siècle), Paris 1972, 25 27.
with the illuminator’s intention to introduce The Incarnation of Christ as a renewal of man as well as a new creation devoid of sin and death eclipsed by the sun of justice (i.e. Christ), with Mary herself guaranteeing the reality of the future heavenly state. The idyllic landscape, with figs and fresh water, symbolizes the anticipated peace and abundance.34

The salvific message implied in the scene is augmented by the theological Eve-Maria antithesis, which, referring to the birth of the Virgin35, was developed in the second homily of the monk Iakobos and visualized in The Fall cycle (Gen. 3:1-24), which is appearing against a comparable landscape and preceding The Rest on the Road to Elizabeth. In V, the focus of the composition is The Temp-

34 Hutter and Canart, Das Marienhomiliar, 72 73.
35 PG 127: 580 4. For further aspects of Marian typology found in Eastern homiletical literature, where Mary is likened to Paradise and nature is renewed and sanctified through the coming of Christ, see M. Hambury, ed., Jacob (of Serug), On the Mother of God, Crestwood, NY 1998, esp. 9, 11 2, 40, 82.
tation of Eve, with The Fall, The Admonition, and The Expulsion from the Paradise surrounding it (Fig. 6)36. We should note that the artist made a distinct effort to render Eve’s breasts, though flat, as naturalistic as possible, their shape and size conforming well with the proportions and elegance of the body. The centrality of the sinning female figure in this image may be explained, following the miniature, by Adam’s post-lapsarian accusation of Eve:

Oh that wicked and profane advice! She who interwove the deceit; she who discharged the death bearing virus into my own ears!... Oh woman, how did not you realize the sharp ened sword you brought upon us? How did not you recog nize that you held death in your tongue? Why did you do this wicked thing?37.

A series of iconographic elements in paradisiacal landscapes emerging from both the OT and NT are important to my antithetical contention. The Tree of Life standing beside the couple in The Temptation38 can be typologically related to the tree, which seemingly sprouts from Mary’s body, Byzantine thought abounds with this association, designating it as a salfvic sign. For example, both Iakobos and the illuminator were certainly more acquainted with the seventh okos of the fifth-century Akathistos hymn—“Hail, tree of glorious fruit on which the faithful feed”39. The same idea is evinced in one of Proklos’s homilies (ca. 410-485), in which he describes an imaginary Annunciation wherein the angel addresses the Virgin as follows: “Hail, favoured one, the unfading Paradise of chastity, in which the tree of life was planted and will burgeon with the fruits of salvation for all”40. The Tree of Life mentioned here is the one associated with the cross in Rev. 22:2, which was to become widely understood as the prefiguration of the Cross, the restorative Tree of Life41. This typological link is also reflected in Orthodox liturgy, expressed in the hymn the priests recite when preparing the bread for Communion:

Make ready, O Bethlehem, for Eden hath been opened for all. Prepare, O Ephratha, for the tree of life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Virgin; for her womb did appear as a spiritual paradise in which is planted the divine Plant, whereof eating we shall live and not die as Adam. Christ shall be born, raising the image that fell of old42.

The girdles, made of dry and lifeless fig leaves covering the couple’s loins after the Fall, are a stark contrast to the ripe figs, signs of fruition and fertility, that the Virgin held in her lap. This implies that the Tree of Life in Paradise, desicated by the transgression of God’s law, will again turn green following the Virgin’s sacred pregnancy. Thus, whereas the oversized bottle-shaped breast protruding from Gaia’s side in the Christological scene conveys the idea of bountiful nourishment, Eve’s life-like mortal breasts imply, once again, lifelessness and void. Lastly, Eve of The Fall, addressing the twining serpent on the tree, seems to be holding her prominent abdomen; her gesture and (pregnant?) body part may be seen as a double entendre of her sin – disobedience toward God and sexuality.

The inclusion of related iconographic elements in both The Rest of the Virgin and The Fall establishes a concep-

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36 Fol. 35r: Ὁ ἐκ τοῦ παραδείσου ἐξοικισμὸς τῶν πρωτοπλάστων (‘The Expulsion of the First Parents from Paradise); Hutter and Ca nart, Das Marienhomiliar, 30. 31. P depicts the episodes per the usua l reading, from the upper left corner toward the lower right corner: The Temptation of Eve; The Fall; The Admonition (in the center); and The Expulsion from Paradise; Fol. 47r: Omont, Miniatures, 22; pl. XXIV (3); Anderson, “The Illustrated Sermons”, 78; Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited”, 390 392.

37 In Depositions 2:11 (PG 127: 580C); English trans. by Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited”, 391. In P, this text appears in conjunction with Adam’s lament, followed by the corre sponding miniature. See also Anderson, “The Illustrated Sermons”, 78. 79. Iakobos’s reprimanding attitude toward Eve’s role in the story of the Fall is quite unusual; in contrast, the church fathers adopt, for the most part, a positive attitude of Eve; M. Meyer, “Eve’s Nudity. A Sign of Shame or a Precursor of Christological Economy?” in K. Kogman Appel and M. Meyer, eds., Between Judaism and Christianity. Art Historical Essays in Honour of Prof. Elisabeth (Elisheva) Revel-Neher, Leiden 2009, 243 258.

38 This detail is not mentioned in the Septuagint, which locates Adam and Eve generally among the trees of Paradise. However, the Greek exegesis mentions that the couple hid behind a fig tree, from which they made the girdles of leaves; cf. Theodoret, Quast. in Gen. 28 (PG 88: 125C).


40 PG 85: 444A; trans. in Peltomaa, op. cit., 80, n. 166.

41 G. Ladner, “Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism: A Comparison”, Speculum 54/2 (1979), 236 237, with further bibiliography. See also R. Hatfield, “The Tree of Life and the Holy Cross,” in T. Verdon and J. Henderson, eds., Christianity and the Renaissance, Syracuse 1990, 137 and 139. The iconography of the Tree of Life as a sign of the Cross was established early on, as, for example, on an ampulla from sixth or early seventh century, where palm leaves symbols of victory grow from the wood of the Cross; cf. A. Grabar, Ameoules de Terre Sainte (Monta-Bobbio), Paris 1958, 32, pl. 32.

tual contiguity and temporal sequence wherein the sin, i.e. death, brought into the world by the fault of the former, will be rectified by the grace of the latter, i.e. the fruit-bearing Virgin/tree through which life and nourishment will issue forth.

In summary, while the Kokkinobaphos miniatures were illustrated through an association with the texts, they also convey the idea of ‘joy’: the unrestrained joy of Anna summoning the twelve tribes of Israel to bear witness to her “unhoped for milk”, i.e. the birth of the Virgin; Elizabeth rejoicing in the fruit of her sterile womb, feeding her newborn; and the joy of the Earth (Gaia), on whose abundant flora and fauna the Virgin, carrying the divine fruit in her womb, treads.

The question of the extent to which the bottle-shaped breast was noticed by the alleged patron of Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, given the discrepancy between them, is yet to be clarified. While both codices illustrate the objectified breast as an attribute (Gaia), only V shows it in relation to maternal nourishment (Anna, Elizabeth)⁴³.

⁴³ It has been suggested that the numerous visual discrepancies between the codices were executed per Iakobos’s instructions in order to meet the expectations and needs of the various recipients; Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited”, 387 406.
There is a general consensus that V’s iconographic program was meant to edify the moral and devotional character of its commissioner, Eirene Sebastrokratorissa. In her forthcoming article, Linardou argues that the monk’s didactic approach was probably motivated by his concern for the noblewoman’s attraction to the ‘heretical’ philosophy of the Greeks and her Orthodox integrity (or lack thereof), and attempted to save her soul by providing her with a suitable model to emulate – Mary.

Evangelatou has eloquently demonstrated that there seems to be a topical correlation between the theological subjects broached in the Kokkinobaphos pictorial program and the theological and moral issues voiced by Iakobos in his frequent and well-known correspondence with Eirene. In it he forged his expectations of the noblewoman and set down the moral standards he thought she should adopt. Thus, for example, he admits to Eirene in his 35th letter, that “whatever moral or theological issues he mentions in a rather cursory way in his letters he has presented more formally and elaborately in his book”.

The monk has attached great importance to the role the book might have played in the edification of Eirene’s soul; in it he praises her continuous thirst for the “divine waters” and urges her to read attentively the book he presents to her:

> When a treasure is stepped underfoot, it does not demonstrate its wealth; one must first dig through the ground and descend in depth in order to find its riches. The same is true with this book: reading is not enough in order for the treasures of virtue to be revealed, if your royalty does not investigate in depth...

Although we do not have sufficient material to ascertain whether the book the monk speaks about is indeed the abundantly illustrated copy (= V) he presented to the noblewoman, it is nevertheless clear that the rich Marian imagery served Iakobos in his pursuit to theologically educate its female recipient.

Pulling all threads together now, it seems that the artist strategically and consciously used the bottle-shaped breast motif, reminiscent of the Galaktotrouphousa, as an iconographical building block in his construction of an ideal visual Marian model. On a typological level, it is contrasted with the less voluminous, naturalistic, breast of Eve, possibly alluding to her role in bringing death on earth and to her “cursed,” joyless, motherhood, and forms the Eve-Mary antithesis voiced in Iakobos’s second homily. Eirene, urged by her religious guide to use the book as a spiritual tool and weapon against the dark forces (“wherever spiritual books are kept, any diabolic energy is chased away...”), would have been inclined to make all the above associations between the visual motif resonating with allusions to an abundant and divine nourishment, and, more specifically, to Marian motherhood. His miniatures might have been more effective than much of his discursive theological reasoning. In light of these conclusions, a pronounced emphasis on the maternal nourishment in P, designed for Iakobos’s private use, would have been entirely superfluous.
Το εικονογραφικό στοιχείο που εξετάζεται είναι ο γυμνός γυναικείος μαστός σε μορφή φιάλης, που οπτικά μπορεί να συνδεθεί με τον κοπτικό εικονογραφικό τύπο της Θεοτόκου Γαλακτοτροφούσας. Ο φιαλόσχημος μαστός, που θεωρείται ότι εκφράζει το δόγμα της Ενσάρκωσης μέσω της Θεοτόκου, εκλαμβάνεται ως σύμβολο του θηλασμού. Στον κώδικα του Βατικανού διακρίνεται προσαρτημένο στο μανίκι της τροφού η οποία τελεί το πρώτο λουτρό της Θεοτόκου στη σχετική παράσταση. Εικάζουμε ότι ο μαστός προσγράφεται στη τροφό, καθώς ο θηλασμός του βρέφους σε μια ευκατάστατη οικογένεια θα ήταν ένα από τα καθήκοντά της. Στη μικρογραφία του Γενεσίου του Προδρόμου η Ελισάβετ τα/iotadiaeresistonosζει το καθισμένο στην αγκαλιά της βρέφος με τον ίδιο τρόπο. Επομένως, είναι φανερό ότι το φιαλόσχημο στήθος, που συνδέεται με τη μητρότητα της Παναγίας, χρησιμοποιείται ως στοιχείο σε σκηνές θηλασμού, υποδηλώνοντας την ιδέα της θε/iotadiaeresisκής τροφής. Για τον λόγο αυτό είναι δυνατό να υποστηριχθεί ότι πρόκειται για εικονογραφικό στοιχείο με θρησκευτική σημασία, εξ ιτίας της θαυμαστής θυγατρικής ψής και της θείας μητρότητας που σχετίζονται με τις μορφές της Αναγεννησίας Παναγίας και της Ευαγγελιστρίας Βασίλισσας Ελισάβετ. Μαίνονται γενικά αποδεικτικά ότι το εικονογραφικό στοιχείο συνδέεται με την θεία μητρότητα, την θαυμαστή σύλληψη, και με δύο συγκεκριμένες τροφοδοτικές σεναρίους που παρουσιάζονται στην παραστάση της Θεοτόκου της Ελισάβετ και της Ευαγγελιστρίας Βασίλισσας Ελισάβετ: η πρώτη παράσταση, στην οποία εμφανίζεται ένας καθισμένος στην αγκαλιά της Ευαγγελιστρίας Βασίλισσας Ελισάβετ βρέφος, δηλαδή η θεία μητρότητα, και η δεύτερη παράσταση, στην οποία εμφανίζεται ένας καθισμένος στην αγκαλιά της Θεοτόκου της Ελισάβετ βρέφος, το οποίο δεν είναι καθισμένος αλλά σέρνει την αγκαλιά του κοπτικής θείας μητρότητας σε θηλασιακή θέση. Επομένως, είναι φανερό ότι το εικονογραφικό στοιχείο του εικονογραφικού στοιχείου της Θεοτόκου της Ελισάβετ και της Παναγίας παρέχει έναν συγκεκριμένο τροπολογισμό της θείας μητρότητας που σχετίζεται με τη θαυμαστή σύλληψη και την θαυματουργή ανάδειξη της Μαστός και Φιάλης στις Μικρογραφίες του Ιακώβου της Μονής Κοκκινοβάφου.
νουν το, αποδοσμένο σε σχήμα αντικειμένου, στήθος ως διακριτικό ορισμένων μορφών (Γαίας), μόνο ο κώδικας του Βατικάνου το συνεχίζει με τον θηλασμό (Αννα, Ελισάβετ).
Προς συζήτηση είναι το ερώτημα σε ποιο βαθμό έγινε αντιληπτός ο φιαλόσχημος μαστός από τους θεωρούμενους ως παραγγελιοδότες του δύο χειρογράφων των Ομιλιών του Ιακώβου. Στο άρθρο εκφράζεται η άποψη ότι η πλούσια εικονογραφία της Παναγίας, που περιλαμβάνει και το ιδιαίτερο στοιχείο του φιαλόσχημου στήθους, με υπαινιγμούς σε μια άφθονη, τόσο θεϊκή όσο και μητρική, τροφή, θα είχε μεγαλύτερη απόδοση στον κώδικα που δόθηκε στη γυναίκα παραγγελιοδότη παραγγελιοδότη κώδικα, στον οποίο το στοιχείο αυτό θα ήταν εντελώς περιττό.