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In memoriam  
Paul Canart



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## TWO GRAFFITI DRAWINGS IN THE CHURCH OF HAGIA SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE

CHRISTINA SAVOVA–THOMAS THOMOV/SOFIA

The term *medieval graffiti* is commonly used to refer to all marks carved on stone, and more rarely on wood. People made them to acknowledge their existence and faith in significant and mainly sacred places. They are not colorful but they reflect life in all facets and in different forms: personal notes and memoranda, depictions of sailing ships, animals, weapons and coats of arms, as well as portraits and abstract geometrical patterns. Graffiti are mirrors of ways of living and thinking and the churches were not always quit spiritual place. So, they were both accepted and acceptable. Church authorities seemed to have tolerated them and graffiti tended to be kept rather than erased.

Medieval graffiti are a relatively untouched subject. There are many that have never been studied, documented, or even acknowledged. Plenty of them were destroyed, either deliberately or accidentally, and their conservation is neglected and poor. It is only recently that the interest in medieval graffiti has been growing.

One of the places with abundance of graffiti is the Great Church or the Church of the Holy Wisdom – the famous sixth-century domed church, which was built by emperor Justinian the Great. It was considered to be one of the wonders of the world and the most important religious edifice in the city of Constantinople. Hagia Sophia was a focus of God's blessing with tales of wonders and miracles, well-known beyond the borders of Byzantium. The graffiti in the aisles are not numerous but the marble revetments, balustrades, window-frames, doors and columns of the galleries have been engraved with mementos in several languages. Most people are not aware that Hagia Sophia offers examples of graffiti dating back to hundreds and hundreds of years. As a matter of fact, they may be compared to a buried in a backyard medieval library. In the Great Church, graffiti comprised inscriptions in various languages<sup>1</sup>, as well as some drawings<sup>2</sup>. The inscriptions provide first-hand information on the evolution of languages, the history and development of particular scripts, as well as some non-professional writing practices. Despite of their historical value, scholarly literature still considers them a minor source of information. Some of the drawings are crude and schematic, others are remarkably detailed. The first drawing, which is

<sup>1</sup> Recently Th. Thomov have published eighty-five Cyrillic and one Glagolitic inscriptions which have been scratched in almost all parts of the galleries of Hagia Sophia: Т. Томов, *Непознатият храм „Св. София“. I. Надписи-графити на кирилица и глаголица*, София 2016.

<sup>2</sup> A total of 90 graffiti drawings were recorded between 2007 and 2014. They include many different forms – from sailing ships, animals, birds, weapons, coats of arms and abstract geometrical patterns, to portraits of saints, angels, clerics and laymen. The most numerous are the ship graffiti (35). Many of the drawings are highly detailed and accurate, indicating that they have been sketched by skilled artist. Recently Thomov published four ship graffiti representing Viking sailing vessels: Four Scandinavian ship graffiti from Hagia Sophia, *BMGs* 38/2 (2014) 168–184.

18 cm in width and 21 cm in height, is located at the east part of the south aisle of the church and at the south side of the soffit of the bema arch. It is lightly engraved at about 160 cm above the floor. The position of the drawing is rather unusual: instead of the common vertical one, this one is situated horizontally (Photo. 1). Graffiti, portraying complete Christian scenes, are an extremely rare find.

In 1908 E. M. Anthoniadis<sup>3</sup> published himself own drawing of the graffito with a short commentary. Unfortunately, it lacks several important details related to the attire and the head of the figure, which leads to its wrong identification as a young deacon.

In 2010 Th. Thomov inspected the drawing in the south aisle of Hagia Sophia and took some new photographs and corrected some details. It is a carefully painted full-length figure of a youth in a solemn pose. (Fig. 1) He is clad in a court costume with the traditional crossed *loros* on top. There is a staff (or a baton) in his left hand, and his right hand points to a vessel with a handle. His thick curly hair is gathered round the head in thick plaits and falls down the back of his neck, his fringe is V-shaped and the ends of a ribbon flutter behind his head. The oval and symmetrical face reveals a strong character. The eyes are large, the nose is sharp and rather straight, the lips are thick and the chin is round.

His long-sleeved undergarment (*divetession*?) goes down to his feet. The sleeves are quite wide in the upper arm, but are pulled in and caught at the elbow with a narrow cuff at the wrist. The lower hem of the tunic is edged with decoration and from the fact that it is carried upwards at the sides, we can take it that the artist wanted to show that sides of the tunic are open or slit at the bottom in order to facilitate walking. The slit is edged with a stripe ending in a circular segment. His top garment (*sakkos*?) is to his calves, the sleeves are short, loose and to the elbow. They are hemmed with bands. The shoes are decorated with small circles and their toes show. The traditional crossed *loros* – a very long scarf – is draped diagonally over both shoulders, one end hanging to the lower hem of the outer tunic, and the other end wound around the waist in a complicated way and hanging over the left arm<sup>4</sup>. The frontal pose of an image is considered to be a symbol of spiritual communication between the effigy and the onlooker. However, for the medieval spectators the image was actually a representation of apparition.

In our opinion, this is undoubtedly a depiction of an archangel. The first and foremost argument is the abundant curly hair with hair fillet, whose ends are seen on either side of the neck. One can easily distinguish it in the graffito drawing. Actually, archangels never wear a crown. Their hair is adorned with a textile band<sup>5</sup>. Diadems

<sup>3</sup> E. M. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΔΟΥ, *Εκφρασις της Αγίας Σοφίας*, 3 vols, Αθήναι 1908, II, 217.

<sup>4</sup> For the manner in which the traditional *loros* was worn, see P. GRIERSON, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection*, II, 1, Washington, D.C. 1968, 78. Cf. also M. PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images: Byzantine material culture and religious iconography (11th–15th centuries)*, Leiden 2003, 18–20.

<sup>5</sup> H. MAGUIRE, A Murderer among the Angels: the Frontispiece Miniatures of Paris Gr. 510 and the Iconography of Archangels in Byzantine Art, in R. OUSTERHOUT, L. BRUBAKER (eds.), *The Sa-*

like *loros* have an ancient origin. Emperor Constantine the Great (324–337) opted to wear the Hellenistic diadem, a simple, tied at the back headband that is associated with Alexander the Great, who was the first to wear it as an exclusive symbol of his succession to the empire. Subsequently, the emperors and the priests wore it as a sign of their high secular or spiritual<sup>6</sup> power. Constantine seized upon the symbol to emulate the great conqueror<sup>7</sup>. In Byzantium, however, it was transformed into a round or semicircular headpiece of jeweled panels with hanging precious stones and pearls called *pendulia*.

The second argument is the *loros*, since it is a specific characteristic of archangels, as well as a way to distinguish them from other angelic orders. We can assume that for the person, who created the graffiti, it was necessary to emphasize that fact. The earliest example of attire change from *chlamys costume* to the ceremonial *loros costume* dates to the period immediately after the end of Iconoclasm in the 9th century<sup>8</sup>. For example, the angelic orders like Dominations and Powers, represented in the bema of the Dormition Church at Nicaea (after 843), now destroyed, were dressed in crossed *loros* costumes. According to M. Parani the widespread image of the angelic orders (especially the archangels) in *loros costumes* is an innovation of the Middle Byzantine period<sup>9</sup>. During the Middle and Late Byzantine periods the archangels were portrayed in the crossed *loros*, or what we know as the simplified *loros* worn in the same way but richer in design<sup>10</sup>. From the mid-10th century onward, the crossed *loros* with a loose collar round the neck, a short end hanging in front and the longer wrapped round the waist, had been superseded by the modified one<sup>11</sup>. We should take into consideration W. Woodfin's statement that archangels continue to appear "in *loroi*" in the late Byzantine and post Byzantine art often in the same contexts as angels in liturgical dress<sup>12</sup>.

*cred Image East and West*, Urbana–Chicago 1995, 64; PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 46; Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов. Как изобразить невидимое, *Православная жизнь*, 20.11.2016 г. <http://pravlife.org/content/ikonografiya-angelov-kak-izobrazit-nevidimoe>.

<sup>6</sup> Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов, (with illustrations).

<sup>7</sup> J. Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> H. MAGUIRE, A Murderer among the Angels, 64; C. MANGO, St. Mihael and Attis, *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 12 (1984) 43; PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 45.

<sup>10</sup> P. GRIERSON, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection*, Washington D. C., 1973, III, 1, 120. See also PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 46 who pointed out that the simplified *loros* was "introduced in the iconography of the archangels roughly at the same time as its actual adoption by Byzantine emperors i.e. in the 10th century".

<sup>11</sup> M. Parani, (*Reconstructing the reality of images*, 20) states that the crossed *loros* did not disappear from the 11th century portraiture and that in the same century it was still employed. However, the same cannot be claimed for the next century.

<sup>12</sup> W. WOODFIN, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium*, Oxford 2012, 199.

To sum up: the graffito figure in Hagia Sophia is dressed in *loros* of a rare and antiquated type, which was not worn by Byzantine emperors since the eleventh century. This contributes to the perception that it is a depiction of an archangel<sup>13</sup>.

The next interesting detail is the staff<sup>14</sup>. When an archangel appears in a frontal pose, especially in iconic representations, he holds a staff or *labarum* inscribed with the *trisagion* in one hand, and the globe, surmounted by or closing a cross, in the other<sup>15</sup>. During the late 9th and 10th centuries, the staff served as an insignia of the officials who were responsible for keeping order during imperial ceremonies, or of those who served as messengers or spokesmen<sup>16</sup>.

What were the garments worn under the *loros*? The most common type in the Middle Byzantine period<sup>17</sup> was a full-length tunic with long sleeves<sup>18</sup>. It was rich-

<sup>13</sup> The *loros* is the Roman *trabea triumphalis*. It used to be worn by the consuls, but with the gradual disappearance of this office in the 6th and 7th centuries it was adopted by the emperor. It is often mentioned by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and from what he says it appears that it was worn not only by the emperor, but by twelve high dignitaries at Easter and some other occasions. For this, see PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 18–22, esp. 20.

<sup>14</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 66–67.

<sup>15</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 32, 46.

<sup>16</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 66 и п. 55 with cited sources. In the 11th and 12th it was an insignia of the imperial messengers. Cf. also E. PILTZ, *Middle Byzantine Court Costume*, in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, Washington 1997, 50 who pointed out that there are two silentaries holding a staff.

<sup>17</sup> However, attempting to date graffito using the garment's ornamentation alone is problematic due to its appearance both in the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. For example, see the eleventh-century miniature of "Angelic Council" at the monastery of Dionisia on Athos: Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов; the eleventh-century mosaic of the Archangel Gabriel at the church St. Sophia at Kiev <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&id=979>; the late eleventh-century portrait of the Archangel Michael at the church Sts. Anargyroi at Kastoria: after ST. PELEKANIDIS & M. CHATZIDAKIS, *Kastoria*, Athens 1985, 47, fig. 26; mosaic of the Archangel Michael dated 1143–1151 at the church of La Martorana in Palermo; the twelfth-century mosaic in the dome at the Palatine Chapel in the Royal Palace in Palermo: Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов; the thirteenth-century marble relief of the Archangel Michael in Berlin: Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов; the icon of the Archangel Michael dated 1340 at the monastery of Dečani: <http://www.pravoslaviето.com/poklonnichestvo/kosovo/dechani/index.htm>; the fourteenth-century angels at the Dormition church at Gračanitsa: <http://katehon.com/ru/article/vizantiyskaya-synnaya-sedmica-i-russkaya-maslenica-skorb-i-radost-0>.

<sup>18</sup> However, attempting to date graffito using the garment's ornamentation alone is problematic due to its appearance both in the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. For example, see the eleventh-century miniature of "Angelic Council" at the monastery of Dionisia on Athos: Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов; the eleventh-century mosaic of the Archangel Gabriel at the church St. Sophia at Kiev <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&id=979>; the late eleventh-century portrait of the Archangel Michael at the church Sts. Anargyroi at Kastoria: after ST. PELEKANIDIS & M. CHATZIDAKIS, *Kastoria*, 47, fig. 26; mosaic of the Archangel Michael dated 1143–1151 at the church of La Martorana in Palermo; the twelfth-century mosaic in the dome at the Palatine Chapel in the Royal Palace in Palermo: Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов; the thirteenth-century marble relief of the Archangel Michael in Berlin: Д. МАРЧЕНКО, Иконография Ангелов; the icon of the Archangel Michael dated 1340 at the monastery of Dečani: <http://www>.

ly decorated with ornaments round the hem, the collar, the cuffs, and arms<sup>19</sup>. The sleeves, as in our case, are usually quite wide, but are pulled in and caught at the elbow<sup>20</sup>. According to M. Parani, what appears to be a “Middle Byzantine development was the substitution of arm-bands for the square or circular attachments on Early Byzantine tunics”<sup>21</sup>. In the tenth century Book of Ceremonies (*De Cerimoniis*), which is a kind of dossier containing earlier documents and more recent materials, this garment was identified as *divetission*<sup>22</sup>. It seems to have been worn on top of the undergarment with wide arms reaching not quite to the wrists. It is clear that the armbands composed of small rectangles are ornamental decoration of the sleeves of the overgarment.

We can also refer to the angelic orders represented in the bema of the Dormition church at Nicaea (after 843), now destroyed<sup>23</sup>. They wear shorter tunics over longer ones with modest ornamentation at the lower hem<sup>24</sup>. (Fig. 2) However, the shape and decoration of the overtunic are hidden by the enormous *loroi*. Emperors Constantine and Justinian I are dressed the same way on the mosaic panel over the south-west vestibule portal of Hagia Sophia from the mid-tenth century. (Fig. 3) Another example is the mosaic of king Roger II in the church of St. Mary of the Admiral in Palermo

pravoslavieto.com/poklonnichestvo/kosovo/dechani/index.htm; the fourteenth-century angels at the Dormition church at Gračanitsa: <http://katehon.com/ru/article/vizantiyskaya-syrnaya-sedmica-i-russkaya-maslenica-skorb-i-radost-0>.

<sup>19</sup> W. WOODFIN, *The Embodied Icon*, 139: “...often patterned and heavily embroidered with gold”. M. PARANI, Look like an Angel: The Attire of Eunuchs and Its Significance within the context of Middle Byzantine Court Ceremonial, in A. BEIHAMMER, St. CONSTANTINO, M. PARANI (eds.), *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean: comparative perspectives*, Leiden 2013, 445: “...a tunic with gold-woven ornaments at the shoulders and elsewhere”. M. HENDY, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, IV, Part I: Alexios I to Michael VIII: 1081–1261*, Washington D.C. 1999, 157: “...a long tunic, with a basic colour, but always heavily embroidered”. Cf. also H. MAGUIRE, Murderer among the Angels: The Frontispiece Miniatures of Paris. Gr. 510 and the Iconography of the Archangels in Byzantine Art, in R. OUSTERHOUT and L. BRUBAKER (eds.), *The Sacred image East and West*, Urbana 1995, 63–71; IDEM, The Heavenly Court, in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, Washington D.C. 1997, 247–258.

<sup>20</sup> M. HENDY, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins*, 157.

<sup>21</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 54. “...its collar, cuffs, and hem were often embroidered”.

<sup>22</sup> P. GRIERSON, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins*, III, 119; W. WOODFIN, *The Embodied Icon*, 139; M. PARANI, The Romanus Ivory and the New Tokalı kilise: Imperial Costume as a Tool for Dating Byzantine Art, *CahArch* 49 (2001) 16.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&id=1889>.

<sup>24</sup> The dating of the mosaic is a debatable issue. We accept the opinion of V. Lazarev who narrows the time of production to the mid-tenth century rejecting the suggestions of dating it to the reign of Basil I or the middle of the eleventh century. Cf. V. LAZAREV, *Storia della pittura bizantina*, Turin 1967, 177, n. 78. According to M. Parani (*Reconstructing the reality of images*, 54), the fashion of wearing a shorter tunic over a longer undertunic “...seems to have been introduced in official attire by the eleventh century”. But this garment which reaching the knees was provided with an opening at the front of the skirt. However, in our case the tunic is without such an opening.



(dated 1146–1147)<sup>25</sup>. (Fig. 4) In this case, the decoration of the undertunic below the calves is unpretentious and the lower hem of the overgarment is richly ornamented. It is apparent that the designer of the mosaic was guided by a pictorial model from an earlier period. According to E. Kitzinger, a small ivory relief in Moscow<sup>26</sup> from the mid-10th century reflects “almost perfection of the prototype from which the design of the mosaic derives”<sup>27</sup>. (Fig. 5)

Finally, a pair of shoes, decorated with small circles, can be seen beneath the hem of the tunic<sup>28</sup>. One can assume that the circles must be an imitation of pearl decoration, or an indication that what was represented in the graffito did have some relation to reality after all. The imperial shoes were one of the most characteristic elements of the emperor’s costume despite their relatively small size and inconspicuous position<sup>29</sup>.

In the words of C. Mango, the imperial iconography of archangels never appears in narrative scenes, either biblical or hagiographical<sup>30</sup>, and the royal attributes appear only in static or ‘iconic’ images<sup>31</sup>. H. Maguire has convincingly suggested that during the 9th and the 10th centuries, ‘imperial’ angelic orders were incorporated in the decoration of the bema – they formed the honorific guard of the Virgin with or without the Child, or they participated in the *theophanic* prophetic visions in the apse<sup>32</sup>. For this reason, their attitude is not one for adoration and as it is indicated by the inscription of their *labara*, they participate in the timeless and never-ending glorification of God by the angelic orders<sup>33</sup>. We can also find the images of archangels in imperial costumes in the entrance, the naos, the altar and the dome. A glance at our graffito reveals that archangels have no royal attributes i.e. a globe and *labarum*.

The vessel next to the archangel’s right side is the most enigmatic thing in the drawing. There is a reason to suggest that it may be considered somewhat special. It is worth noting that in the Vatican codex vat. Copt. 9 (dated 1204/5) Archangel Michael is shown in a similar pose<sup>34</sup>. (Fig. 6) A century ago, E. Anthoniadis stated

<sup>25</sup> E. KITZINGER, *Mosaici Di Santa Maria Dell’Ammiraglio a Palermo. With a chapter on the Architecture of the Church by S. Ćurčić*, Washington D.C., 1990, 261.

<sup>26</sup> On the ivory panel, now in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, Christ is shown crowing Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. For this panel, see A. GOLDSCHMIDT and K. WEITZMANN, *Die Byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1930, № 35, 35–36.

<sup>27</sup> E. KITZINGER, *Mosaici Di Santa Maria*, 195.

<sup>28</sup> In the Middle Byzantine period the shoes were decorated with pearls and precious stones. For reference: PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 31, 46.

<sup>29</sup> W. WOODFIN, *The Embodied Icon*, 145.

<sup>30</sup> In the Lives of the Saints and other edifying texts the angels and archangels appear in the guise of eunuchs or imperial cubiculari, and not like emperors. See C. Mango, *St. Mihael and Attis*, 44.

<sup>31</sup> C. MANGO, *St. Mihael and Attis*, 44. See also PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 42.

<sup>32</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> The archangel Michael is dressed in the imperial *loros* and holds a staff in the left hand, while with



that it is “possibly a casket with holy relics”<sup>35</sup>. To disprove this view, it is sufficient to refer to the ivory casket in the Palazzo Venezia, Rome, dated to 898 or 900<sup>36</sup>. (Fig. 7) Moreover, it is virtually impossible to find such a casket neither among the preserved medieval artefacts, nor among its pictorial representation in the medieval art. Besides, if we take into consideration that the mosaic image of Archangel Gabriel is placed on the south side of the bema arch, we can conclude that he is actually depicted in the graffiti drawing. In some cases he holds in his right hand a “lantern with a candle” as one of his main attributes<sup>37</sup>. Unfortunately, it is impossible to sustain such an identification for the vessel in our case.

It might be a reliquary bag, although the shape of the handle is not compatible with the preserved medieval artefacts and depictions in the pictorial art. Or it might be a moneybag, which was a symbol of the imperial donations to the church, a sign of imperial generosity and piety. As it is well known, after having received the Eucharist, the emperor would proceed with his entourage through the south gallery and through the door to the Holly Well<sup>38</sup>. Here he would present his moneybag to the

the right one he points toward the Gospel of St. Evangelist Mark. See, Gospel Var. Copt. 9, fol. 146 at Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome. <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&id=5747>.

<sup>35</sup> E. M. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΔΟΥ, *Εκφρασις*, 217.

<sup>36</sup> A. CUTLER and N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, An Imperial Byzantine Casket and Its Fate at a Humanist's Hands, *The Art Bulletin* 70/1 (1988) 77–87.

<sup>37</sup> В. Д. ФАРТУСОВ, *Руководство к написанию икон святых угодников*, Москва 1910, 226. See also Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, The Prologue from Ohrid, November 8: <https://web.archive.org/web/20081207012031/http://www.westsrbdio.org/prolog/my.html?month=November&day=8&Go.x=13&Go.y=15>; А. ЕВСТИГНЕЕВ, *Ангелы, Архангелы и другие Силы Небесные*, Москва 2013, 194; А. ЕВСТИГНЕЕВ, *Православные иконы*, Москва 2013, 279; P. & L. MURRAY (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, Oxford 1998, 18. From iconographic point of view the lantern is mainly connected with the scenes, such as “The Arrest of Christ” and “Nativity”. For example, see Très belles Heures de Notre-Dame (BnF NAL 3093, folio 181r), 1375–1425 c. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84496839/f199.item>; Benediktinerkollegium, Speculum Humanae Salvationis 1427 Cod. membr. 8 Fol. 18v, <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/bks/membr0008/18v>; Nativity, a book of hours (PML M.104, fol. 62r), c. 1450–1460. Belgium; J. Howe. Medieval Lanterns. – *Dragon* 9, January, 1997, 6–21. The lantern is often presented among the other Lord's Passion relics. In this way, the latter increased their number by about the 12th century onward and sometimes they were carried by the angels. For this, see, Н. ПОКРОВСКИЙ, *Евангелие в памятниках иконографии*, СПб 1892, 378; P. & L. MURRAY (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 32 where is pointed out that the passion for relics caused an increase of their number.

<sup>38</sup> A Holly Well was an edifice, which was located near the southeast corner of Hagia Sophia. The shrine of the Holly Well included a real well, and was connected both with the passage of St. Nicholas, and thereby with the Chapel of St. Nicholas to the north, and with the east end of the south aisle of Hagia Sophia. The vaulted room and large door (the so-called “Door of the Poor, which connected the Holly Well with the church, is still preserved and from this door one could enter the sanctuary by turning to the right or the southeast exedra by going straight. For the Holly Well, see R. GUILLAND, *Etudes sur Constantinople byzantine: Le Puits-sacrè*, *JÖBG* 5 (1956) 35–40; C. MANGO, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, Copenhagen 1959, 60–72; E. M. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΔΟΥ, *Εκφρασις*, II, 169–184 (with a photograph of the

archdeacon and to various officials of the church, and possibly to representatives of the poor<sup>39</sup>. But if we compare the shape of the vessel to the imperial mosaics in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia, we would certainly reject the moneybag suggestion.

The next possibility is a basket. At first sight, it bears great resemblance to the graffito image. One can easily find similar examples from both Byzantine and Western European iconography. But what is the vessel's purpose? What immediately comes to mind is a basket of bread as it is attested, for example, in the Biblical scene of the angel's visit to Gideon<sup>40</sup>. (Fig. 8, 8a) But in scenes, such as "The Lamentation" and "The Descent from the Cross", the basket is placed in the foreground, irrespective of whether it was filled or empty. What seems certain is that its basic function is to be a basket of tools<sup>41</sup>. In support of this assumption, we may refer to an eleventh-century Byzantine ship, which was discovered in 1973 off the south coast of Asia Minor at Serçe Limani. According to the archaeological report, "any of the woodworking tools were found in a basket in the stern, along with a sharpening stone and an assortment of nails"<sup>42</sup>. So, if this container is a basket of tools, we have one example connecting it with an archangel: the well-known story of Archangel Michael's apparition to the boy guarding the tools for the building of Hagia Sophia<sup>43</sup>.

well); G. MAJESKA, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Washington D. O., 1984, 224.

<sup>39</sup> G. MAJESKA, *The Emperor in his Church: Imperial Ritual I the Church of St. Sophia*, in H. MAGUIRE (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829–1204*, Washington D.C., 1997, 9.

<sup>40</sup> S. KORUNOVSKI, EL. DIMITROVA, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale*, Milano 2006, 145, № 109 (Prilep, 1270s–1280s). Cf. also P. & L. MURRAY (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 196; С. ГАБЕЛИЋ, *Циклус Арханђела у византијској уметности*, Београд 1991, 82–84.

<sup>41</sup> For example, see the "The Lamentation" at the church St. Panteleimon at Nerezi (1164): <http://www.philol.msu.ru/~slavphil/photo6/mak04.jpg>; the "The Lamentation" at the Pskov-Caves monastery dated to the 12th century; <https://magisteria.ru/icon/drevnyaya-rus-preemnitsa-vizantiiskusstvo-domongolskogo-perioda/>; the "The Lamentation" at the church of the Virgin Periblepta in Ochrid (1295): [http://www.pravoslavieto.com/poklonnichestvo/starite\\_bg\\_stolici/images/ohrid/sv\\_kliment\\_perivlepta/lamentation.jpg](http://www.pravoslavieto.com/poklonnichestvo/starite_bg_stolici/images/ohrid/sv_kliment_perivlepta/lamentation.jpg); the mid-sixteenth-century fresco at the monastery of Dionisia on Athos: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/52807.html#image5184>; the "Descending from the Cross": S. KORUNOVSKI, EL. DIMITROVA, *Macedonia*. 154, № 116 (Ochrid, the church of St. Clement, 1378), 209, № 155 (Matka, the church of St. Andrew, 1388–1389); the fourteenth-century fresco of the "Descending from the Cross" at the church of Agia Marina, Kalopanagiotis, Cyprus: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_of\\_Arimathea#/media/File:Descent\\_AgiaMarina.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_of_Arimathea#/media/File:Descent_AgiaMarina.jpg); V. LAZAREV, *L'arte Russa delle Icone*, Milano 1996, 66, № 220 (an icon of the "Descending from the Cross", dated to the 14th century in Tretyakov gallery, Moscow).

<sup>42</sup> FR. HOCKER, Chapter 18. Tools, in G. BASS, SH. MATTHEWS, J. ALLAN, J. STEFFY, and FR. VAN DOORNINCK (eds.), *Serçe Limani: An Eleventh-Century Shipwreck, Vol. 1, The Ship and Its Anchorage, Crew, and Passengers*, College Station: Texas 2004, 297.

<sup>43</sup> Patria Constantinopoleos, *Διήγησις περὶ τῆς Ἀγίας Σοφίας*, ed. T. PREGER in *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, pt. 1, Leipzig 1901, 74–108. The account relates that one day the workmen in the church took a break for lunch. The chief builder, Ignatios, left his young son to guard his tools. A splendidly dressed stranger, whom the boy took to be a eunuch from the palace, asked the youth to find the workers and ask them to continue their work. The boy said that he could not do it because he had to guard his father's tools. The stranger promised that he would keep an eye on them. Later, the boy's father took the youth to the emperor to relate the story. Justinian, in his

As a matter of fact, we might be looking in a wrong direction. Quite simply, if we take a closer look at the graffito, we can conclude that there is a certain difference between it and the traditional basket in pictorial art. It is easy to discern that the basket's structure (the willow rods and the multi-strand diagonal of the basket) in pictorial art representations is shown as rectangular segments shaded with vertical and horizontal lines or friezes of small triangles. However, there is not a shred of evidence of them in our case. Bearing this in mind, we believe that the container is a wooden bucket with metal hoops<sup>44</sup>. (Photo 2) Perhaps the closest similar image can be found in the portrayal of the old shepherd in the Nativity in the church of St. George at Kurbinovo on Lake Prespa (1191). (Fig. 9, 9a). For this reason, it would be a mistake to sustain the idea of its identification as a *situla*, or a bucket holding holy water<sup>45</sup>. (Fig. 10)

The bucket is often found among building implements – it was used for thinning the daub, sand, and mortar<sup>46</sup>. (Fig. 11) In addition, the majority of buckets depicted in painting are shown in the process of church building, and a number of them are in biblical illustration of the building of the tower of Babel<sup>47</sup>. (Fig. 12, 13) There is also another paradox: tools are rarely seen in Byzantine pictorial contexts with the nota-

wisdom, discerned that the stranger was no eunuch, but an angel sent from God. To guarantee the promise of the angel to stay and guard until the lad returned, the boy was exiled, with his father's consent, to the Cyclades.

<sup>44</sup> Generally only high-status drinking vessels and some buckets had metal hoops.

<sup>45</sup> P. & L. MURRAY (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 495. The reason for this might be a Holly Well located, as have been stated above, near the southeast corner of Hagia Sophia.

<sup>46</sup> As an illustration the following examples may be cited: Miniature in MS. Canon. Misc. 493, fol. 153r, 14th c.: <http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/detail/ODLodl~1~1~1798~101827;jsessionid=867BD1A6CBF52E8E7FAAFD5813321AF4?trs=3&mi=1&qvq=q%3Abucket%3Blc%3AODLodl%7E14%7E14%2CODLodl%7E1%7E1%2CODLodl%7E23%7E23%2CODLodl%7E24%7E24%2CODLodl%7E6%7E6%2CODLodl%7E7%7E7%2CODLodl%7E8%7E8;> a bucket with mortar and trowel in Mendel I – Amb. 317.2, folio 24 v (dated 1425: <http://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/75-Amb-2-317-24-v>); Jean Mansel, *Fleur des histoires*, Construction du temple, France, XVe siècle, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits Français 55, folio 70 v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits Français 2609, *Grandes chroniques de France*, folio 12, Poitiers, XVe siècle; Loyset Liédet, *Quinte-Curce*, *Histoire d'Alexandre* (de Macédoine), Bruges, XVe siècle in Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits Français 22547, folio 76;

<sup>47</sup> See the painting "The Tower of Babel" dated c. 1100 at the Saint-Savin-sur-Gatemp (Vienne); mosaic from the Atrium at Basilica of San Marco, Venice, 13th century. [http://www.ruicon.ru/arts-new/mosaics/1x1-dtl/italiya\\_venetciya\\_san-marko/stroitelstvo\\_vavilonskoj\\_bashni\\_severnoj\\_svod\\_zapadnoj10/?page\\_19=472&deactivate=&p\\_f\\_15\\_66=1&ref-cat=](http://www.ruicon.ru/arts-new/mosaics/1x1-dtl/italiya_venetciya_san-marko/stroitelstvo_vavilonskoj_bashni_severnoj_svod_zapadnoj10/?page_19=472&deactivate=&p_f_15_66=1&ref-cat=); Illustration to a Bible Historiée Rylands French MS 5, fol. 16r, John Rylands University Library, Manchester, c. 1250 <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/f9/66/fb/f966fbd4ba0d7b6441c4208cf3188c-cb.jpg>; *Chronicles of Heinrich von München* (ÖNB 2768, fol. 44v, c. 1375–1400: <http://tarvos.imareal.oeaw.ac.at/server/images/7008148.JPG>). As a rule in Byzantine illuminated Oktatev is depicted its destruction: Vat. gr. 747. Fol. 33v, XI v.; Vat. gr. 746. Fol. 61v, XII v. <http://www.pravenc.ru/text/153805.html>.

ble exception of agricultural<sup>48</sup> and writing implements<sup>49</sup>. One can add that the story of the building of Hagia Sophia does not specify the types of the building implements. Therefore, their depiction is left to the artist's imagination. The anonymous artist may have introduced a realistic element or a bucket in our graffito as a way of expressing individuality in a culture where iconographic choices were limited by the need for recognizability.

Let us return to the building history of the church, which was transformed into an interesting tale<sup>50</sup>. During the construction, strange miracles took place and the Church had a special angel to guard it. The tale – *Diegesis* – about the construction of Hagia Sophia, was translated into various languages and can be found in a number of texts. It even appears in a Russian version in the 13th and the 14th centuries<sup>51</sup>. There is no doubt that this story with enormous popularity needed some depiction.<sup>52</sup> The choice of Archangel Michael is not so strange, since he is associated with number of early cults featuring gender ambiguity<sup>53</sup>. Only two archangels – Michael and Gabriel – had their own firm place in popular devotions. All others, including Raphael and Uriel, appear mostly in prayer and in incantations of an occult character<sup>54</sup>. Michael

<sup>48</sup> A. BRYER, Byzantine Agricultural Implements: The Evidence of Medieval Illustrations of Hesiod's Works and Days, *BSA* 81 (1986) 49–50. The notable exception is the agricultural implements appearing in illustrated manuscripts of Hesiod's works and Days.

<sup>49</sup> PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 198 points the writing implements in the portrayal of the evangelists and other authors.

<sup>50</sup> The *Diegesis*, a text from the 8th to 10th centuries that provides a legendary account of the construction of Justinian's Hagia Sophia. Regarding the date, see G. DAGRON, *Constantinople imaginaire. Études sur le recueil des Patria* (Bibliothèque byzantine. Études 8), Paris 1984, 22 (where the text is referred to as D). Dagron's attribution of the *Diegesis* to the "patriographic" genre, along with other parts of the *Patria* collection has been generally accepted. However, A. Berger believes that the *Diegesis* does not really belong to the *Patria* collection since it emerged independently and was incorporated into the collection only at some later stage, which leads him to omit the account from his study. Cf. A. BERGER, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinopoleos* (Ποικίλα Βυζαντινά 8), Bonn 1988, 84. According to K. Kovalchuk the *Diegesis* belongs to the core of hagiographic production since it contains a number of features characteristic of a hagiographical discourse and displays a few clear-cut parallels with some hagiographic texts. Cf. K. KOVALCHUK, The Founder as a Saint: The Image of Justinian in the Great Church of St. Sophia, *Byzantion* 77 (2007) 209–210.

<sup>51</sup> In the Russian version, see S. G. VILINSKIĬ, *Византийско-славянские сказания о создании храма Св. Софии цареградской*, Одесса 1900, 84–85, 100; Archimandrite LEONID ed. Сказание о Св. Софии Цареградской, *Памятники Древней Письменности и искусства* 78 (СПб 1889) 10–13; R. MARICHAL, La construction de Sainte Sophie de Constantinople dans l'Anonyme grec (Xe siècle?) et les versions vieux-russes, *Byzantinoslavica* (1960) 238–259; G. MAJESKA, Russian Travelers, 203, n. 19 and 21. It is possible that they came to Russia by the way of a south Slavonic translation.

<sup>52</sup> A. KAZHDAN, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. KAZHDAN et al., New York and Oxford 1991, III, 1598.

<sup>53</sup> On the story of Archangel Michael and the youth, see Th. Preger, *Scriptores*, 85–88. Cf. also C. ГАБЕЛИЪ, *Циклус Арханђела*, 23–29.

<sup>54</sup> C. MANGO, *Byzantium. Empire of New Rome*, London 1972, p. 154; C. ГАБЕЛИЪ, *Циклус Арханђела*, 20–21, 23, 30.

appeared before the boy as a beautiful youth in a shining garment (εὐνοῦχος λαμπρὰν ἐσθήτα ἡμφιεσμένος) and is described as someone sent from the palace<sup>55</sup>. The boy was thought to be a eunuch but later it became apparent that he was not among the court eunuchs. The visitor's shape changed and the emperor realized that he was not a eunuch but an angel<sup>56</sup>. He was a messenger of God, who was sent to inform the emperor about God's desires regarding the name of the church. What is important for the narrative is that the angel has promised to guard the church until the boy returns. As the boy is sent into exile, the angel becomes the guardian angel for Hagia Sophia<sup>57</sup>. According to C. Mango, whenever angels and archangels make themselves manifest in the Lives of the Saints and other edifying texts, they do it under the guise of eunuchs or imperial *cubicularii*, and not that of emperors i.e. with *loros* and *globe*<sup>58</sup>.

To summarize, our graffito shows the climactic moment of the story in *Diegesis* when the archangel remained to guard the building tools and became the permanent guardian of Hagia Sophia. Obviously, there is a certain connection with the mentioned bucket in the central point of the graffito and it may have been chosen by the author because of its use in the process of building. Therefore, it is not in disagreement with the story<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, the skilled artist does not merely follow the imperial iconography of the archangel, i.e. he holds a staff instead of a *labarum*, the

<sup>55</sup> For this manner of presentation, see the Vita of Paul the Younger of Latros where the angel is a boy not older than twelve: Vita S. Pauli iunioris in monte Latro cum interpretatione Latina Iacobi Sirmondi S. I., ed. H. Delehay, in *AB* 11 (1892), ch. 31, p. 141, l. 15. In the Vita of Aberchios, God sends a youth as a messenger to the saint as he sleep: Symeon Metaphrastes, Vita of St. Aberchios, PG 115, col. 1213. In the Vita of St. Andrew the Fool one can find a description of the angel as a beautiful young man of wonderful stature dressed: *Nikephoros, The Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, Edited and translated by L. RYDÉN, 2 vols., Stockholm 1995, vol 2, 77, l. 962.

<sup>56</sup> This is clearly seen through the Greek word ἐνῆλλαγμένη, which derives from ἐναλλάσσω. See T. PREGER, *Scriptores*, 87. 14

<sup>57</sup> The Russian chronicler of the fall of Constantinople in the hands of the Ottoman Turks describes a strange light of May 29, 1453, as the 'angel of God' who guarded Hagia Sophia from the time of Justinian the great quitting the church and the city and portending their doom. Cf. Nestor Iskander, *Повесть о Царьграде [его основании и взятии Турками в 1453 году]*, ed. Archimandrite LEONID, *Памятники Древней Письменности и искусства* 62 (СПб 1886) 24. In the Russian Anonymous Description of Constantinople from the late 14th century, which repeats the story of the building of Hagia Sophia, the Archangel's protection had extended onto the city. The author points out that "...and St. Michael would be the guardian of the Temple of St. Sophia and of Constantinople until the second coming": G. MAJESKA, *Russian Travelers*, 119, 131. The editor of the "Dialogue" version of the Russian Anonymous added to the original text: "Truly, my lord ?Emperor, this is a divine city, and its protector is the great leader of the (heavenly) host Michael until the second coming of Christ" and "...I wish and pry to God and to the holy Archangel Michael to account me worthy to end my life there among these holy places...", in G. MAJESKA, *Russian Travelers*, 1, 201. On the date, see C. MANGO, *The Date of the Anonymous Russian Description of Constantinople*, *BZ* 45 (1952) 380–385.

<sup>58</sup> C. MANGO, *St. Michael and Attis*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> In the *Diegesis* the building tools are unnamed. The Greek word is "ἐργαλεῖον" or "зижителныя сѣуды", "сѣуды" in the Russian version. See T. PREGER, *Scriptores*, 86. 7 and 17 as well Archimandrite LEONID ed. *Сказание о Св. Софии*, 11.



globe is lacking and the depiction of the *loros* is just a sign to distinguish him from the other angelic orders and to show us that this is the image of an archangel. The staff in his hand emphasizes his role as a messenger of God's will<sup>60</sup>. Besides, it is important to mention that St. Michael is God's administrator for heavenly affairs and God's messenger. It is not unexpected that the official iconography does not include similar scenes<sup>61</sup>. However, the graffito artist has enjoyed a great deal of latitude and has shown his own conception. Also, his drawing was on the south side of the soffit of the bema arch, and it forced him to place his drawing in horizontal position and not in the traditional vertical one. This is why it was not easy to be discerned. When we look at our graffito, we realize that the archangel is not depicted as a participant in the timeless and never-ending glorification of God by the angelic orders, but as a guardian of the church in a slightly different image and place<sup>62</sup>. The most conspicuous characteristic of our drawing is the close connection with the narrative. It is worth mentioning that there is no chance to find a depiction of a guardian angel in the 11th century Byzantine art. According to V. Lazarev<sup>63</sup>, the "guardian" of the church of Hagia Sophia (mentioned by G. Florovsky<sup>64</sup>) is no other but Archangel Gabriel, also confirmed by the location. Besides, the place may well have been chosen by the anonymous artist because of the proximity to a colossal figure of the archangel in the apse mosaic. Nevertheless, this is only a hypothesis in need of a further evidence to be accepted as a historical truth.

<sup>60</sup> In hagiography, it is common for angels and archangels to hold a staff in their hand. In the Vita of Aberchios God sends a youth as a messenger who holds a staff, which he gives the Aberchios: Symeon Metaphrastes, Vita of St. Aberchios, *PG* 115, col. 1213. In the Vita of St. Philaret the Merciful the angel holds a golden staff: M. Fourmy and M. LEROY, La Vie de S. Philarete, *Byzantion* 9 (1934) 63, l. 25. There is no strict rule concerning the hand by which the angel holds a staff. An example of an archangel with a staff in his left hand, see mosaic of archangel Gabriel from the first half of the 7th century in the church of Panagia Ageloktisti in Kiti, near Larnaka, Cyprus: [http://www.icon-art.info/detail.php?lng=ru&det\\_id=1398](http://www.icon-art.info/detail.php?lng=ru&det_id=1398); medallion with archangel Gabriel from the mosaic scene of Emperor Leo VI kneeling before Christ, 886–912: [http://www.icon-art.info/detail.php?lng=ru&mst\\_id=2613&top\\_id=92&mode=m&det\\_id=1808](http://www.icon-art.info/detail.php?lng=ru&mst_id=2613&top_id=92&mode=m&det_id=1808); archangel Michael, the Virgin Mary, John the Prodromos, archangels Michael and Gabriel, first half of the 11th c. Monastery of Hosios Loukas, Phokida, Greece: <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&id=4718>; Arch. Gabriel, an eleventh-century mosaic in St. Sophia, Kiev: [http://www.icon-art.info/masterpiece.php?lng=ru&mst\\_id=979](http://www.icon-art.info/masterpiece.php?lng=ru&mst_id=979); Arch. Gabriel, a mosaic in the diakonikon apse, first half of the 11th c., Sanata Maria Assunta, Torcello, Italy (decoration on the lower hem of the tunic): <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&id=3722>.

<sup>61</sup> The scenes in which archangels are dressed in imperial attire are cited by PARANI, *Reconstructing the reality of images*, 42.

<sup>62</sup> Archangel Michael is considered as a guardian of churches. In this function he is depicted either in the narthex, or close to or facing the entrance doors of churches, sometimes greater than life-size. For this, see A. ΞΥΓΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, Αρχάγγελος Μιχαήλ "ο φύλαξ", *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 1 (1933) 18; M. ΤΑΤΙĆ-DJURIĆ, Archanges gardiens de porte à Dečani, in *Dečani et l'art byzantin au milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Septembre 1985, ed. Ed. V. DJURIĆ, Belgrade 1989, 359–366.

<sup>63</sup> В. ЛАЗАРЕВ, *История византийской живописи*, Москва 1986, 71, обр. 122.

<sup>64</sup> Прот. Г. ФЛОРОВСКИЙ, *Догмат и история*, Москва 1998, 401.



As to the date of the drawing, it is very difficult to give a precise date to a graffito without some clues in the inscriptions or some specific details. What seems certain in our case is that the graffito was created some time after the monumental apse mosaic of Hagia Sophia from 867 with the images of the Virgin and the Child between Archangel Gabriel and Archangel Michael (nowadays almost invisible)<sup>65</sup>. As already mentioned, it is impossible to date the graffito based only on the attire decoration of the figure. It is more than obvious that the graffito's hair arrangement above the forehead is very similar to that of the archangel in the apse mosaic from the second half of the 9th century<sup>66</sup>. (Fig. 14) Another close parallels to our graffito are the right angel or ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ, represented in the bema of the Dormition church at Nicaea (after 843)<sup>67</sup>, and the tenth-century fragment of an ivory plaque with Archangel Gabriel in the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection<sup>68</sup>. (Fig. 15, 16). The time span most probably lies between the second half of the 9th century and the 10th century. One can also add the specific combination of the garments, which seems typical for the time before the end of the 10th century<sup>69</sup>.

In the graffito drawing, we witness the work of a skilled artist, who did not simply reproduce what he had seen on the apse mosaic. He must have been familiar with the angelic iconography. On one hand, he attempted to portray the realities surrounding him, and he replaced the archangel's *chlamys costume* from the mosaic of Hagia Sophia, which was rarely noticed in Middle and Late Byzantine contexts, with the crossed *loros costume*. On the other hand, the author may have introduced realistic elements as a way of expressing individuality in a culture where iconographic choices were limited by the need for recognizability. The result is a new and very personal vision of Archangel Michael based on a popular tale like *Diegesis*. In other words, taking into consideration the pose and the hair and clothes arrangement, the graffito dates from the second half of the 9th century to the end of the 10th century, which is a relatively short time span.

<sup>65</sup> The date proposed for the creation of the apse mosaics ranges from the 8th to the 14th century. While the discussion has continued for decades without resolution, scholars seem to have arrived at a consensus that they were done some time after the end of Iconoclasm, in the third quarter of the 9th century. For this, see C. MANGO, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, Washington, D.C. 1962, 97; C. MANGO and E. HAWKINS, *Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, *DOP* 19 (1965) 147; В. ЛАЗАРЕВ, *История византийской живописи*, 71–72; N. ТЕТЕРΙΑТНИКОВ, *Hagia Sophia, Constantinople: Religious Images and their Functional Context after Iconoclasm*, *Zograf* 30 (2004–5) 9–11. However, some scholars continue to present extensive argument in favour of a later date. For example, see M. BERNABO, *L'arte bizantina dopo l'iconoclastia e la datazione dei mosaici nell' abside di Santa Sofia a Costantinopoli*, in *Intorno al sacro volto: Geneva, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI–XIV)*, ed. A. R. CALDERONI MASETTI, C. BOZZO, and G. WOLF, Venice, 2007, 37–47.

<sup>66</sup> For this, see <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&cid=2610>.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.icon-art.info/hires.php?lng=ru&type=1&cid=1889>.

<sup>68</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection, (BZ. 1972. 21): <http://www.doaks.org/resources/bliss-tyler-correspondence/art/bz/BZ-1972-21.jpg/view>.

<sup>69</sup> We cannot cite a Byzantine example later than the 10th century.

The second graffito, which is 25 cm in width and 21 cm in height, is also located in the south aisle of the church. It was engraved on a marble wall plate on the right side of the last door leading to the south-west end of the inner narthex. Its creator was apparently kneeling because it is lightly engraved at about 80 cm above the floor. (Photo 3; Fig. 17)

The graffito is very rough, and it is hard to distinguish any details. However, if we take a closer look, we see that it displays an image of the type of the standing Virgin Hodegetria where Theotokos holds the Christ Child with her left arm and points to him with her right arm. An angel is relegated to the secondary position, standing on the left hand of the Theotokos. He has no imperial attributes, not even the popular halo. The Virgin is depicted in a three-quarter view to the right but her face is turned more towards the spectator. In contrast, the figure of the Archangel is depicted frontally and without imperial attributes including the commonly shown halo. The nimbus is also omitted from the head of Theotokos. On the other hand, Jesus has a “cruciform nimbus” or the cross inside of the halo over his head. The cruciform nimbus is only used for Christ and rarely for someone else in the Trinity. The figures in our graffito are shown with schematic faces without any distortion. However, the hands are drawn in a very simple, childish way. In the images of Theotokos and her Child, one can find more details – palms with four fingers, legs in the right position (the left leg of the Child is simply marked) or some footwear (of Theotokos). The image of the Archangel is represented by elementary primitivism. The anonymous author’s drawing of the Archangel’s wings is very detailed because of his desire to illustrate and make vivid each and every single feather. It is difficult to distinguish the clothes of the Child and the Archangel. As for the Virgin Mary’s dress, the author shows his intention to follow the style of the established iconography. Theotokos wears a short hatched tunic with a V-shaped collar. In all probability, the use of the hatch was a technique to show the traditional blue colour of the dress. As a headdress she wears a kerchief concealing her hair and revealing only the lobe, and a decorated with bands *maphorion*. The latter, edged with a triple pendant, descends on the left side of the head and slants behind the figure of the Child reaching the waist of Theotokos. She looks at the viewer and points with her right hand to the Christ child. Thus, she presents her Son to the world, while they both gaze thoughtfully at each other.

The Child Jesus sits upright supported by Mary’s left arm. His right hand is raised in blessing and he holds a scroll in his left one. These distinguishing characteristics signify that the Child is both the pre-existent Logos (the scroll) and the coming Saviour (the blessing sign). The author has attempted to follow the peculiar iconography of the Child and to depict his raised right hand as a sign of blessing. However, he misinterpreted the gesture and drew the right hand with an open palm. Moreover, the graffito gives us the impression that the scroll is depicted in the hand of the Virgin Mary just because Jesus’ left hand is not seen. As for the Archangel, he is holding a spear in his right hand, while the open palm of his left hand is turned upside-down. His thick and hatched hair is falling down the back and has the shape of a present day beret. In spite of all mistakes, the author’s intention was to depict the Mother of

God in a standing pose known as Hodegetria, gesturing with her right hand toward her Child, who sits upright on her left arm holding a scroll. This type of Hodegetria, probably flanked by two angels, was a well-known preiconoclastic motif. It is a pity to see only the guard on the left side or Archangel Gabriel. The 7th century apse mosaic in the church of Panagia Angeloktisti at Kiti, Cyprus, is the closest parallel to our graffito<sup>70</sup>. (Fig. 18)

Theotokos Hodegetria is the type of the “portrait of the Virgin” traditionally believed to have been painted by S. Luke, and to have been sent from Jerusalem to Constantinople in the 5th century most probably by the Empress Eudoxia. It was one of the most widespread and easily recognizable iconographic images of the Virgin Mary in the Byzantine art. It features the Virgin carrying the Child in her left arm and gesturing to him with her free right hand. He answers to her intercessory prayer by raising his hand in blessing. The Greek word Hodegetria, meaning *she who shows the way*, refers to the raised position of the hand. The designation did not, however, originate from a gesture of the Virgin herself but rather from the famous icon of the Virgin in the Hodegon Monastery in Constantinople. It took its name from the monks who led blind pilgrims to a miraculous spring that was believed to restore sight. Starting in the 10th century, a new image is formed. It presents the Virgin Mary gesturing towards the Child with a loosened embrace. The new visual impression emphasizes the dogmatic or theological relationship in the way Mary pleads with and offers Christ. And as a matter of fact, this is the image that should be identified as the Hodegetria. It has always been discussed as an iconography that emerges in the sixth and seventh centuries on icons and imperial seals<sup>71</sup>.

Thus, the important question is to identify the image, which was used as a prototype by the anonymous author. There are two possible variants: the images within or outside the Hagia Sophia. The most suitable place for supervision on the apse is located on the right side of the great porphyry column or on several steps from the wall with our graffito. Of course, the viewer could not see the archangels at both sides of the apse. On the ground of the newly discovered graffiti drawing at Hagia Sophia, we come to the conclusion that they are a reflection of what their authors saw within the church – a mosaic or a concrete detail from the church ritual. Strangely enough, if the graffito relies on Christian iconography, it follows established strict rules for the church image decoration. In other words, the pure fantasy was replaced by careful supervision. This leads us to another question: whether the apse mosaic has always displayed a representation of the Mother of God seated on a throne.

Alas, the discussion about the date of the creation of the apse mosaic and the pose of Virgin Mary has continued for decades without any resolution. As already mentioned, the majority of scholars believe that the mosaic dates some time after the

<sup>70</sup> Cf., e.g., the Panagia Angeloktistos of Cyprus (eighth century): V. LAZAREV *Storia della pittura bizantina*, Turin 1967, 74 note 18 and pl. 52.

<sup>71</sup> Н.П. КОНДАКОВ, *Иконография Богоматери*, Т. 1–2. Пг., 1914–1915, т. 1, 152–162; В. PENTCHEVA, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*, Pennsylvania state university, 2006, 110.

end of Iconoclasm, or in the third quarter of the ninth century. We shall not recount in detail the arguments of the authors against this date. It is sufficient to note only two of them. According to the first one, G. Galavaris, the apse must originally have a standing Hodegetria, which by the late tenth or early eleventh century, or soon after the earthquake of 989, was replaced by a representation of the Mother of God seated on a throne<sup>72</sup>. On the other hand, Nicolas Oikonomides was puzzled by certain discrepancies between the description of the image of the Mother of God in Photios's homily and the actual mosaic in the apse of Hagia Sophia. Photios describes her as standing, while the mosaic depicts her seated. It is assumed that the Photios's text refers to the sanctuary mosaic, and supporters of an early date attribute the discrepancy to the "fluidity of the Byzantine language". Advocates of a later statement are C. Mango and E. Hawkins<sup>73</sup>, who are also followers of R. Jenkins<sup>74</sup>.

More recently Zaza Skhirtladze has pointed out that the representation of the Mother of God seated on a throne was in the church's apse during the late 11th or early 12th century. The main arguments supporting the author's claim is the hexaptych (six-paneled) Menologion with bilingual – Greek and Georgian – inscriptions, created in the late 11th or early 12th century by the Georgian monk Ioane Tokha. According to Skhirtladze, however, this does not rule out the possibility that "the original image was a standing Hodegetria, that was replaced in the late 10th or early 11th century with an image of the Mother of God on a throne"<sup>75</sup>.

It certainly looks like the authors of graffiti used to represent things seen inside the church. Therefore, we can conclude that the original image in the apse was precisely a standing Hodegetria.

It should be also remembered that during the 9th and the 10th centuries, 'imperial' angelic orders were incorporated in the decoration of the bema – they either represented the honorific guard of the Virgin with or without the Child, or they participated in the *theophanic* prophetic visions in the apse. Thus we are dealing with the 9th or the 10th centuries, and judging by the iconography of our graffito one can date it to this time.

In summary, we have two exceptional graffiti drawings from the church of Hagia Sophia. Apart from being a valuable source regarding the church, they certainly help us understand and interpret much better the thoughts of the medieval people and the way they expressed them through art.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. G. GALAVARIS, Observations on the Date of the Apse Mosaic of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, in *Actes du XIIe Congrès international d'Etudes byzantines*, III, Belgrade 1964, 107–110. Galavaris' theory has been readily accepted by V. LAURENT, *Le Corpus des Sceaux de l'Empire byzantin*, V/1, Paris 1963, no. 45.

<sup>73</sup> C. MANGO, Documentary Evidence on the Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia, *BZ* 47 (1954) 400; C. MANGO and E. HAWKINS, Apse Mosaics, 143.

<sup>74</sup> R. J. H. JENKINS' review of Mango's *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, *BZ* 51 (1959) 106–108.

<sup>75</sup> Z. SKHIRTLDZE, The Image of the Virgin on the Sinai Hexaptych and the Apse Mosaic of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014) 382.



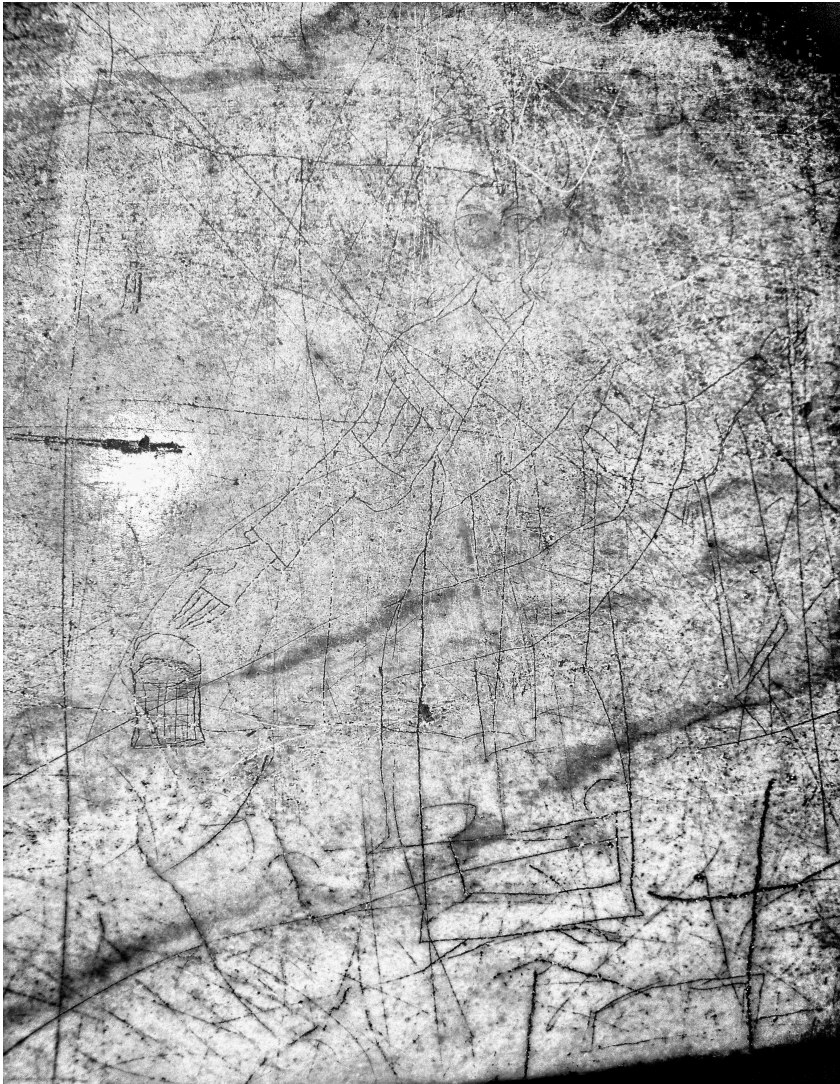


Photo 1.



Photo 2. Graffito's Bucket.



Fig.1.





Fig.2. Angelic Powers (Dynamis) in the bema of the Dormition Church at Nicaea (after 843).



Fig.3. Mosaic of SW vestibule in Hagia Sophia

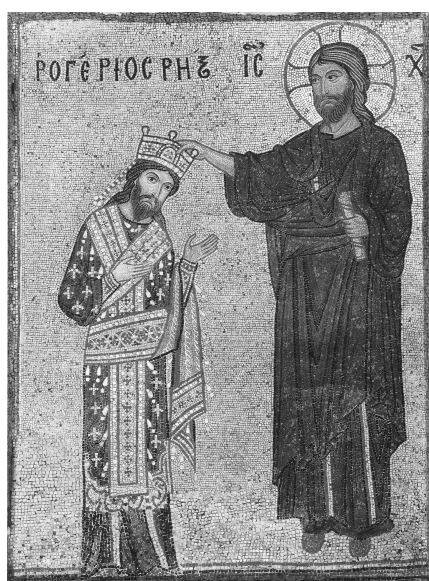


Fig.4. Narthex (detail) 1150s Mosaic, Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, Palermo



Fig.5. The 10th century ivory in Moscow



Fig.6. Miniature from the Gospel Vat. Copt. 9, fol 146, Biblioteca Vaticana, Rome (dated 1205).



Fig.7. Byzantine ivory casket, assigned to 898 or 900 A.D. in the Palazzo Venezia, Rome.





Fig.8. Archangel and Gideon. Prilep.



Fig.8a. Archangel and Gideon, Basket, detail.

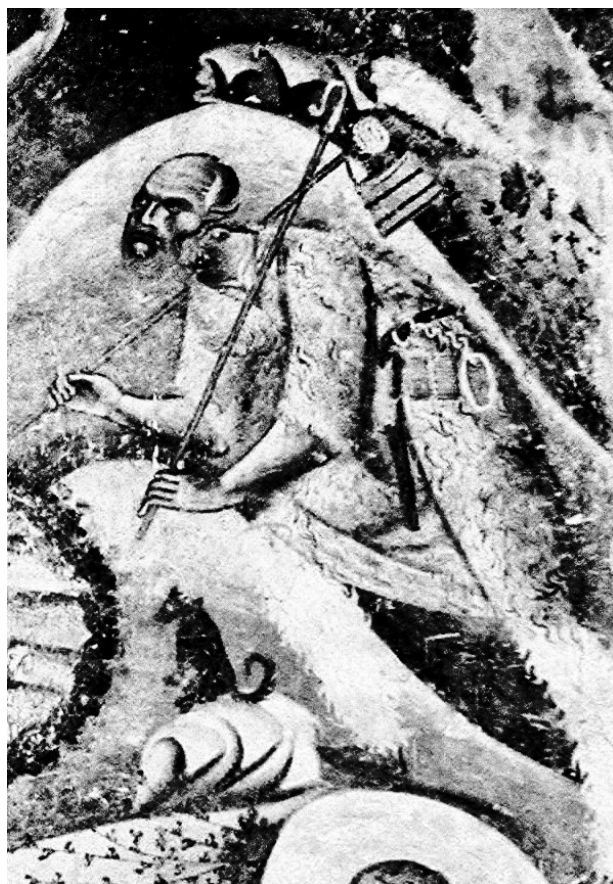


Fig.9. The shepherd, Kurbinovo (1191).



Fig.9a. The shepherd's bucket, Kurbinovo (1191).





Fig.10. Ivory situlae designed to hold holy water. Milan, Italy, 980-981 A.D.

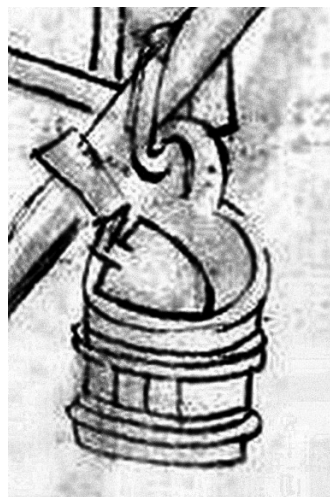


Fig.11. A bucket with mortar and trowel from Mendel Housebook, Amb. 317.2, folio 24v (detail), c. 1425, Nuremberg.



Fig.12. Construction of the Tower of Babel, San Marco, Venice, 13th c. (detail).



Fig.13. Construccoon de la Torre de Babel Bible Historiee, Rylands French MS 5 folio 16r, c. 1250 (Manchester, John Rylands University Library).



Fig.14. Archangel's hair arrangement, Hagia Sophia.



Fig.15. Archangel's hair arrangement, Dormition Church, Nicaea.



Fig.16. Fragment of a Plaque with the Archangel Gabriel dated to the 10th century; Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection, BZ.1972.21.





Photo 3.



Fig.17.



Fig.18. The 7th century apse mosaic in the church of Panagia Angeloktisti in Kiti, Cyprus.