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A TENTH-CENTURY GRAFFITO OF ST BASIL THE GREAT IN THE LIGHT OF HIS CULT IN EASTERN MONASTICISM

As one of the most important contributors to the development of the Trinitarian concept and the author of one of the Three Byzantine liturgies, St Basil the Great (c. 330–379 AD) was one of the most venerated Church Fathers in the Middle Ages, both to the East and the West. Thus, the early establishment of the cult of St Basil as "the imperial attire of the church"[1], led to the use of St Basil's bishop portrait as a prototype of his holy image[2]. Indeed, according to Andréa Grabar, the earliest representations of St Basil the Great–the Sinai icon and the frescoes in St Maria Antiqua, Rome, which he dates to the seventh century, are copies of his original bishop portrait (Fig. 1 and 2)[3]. However, it is accepted that the standardized hagiographic portraits, which were in use just before and just after the iconoclasm and to the group of which belongs the bishop portrait of St Basil with black hair and long black beard, were replaced by more "realistic portraits" about the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century[4].

In addition, the Church Father St Basil the Great has no lesser importance for the establishment of the communal mode of monastic life with his ascetic works *Moralia* and *Regulae fusius et brevius tractatae*[5]. It is strange, therefore, that St Basil's influence on the development of Christian monasticism did not contribute

[1] Patriarch P h o t i o s. Epistulae et Amphilochia. Vol. 3. Leipzig, 1983–1988, 42.1346.

[2] There are about 300 bishops represented in Byzantine art and nearly all of them are represented as canonised saints. However, only some of these bishop images have a distinct portrait-type. See W a l t e r, Chr. Biographical Scenes of the Three Hierarchies. – Revues des Études byzantines, 36, 1978, p. 233.

[3] G r a b a r, A. Le portrait dans l'icônographie chrétienne. – In: L' art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age. Vol. 1. Paris, 1968, 591-607. In fact, the earliest fresco of St Basil the Great in St Maria Antiqua is situated in the main apse and dates to the middle of the seventh century, while his image in the north aisle is dated to the third quarter of the eighth century. See B u c h t h a l, H. Some Notes on Byzantine Hagiographic Portraiture. – Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 62, julliet-août 1963, p. 83.

[4] According to Hugo Buchthal, the "realistic" portrait of St Basil the Great with "lean, ascetic face, morose expression, piercing eyes, very distinctive aquiline nose and long, pointed black beard" can be recognised in the Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613, fol. 288, the end of the tenth century) and in the Homilies of St Gregory of Nazianzus (Paris gr. 550, fol. 4, twelfth century) at earliest. See B u c h t h a l, H. Some Notes..., p. 81, 88.

[5] Bibliography on these works see in G e e r a r d, M. Clavis patrum graecorum. Vol. 2. Turnhout, 1974–1983, no. 2877 and 2875.

Fig. 1. St Basil the Great. Icon on wood, part of a triptych, Mt Sinai (after A. Grabar).

Fig. 2. St Basil the Great. Wall paintings, S. Maria Antiqua, Rome (after A. Grabar).

much to the medieval conception of his visual holy image. A rare example for an artistic interpretation of St Basil as an esteemed spiritual teacher in the "angelic life" seems to be the twelfth-century illustrated copy of his Ascetic Treatise (Copenhagen, Gl. Kongl. Saul. 1343): there, in the frontispiece (fol. 1) St Basil is represented as a bishop, surrounded by monks to the left and to the right[6]. In addition, what is even more striking, is the fact that St Basil's personal commitment to monastic life was not paid any attention by the medieval artists. Even the two narrative cycles of St Basil's life in the tenth-century wall paintings of the Cappadocian churches Balkham Deresi and Tokali New Church do not illustrate the monastic experience of the saint in Neokaisareia, although it is believed that the scenes in these cycles were derived from St Basil's Life written by Pseudo-Amphilochius[7].

Thus, one can assume that the "monastic" image of St Basil the Great was not developed throughout Byzantine art at all. Was that really the case? Strange enough as it may seem, a graffito-image of a saint from the monastery of Ravna, Bulgaria, provides an opportunity to throw light upon this question. For, this graffito is accompanied by the name of Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΗΛΕΟΣ[8].

THE RAVNA MONASTERY

Similar to most of the other early Bulgarian monasteries, the Ravna monastery is not mentioned in the sources and only became known through archaeological excavations carried on between 1979 and 1990[9]. The monastery is located about 25km

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[6] W a l t e r, Chr. Biographical Scenes..., p. 243.

[7] In the scholarly literature the date of Pseudo-Amphilochian Life of St Basil varies between the sixth and the ninth century. The text see in P s e u d o - A m p h i l o c h i u s. Vita Sancti Basilii. SS Patrum Amphilochii Iconiensis, Methodii Patarensis et Andrea Cretensis. Ed. F. Cembefis. Opera omnia. Paris, 1644, 155–177 (=BHG no. 247). Unfortunately, this work was not accessible to me when preparing this article. Therefore, here I refer to the Slavic translation of *Vita S. Basilii* published by С о б о л е в с к и й, А. И. Жития святых по древнерусским спискам. – В: Памятники древней письменности и искусства. Т. 149. СПб., 1903, 17–57 and especially 28. This text I was provided by courtesy of Prof. Angelina Mincheva whom I would like to thank. For the narrative painted cycles of St Basil's Life see G o u m a - P e t e r s o n, Th. Narrative Cycles of Saint's Lives in Byzantine Churches From the Tenth- to the Mid-Fourteenth Century. – Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 30, 1985, № 1, p. 33, Table B 2; W a l t e r, Chr. Biographical Scenes..., 245.

[8] I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Kazimir Popkonstantinov for providing me the opportunity to work and publish this extremely interesting graffito-material form the Ravna monastery. At the same time, at the insistence of Prof. Popkonstantinov I would like to state that the present publication of the graffito-image of St Basil as well as of the other two graffito-images of monks has to be considered their first publication. For, their appearance in the article of Dr. Rumen Bojadzhiev (Б о я д ж и е в, Р. Някои аспекти на християнската символика в рисунките-графити от старобългарския манастир при с. Равна, Провадийско. – Год. на СУ. Център за слав.-визант. проучвания „Иван Дуйчев", 84–85, 1990–1991, 219–249) as well as of the graffito-material in his article as a whole, is published without the permission of the excavator of the Ravna monastery Prof. Popkonstantinov.

[9] The author of the present article also participated in the excavations between 1987 and 1990. The final results have not been published yet, however, there are some important articles concerning the monastery of Ravna. See Г е о р г и е в, П. Манастирската църква при с. Равна, Провадийско. – Известия на Нар. музей Варна (henceforth: ИНМВ), 21, 1985, 71–98; Г е о р г и е в, П. Историята на Равненския манастир. – Епохи, Велико Търново, 2, 1993, 57–69; П о п к о н с т а н т и н о в, К. Двуезични надписи и абецедари от манастира при с. Равна. – ИНМВ, 20, 1984, 65–81; П о п к о н с т а н т и н о в, П. Два псалтирни текста от IX–X в. – В: Приноси към българската археология. Т. 1. С., 1992, 103–119.

south-east of the medieval capital of Pliska and 18 km west of the present-day town of Provadija. The monastic complex is situated on a high terrace on the right bank of the Provadijska river, now close to the railway station of the village of Ravna. Therefore, the monastery is presently known as the monastery of Ravna.

The building complex covers an area of about ten acres and is constructed according to a previously composed plan. A Greek inscription noting the date of the consecration of the church[10], the date of the archaeological finds, and the palaeographic analysis of the epigraphic material define the period of existence of the monastery from the last quarter of the ninth to the beginning of the eleventh century when it was finally destroyed and deserted[11]. In addition, the seals of King Symeon (893–927 AD) and his first-born son Michael, heir to the throne, which are found in the monastery, imply that the monastic site was a royal donation. Moreover, on the basis of the consecration date of the church, 889 AD, it is suggested that the Ravna monastery had already perhaps been founded and then protected by Knjaz Boris-Michael (852-889; † 907 AD) in order to help the activity of the Cyrillo-Methodian disciples who had arrived in Bulgaria four years earlier, in 885 AD[12]. The strongest evidence in support to this hypothesis is the Greek inscription found in the central nave of the church with the name of ΚΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΠΑΠΑ ΡΟΜΗΣ, the holy patron of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission in Great Moravia[13].

In addition, the quantity and variety of the epigraphic material, which consists of about 300 inscriptions in Greek, Glagolitic, and Cyrillic, prove the specific cultural functions of the Ravna monastery. To be more precise, particular groups of graffiti, such as Greek alphabets, bilingual Greek-Cyrillic inscriptions, minuscule Greek inscriptions as well as graffiti-replica of book illuminations, indicate the practice of teaching Greek, translating, copying, and illuminating manuscripts in this tenth-century monastery (Fig. 3). Moreover, the concentration of these graffiti in the

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[10] There is an ongoing discussion on the reading of the date in the inscription for the consecration of the church. See Михайлов, С. За автентичността на надписа за освещаване на манастирската църква край с. Равна. – ИНМВ, 20, 1984, 83–89. He reads the date as 589 AD. However, Veselin Beševliev and Kazimir Popkonstantinov claim that there is a mistake in the inscription and the date should be read as 889 AD. See Бешевлиев, В. Гръцки надпис с дата от старобългарския манастир при с. Равна. – ИНМВ, 18, 1982, 117–118; Попконстантинов, К. Още веднъж за надписа с дата от старобългарския манастир при с. Равна. –Археология, 1986, № 1, 8–19. Another reading of the date as 897 AD has been recently suggested by Георгиев, П. Хронологическо проучване върху датирания надпис от Равна. – В: Изследвания в чест на акад. Димитър Ангелов. С., 1994, 275–283. I think that the safest reading of the date is that of 889 AD and therefore I accept it.

[11] Георгиев, П. Историята..., 58–60.

[12] The long *Vita* of St Clement (the so-called *Legenda Bulgarica*), which is believed to have been written by the Archbishop Theophilact of Ohrid (c. 1085—c. 1109) in c. 1100 AD, states that before becoming a bishop, Clement had already a monastery in Ohrid donated by Knjaz Boris-Michael. See Theophilact, Archbishop of Bulgaria. *Vita Clementis*. Ed. N. L. Tunickij. – In: Migne, J. P. Patrologia graeca. T. 126, col. 67. In addition, according to the second Slavic Life of St Naum, surviving in a manuscript form the sixteenth century, when he became a successor of St Clement as a teacher in the bishopric of Devol a monastery dedicated to Archangel Michael was built on the south shore of the Lake Ohrid with "the funds and decree of the devout Bulgarian King Michael-Boris and his son King Symeon in 6413=905". The text see in Иванов, Й. Български старини из Македония. С., 1931, 312–313. English translation see in Kussef, M. St Naum. – Slavic and East European Review, 29/No. 72, 1950, 140–150.

[13] Попконстантинов, К., Т. Смядовски. За почитането на Климент, папа Римски, в средновековна България. – Palaeobulgarica, 1983, № 4, с. 88.

north range of the central enclosure of the monastery allows identification of the location of the school and the scriptorium themselves. In addition, the graffiti scratched in the outer face of the north church wall suggest that the north part of the central enclosure of the monastery – between the church and the scriptorium – was a favourite place for the calligraphers to take a break during which they exercised on the church wall.

Fig. 3. Graffiti-replica of book ornamentation, Ravna monastery (facsimile R. Kostova).

Therefore, it is not a surprise that at this particular place, between the fifth and the sixth pilasters of the outer face of the north church wall, appear the most curious images amongst the graffiti in the Ravna monastery – those of three peculiar human figures situated close to each other[14]. They differ in the quality of their execution and most probably were scratched by two, or even three different "hands". However, the three graffito-drawings are made in a similar manner with three common features: frontal posture of the body with legs turned in profile; depiction of the dress by cross-hatching; and, cross hanging on the neck (Fig. 4, 5, 6 and 7). That is the third feature which enables the identification of these graffiti as images of clerics. Two of them are in *orant* posture and wear pointed hats with crosses which can be identified as a special hood (*κουκούλιον, cuculus*) worn by the monks of the great habit (*megaloschema*)[15]. Consequently, both figures can be safely recognised as images of monks[16]. Moreover, one of them undoubtedly has a saintly status clearly acknowledged by the Greek inscription around his head: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΗΛΕΟΣ (Fig. 3)[17].

THE NAME

The inscription, however, helps the identification of the graffito-image only at first glance. If one takes into account the Synaxarion of the Great Church of Constantinople from the ninth century, which certainly was applied in Bulgarian liturgical practice, one will find there five saints with the name ΒΑΣΗΛΕΟΣ: Basil the Great, bishop (fourth century, January 1); Basil of Dekapolis (eighth century, February 28); Basil, bishop of Chersones (third century, March 3); Basil of Ankyra, bishop (fourth century, March 22); Basil of Amaseia, bishop (fourth century, April 26)[18]. Apparently, the further identification of the graffito-image requires a clarification of the status of the saint which will be based on iconographic characteristics, such as costume, attributes, and posture.

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[14] The three graffito-images are scratched at 1.6 m height from the contemporary groundlevel and are situated 0.4–0.5 m from each other.

[15] For the tradition of representing monks in Byzantine art see Lexikon der christlichen Iconographie (henceforth: LCI). Ed. Er. Kirschbaum. Vol. 5. Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1992, cols. 260–266; Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst. Ed. Kl. Wessel. Vol. 2. Stuttgart, 1983, cols. 1061–1072. For monk's costume also see The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium (henceforth: Dictionary of Byzantium). Gen. ed. Al. Kazhdan. Vol. 2. New York and Oxford, 1991, col. 1849; Г о ш е в, Н. Облеклото на старобългарските монаси. – Изв. Нар. етногр. музей, 10–11, 1932, с. 53.

[16] The third figure, although without a *koukoulion*, can be identified as a monk's image as well, for the rest of its characteristics – costume and cross hanging on the neck – are similar to those of the other two figures.

[17] It should to be mentioned that to the right of the other human figure wearing a *koukoulion* there is a Greek inscription with the name Αλεξος. However, it is not clear whether the inscription refers to the human figure.

[18] Ч и ф л я н о в, Б. Триоди и месецослови на Великата църква през IX в. – Годишник на Духовната академия, 19, 1969/1970, 378–384.

Fig. 4. A graffito of monk-saint St Basil, Ravna monastery (photo K. Popkonstantinov).

Fig. 5. St Gregory of Nazianzus and monks wearing megaloschema and novices. Homilies of St Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrosian. Cod. E 49–50 inf., fol. 119.

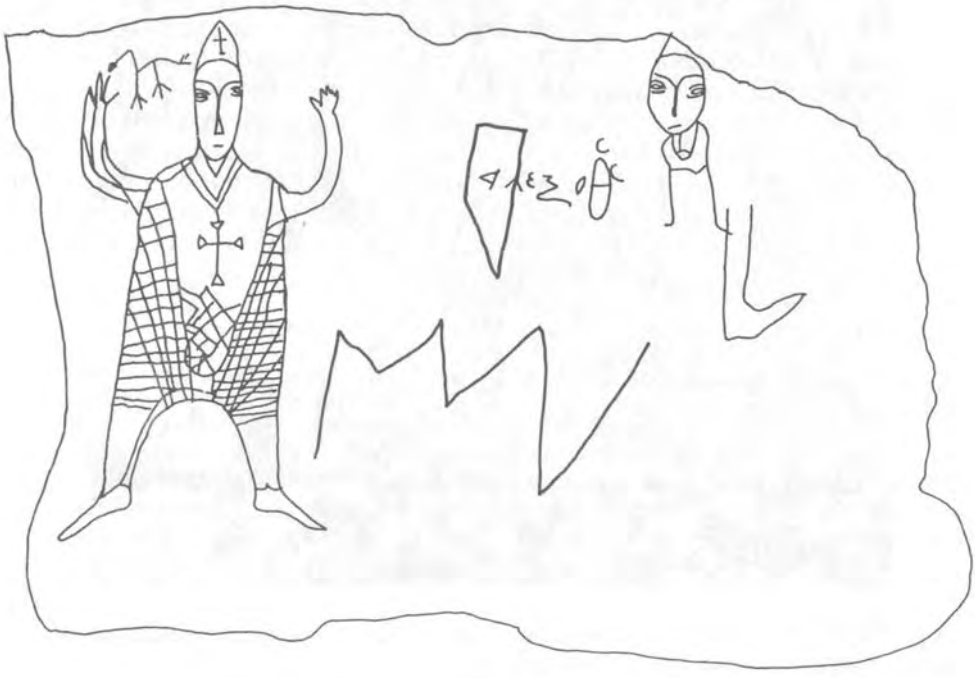

Fig. 6. A graffito of monk, Ravna monastery (facsimile R. Kostova).

Fig. 7. A graffito of monk, Ravna monastery (facsimile R. Kostova).

COSTUME

As mentioned above, the clearest indication that the graffito with the name Basil depicts a monk-saint is the hood with a cross which is identified as a *koukoulion*. Unfortunately, the sketchy character of the drawing does not allow us to tell much about the other parts of the monk's garb. The garment which, however, can be securely recognised are trousers with tight legs which get to a pair of low boots (Fig. 4 and 5)[19]. The appearance of trousers in a monk's image is striking enough, for they were not a proper element of the monk's costume. As implied by the correspondences between the text of the *Typikon* of the Stoudios monastery and the text of the tenth-century Glagolitic *Euchologium Sinaiticum*, it can be safely assumed that the Bulgarian monks followed strictly the Byzantine monastic habit

[19] The trousers, called *anaxyrides* or *braka*, were introduced in the later Roman Empire under barbarian influence and became very fashionable in the sixth century. See Dictionary of Byzantium, vol. 3, col. 2124.

(*schema*) which avoided the use of trousers[20]. Therefore, one can find no representations of monks wearing trousers in Byzantine and Bulgarian medieval art (Fig. 4 and 5)[21].

Then, can it be suggested that, in spite of the monk's status of the saint, the author of the graffito-image in the Ravna monastery reflected the contemporary fashion of wearing trousers which he had seen in the monastery or elsewhere? Indeed, chapter 59 of *Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad consulta Bulgarorum* from 866 AD makes evident that *femoralia* (drawers) were worn by the Bulgarians, both by men and women. Although such dress was not appropriate for Christian women, the Pope stated that "our books recommend to make drawers", because "we wear drawers in a spiritual sense oppressing in this way the lust of our flesh through forbearance"[22]. However, the fact that the same trousers appear on the other two human figures, mentioned above (Fig. 6 and 7), leads me to suggest that this garment is an indicative element of the iconography of a common prototype which was followed by the graffito-authors of the three human figures.

ATTRIBUTES

Another peculiar iconographic feature of the graffito-image of the monk-saint Basil are the attributes. One of them is the cross hanging on the neck. Although one can refer to the well-established tradition from the fifth century onwards of wearing crosses under or over one's clothing[23], the appearance of the cross hanging on the neck of the monk's graffito-image is not common, for in monastic habit this way of wearing crosses was replaced by a special garment called *analabos*, a sort of sleeveless vest[24]. This might be the reason, therefore, for the lack of any representations of monks wearing crosses on the necks in the pictorial sources of Byzantine painting which I was able to consult. Thus, in spite of the lack of comparative material, it can be suggested that the cross hanging on the neck of the graffito-image of St Basil indicates his higher clerical status. Furthermore, the fact that the other two human figures also have crosses hanging on their necks implies that this attribute is another distinctive feature of the common prototype together with the trousers.

The second attribute of the monk-saint Basil is the cross which he is holding in his right hand. Although the cross held in such a manner usually functions as a martyr's attribute, it can be seen as an attribute of saints who are not martyrs as well. For example, in the eleventh-century fresco in St Sophia, Thessaloniki, St

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[20] Г о ш е в, И. Облеклото..., passim and especially 40–44.

[21] Trousers can be seen in images of military saints, as for example, St Procopios (Moscow Menologion, gr. 9, 1063 Ad, fol. 72r) and in images of a particular group of holy personages, such as Daniel, The Three Hebrews, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebastea. See Dictionary of Byzantium, vol. 3, col. 2125.

[22] Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad consulta Bulgarorum. – In: Fontes Latini Historiae Bulgaricae. Vol. 2. S., 1960, p. 103.

[23] According to this practice, the baptised Christians received simple wooden or metal crosses, while the golden and silver *enkolpia* were worn by high ranking secular officers and clerics (*stavrophoroi*). See К о н д а к о в, Н. П. Иконография Богоматери. Т. 1. СПб., 1914, с. 259; М и р к о в и ћ, Л. Православна литургика или наука о богослужењу у православне источне цркве. Београд, 1965, с. 135.

[24] Dictionary of Byzantium, vol. 2, col. 1849; Г о ш е в, И. Облеклото..., с. 55.

Theodore of Stoudios holds a cross – an uncommon appearance of the saint which is successfully explained by Doula Mouriki through the assimilation between the image of the martyr and that of the confessor[25].

But instead of going further at this point in the present analysis, I would suggest rather that the cross in the right hand of the monk-saint Basil cannot be considered his attribute. If one examines the graffito-drawing more carefully, one would see that, in fact, two crosses with one and the same crossing point are scratched. One of them has a longer vertical arm which is touching the body of the saint, while the other three arms end with dots. The other cross is scratched more shallowly. Its vertical arm starts form the fingers of the saint's hand and also ends with dots. The other three arms end with dots as well and only one of them coincides with the horizontal arm of the previous cross. Most probably, the smaller and almost invisible cross was made first, and then the bigger cross was scratched deeper over it. Both crosses, however, are not placed in a proper vertical position which would follow the position of the hand raised in *orant*, but they are placed almost diagonally to the hand. Therefore, I think that the original image of the monk-saint Basil did not have a cross in the right hand, but it had only one attribute – the cross hanging on the neck. It seems that the two crosses in the right hand were made later, either by the same author, or by somebody else.

POSTURE

The posture is the last element of the iconography of the graffito in question which can be used in its identification. The frontal posture, in which the monk-saint Basil from the Ravna monastery is represented, is acknowledged as a distinctive stylistic feature of the images of monk-saints in Byzantine art which emphasises the ascetic nature of this category of saints[26]. In addition, the *orant* gesture is the most appropriate gesture for the monks whose main task is to pray[27]: for instance, most of the monk-saints in the eleventh-century mosaics in the katholikon of Hosios Loukas in Phocis are in *orant* attitude (Fig. 8 and 9).

Thus, the analysis of the three iconographic characteristics – costume, attributes, and posture – hints that the graffito of the saint named Basil, and subsequently its prototype, definitely belong to the group of the monk-saints.

IDENTIFICATION

Now, we can pose a more precise question as to who of the five saints with the name Basil in the Sinaxarion of the Great Church can be classified as a monk-saint? Four of them are bishops: St Basil the Great, St Basil of Ankyra, St Basil of Chersones, and St Basil of Amaseia. Only for one of these four bishops, St Basil the Great, there is hagiographic evidence that he was a monk for a certain period of time. The one of the saints with the name Basil who was not a bishop, St Basil of

[25] M o u r i k i, D. The Portraits of Theodore Studites in Byzantine Art. –Jahrbuch der Österreichishen Byzantinistik (henceforth: JÖB), 20, 1971, 257–258.

[26] K a z h d a n, A., H. M a g u i r e. Byzantine Hagiographic Texts as Sources for Art.– Dumbarton Oaks Papers (henceforth: DOP), 45, 1991, p. 3.

[27] M o u r i k i, D. The Portraits..., p. 270.

Fig. 8. St Theodore of Stoudios. Mosaic, katholikon, Hosios Loukas (after A. Kazhdan and H. Maguire).

Fig. 9. St Nicon. Mosaic, katholikon, Hosios Loukas (after A. Kazhdan and H. Maguire).

Dekapolis, was a monk and therefore he is always represented in monastic vestments as is done in his earliest image in the Menologion of Basil II (Vatic. gr. 1613, fol. 426). Thus, following the iconography of the graffito-image of the monk-saint Basil in the Ravna monastery, it seems reasonably to identify it as a representation of the monk-saint Basil of Dekapolis.

However, I assume the risk of suggesting that the graffito does not depict St Basil of Dekapolis, but depicts instead St Basil the Great. The main argument for this suggestion is the incomparable levels of popularity of the two saints. The cult of St Basil of Dekapolis was not widespread neither in Byzantium, nor in the Slavic Orthodox world. But what is more important for our study, is that we do not have any evidence that this saint was known in tenth-century Bulgaria at all. In contrast, St Basil the Great was well-known as a theologian and ascetic teacher. Excerpts from his treatise *Adversus Eunomium* and his commentaries on New Testament texts are included in the *florilegium* known as *Simeonov (Svetoslavov) Izbornik* which was translated from Greek to order of King Symeon, but survived in a Russian copy from 1073 AD[28]. Furthermore, St Basil's theological writings constituted the basis of the *Hexaemeron* written by the Bulgarian writer John the Exarch[29]. In addition, the Slavic translation of the *Nomocanon XIV titulorum* contains canons *cxi-cxii* from St Basil's work *Liber de Spirito Sancto*[30]. Moreover, St Basil's influence

[28] The text is quoted according to the last edition in Симеонов сборник (по Светославовия препис от 1073 г.). Т. 1. Изследвания и текст. С., 1991, fol.4-5, 203–205; fol. 32–33, 259–261; fol. 34, 263; fol. 37^{r}, 270; fol. 39, 273; fol. 46–47, 287–289; fol. 53, 301–302; fol. 56, 307–308; fol. 58^{r}, 312; fol. 66^{r}–67, 328–329; fol. 73^{r}, 342; fol. 76^{r}–77, 348–349; fol. 78, 351 (excerpts from the *Hexaemeron*); fol. 84–85^{r}, 363–366; fol. 90^{r}, 376; fol. 92–93, 379–381; fol. 104^{r}–105, 404–405.

[29] T h o m s o n, Fr. Continuity of the Development of the Bulgarian Culture During the Period of Byzantine Hegemony and Slavonic Translation of Works by the Three Cappadocian Fathers. – In: Международен симпозиум 1100 години от блажената кончина на св. Методий. С., 1983, 142–143 and notes 76–77.

[30] T h o m s o n, Fr. Continuity..., p. 142 and notes 71, 72.

in the establishment of monasticism in Bulgaria is attested by the translated fragments of his *Regulae fusius tractatae* in the tenth-century Cyrillic *Folia Zographensia*[31]. In addition, St Basil's *Sermo asceticus xii. De ascetica disciplina* which is found in the fourteenth-century codices at the earliest, is also considered to have been translated by the tenth century[32].

Although these proofs for the popularity of St Basil the Great are not related directly to the graffito-image under discussion, they illustrate the influence of the saint in religious life in tenth-century Bulgaria. What is more important for the present study, is the fact that the translations of St Basil's works in Bulgaria certainly provided the best channel for the spread of his portrait through illustrated copies. In this respect, it is noteworthy that St Basil is depicted in the miniature in *Izbornik* of 1073 AD (fol. 3r) which represents the participants in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381 AD[33]. Therefore, I suggest that the graffito-image of the monk-saint designated as Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΗΛΕΟΣ in the Ravna monastery is a replica of a portrait of St Basil the Great as a monk, most probably transmitted through an illustrated manuscript.

THE HAGIOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF ST BASIL THE GREAT

The weakest point of this hypothesis, however, is the fact that in Byzantine art St Basil the Great has never been considered to be a monk-saint, but a bishop-saint – a status, which definitely was followed by his known portraits and narrative cycles (Fig. 10 and 11)[34]. Despite the fact that St Basil's iconographic type appears to be

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[31] Минчева, А. Старобългарски кирилски откъслеци. С., 1978, 39–45; Thomson, Fr. Continuity...., p. 143 and note 81.

[32] Thomson, Fr. Continuity..., p. 143 and note 82.

[33] Лихачова, В. Художественное оформление Изборника Святослава, 1073. – В: Византия и Русь. М., 1989, с. 29; Мавродинова, Л. Украсата на Светославовия сборник от 1073 г. – В: Симеонов сборник (по Светославовия препис от 1073 г.). Т. 1, с. 117, обр. 6.

[34] I found only one reference to representation of St Basil as a monk, but in a monument of West European art. This is a representation of St Basil as a Basilian monk wearing a *koukoulion* in the thirteenth-century altarpiece at Palazo del Commune, Massa Maritima, Italy. See Kaftal, G. Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting. Vol. 1. Firenze, 1982, col. 14, fig. 152; LCI. Vol. 5, cols. 337–339. Here I list some of the monuments which represent St Basil as a bishop-saint. Mosaics: the katholikon of Hosios Loukas, Phocis, eleventh century; St Sophia, Kiev, eleventh century; the cathedral of Cefalú, twelfth century (Лазарев, В. Н. История византийской живописи. М., 1986, с. 95, 101). Manuscripts: Homilies of St Gregory of Nazianzus, Paris. gr. 510, fol. 104, 880–885 Ad; Homilies of St Basil the Great, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Gr. 77, fol. 2, tenth century (Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften. Oxford, Bodleain Library. Edited by Ingmar Hutter. Bd. 1. Stuttgart, 1977, Nr. 1, Abb. 1, Farbtaf. 1; Weitzmann, K. Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des IX. und X. Jahrhunderts. Wien, 1996, Taf. XCVI, Abb. 615, Addenda, 76); Menologion of Basil II, Vat. gr. 1613, the end of the tenth century, fol. 288; Menologion, Vat. gr. 1156, fol. 283, eleventh century; Menologion, Tbilisi A. 648, eleventh century (Мијовић, П. Менолог. Историко-уметнички истраживања. Београд, 1973, с. 386. I would like to thank to Prof. Dr. Elka Bakalova for providing me this book.); Psalter No 3, Dumbarton Oaks, 1084 AD (Лихачова, В. Връзки между изкуство и ритуал в Константинопол през втората половина на XI в. – В: Етюди по средновековно изкуство. С., 1986, с. 31); Euchologium No 27, GBL, Moscow, fol. 181, eleventh century (Пуцко, В. Византийские лицевые рукописси Государственый библиотеки СССР. – Византийский временник, 43, 1982, 106–108); Liturgical scroll 109, Patriarchal Library, Jerusalem, eleventh century; Liturgical scroll gr. 672, GPB, St Petersburg, eleventh century (Лихачова, В. Искусство книги Константинополя XI века. М., 1976, 82–88).

Fig. 10. Theotokos holding the Child, Archangels Michael and Gabriel, St Nicholas, St John Chrysostom, and St Basil the Great. Miniature, Psalter, Berlin (after V. N. Lazarev).

Fig. 11. The Mass of St Basil. Wall painting, St Sophia, Ohrid.

very homogeneous, Christopher Walter distinguished two biographical traditions, both dating to the ninth century at the latest. One of them is derived from the Homilies of St Gregory of Nazianzus and there St Basil is represented generally as "a Doctor of the Church". The other tradition, which originated form the Life written by Pseudo-Amphilochius, is defined as "popular" and according to it St Basil is "a man of the sacraments, of asceticism and of prayer"[35]. This popular tradition, in my view, might produce the monk's image of saint.

[35] To the first biographical tradition in the iconography of St Basil the Great Chr. Walter lists the following manuscripts of St Gregory's Homilies: Paris. gr. 510, fol. 104; Ambrosian. E 49–50 inf.; Turin University Library C. I.6, fol. 89^{v}; Athos Pantaleimon 6; Coislin. 293. To the second tradition, in addition to the tenth-century narrative cycles in Balkham Deresi and Tokali New Church, belong two eleventh-century frescoes in St Sophia, Ohrid and a twelfth-century icon in the collection of Eric Bradley, Esq. London. See W a l t e r, Chr. Biographical Scenes..., 244–250.

However, I was not able to find surviving representations of the monk-saint Basil the Great in Byzantine art. What could be the reason? Perhaps, one reason could be the loss of monuments either because of historical, or physical circumstances. In the matter of the surviving works, however, except for the limit of my information, one of the important reasons for the predominance of a particular iconographic type might be the dependence of the artist's interpretation of the subject on the requirements of the patron. For example, the patronage of Patriarch Photios of the ninth-century manuscript of the Homilies of St Gregory of Nazianzus (Paris. gr. 510) allows the interpretation of most of the illustrations there either as a visual polemic on contemporary events, or as a reflection of Photios' specific interests[36]. Therefore, in this manuscript the emphasis in the illustration of the biographical Homily XLIII dedicated to St Basil the Great (*In laudem Basilii Magni*) relies on his role as a "pillar of the Church", but not as an adherent of monasticism[37].

In addition, the patronage seems to have been the reason for the omission of the monastic episode in St Basil' life in the main monument of the "popular" tradition in his iconography – the wall paintings in the Cappadocian churches Balkham Deresi and Tokali New Church. As pointed out by Lyn Rodley, the cave churches and monasteries in the volcanic valleys of Cappadocia were not a consequence of the activity and glory of the Cappadocian Fathers, but were rather evidence for "an intensification of patronage of previously modest monastic presence". Thus, the iconographic programmes and the painters who executed them in the Cappadocian churches in many cases were brought from other centres. This is the case of Tokali New Church the wall paintings of which are strongly influenced by the tenth-century Constantinopolitan art[38]: for instance, the veneration of St Basil in the Byzantine capital is reflected by his prominent place in the scenes of the Crucifixion in the central apse of the church. In addition, the influence of the metropolitan iconographic programmes can be seen in the eleventh-century church of the Halaç monastery, probably dedicated to St Basil, where the saint is represented in the main apse as a bishop to the right of the Virgin with the Child[39].

However, what is missing in these examples is a work from a definite "monastic" origin which, in order to satisfy the specific needs of a community, would highlight the "monastic" image of St Basil. In support to this suggestion, it is worth mentioning the variety of representations of St Theodore of Stoudios which resulted from the specific objectives of the propaganda of the Stoudios community: St Theodore of Stoudios is depicted both in monastic garb (e. g. in Menologion of Basil II, Vat. gr. 1613) and in priestly garments (e.g. in Psalter Barberini, gr. 372, 1029 AD, fol. 116)[40]. Thus, I suggest that the prototype of the graffito-image of the monk-saint

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[36] St Gregory's Paris. gr. 510 is considered to have been produced as a gift of Patriarch Photios to the Emperor Basil I (867-886 AD). See B r u b a k e r, L. Politics, Patronage, and Arts in Ninth-Century Byzantium: The Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus in Paris (B. N. 510). – DOP, 39, 1985, p. 3.

[37] W a l t e r, Chr. Biographical Scenes..., 243–244.

[38] R o d l e y, L. The Pigeon House Church, Çavušin. – JÖB, 33, 1983, 301–304. According to Robin Cormack, this position of St Basil reflects the Constantinopolitan association of festivals connected to the display of the relic of the True Cross in the chapel of St Basil in the imperial palace. See C o r m a c k, R. Byzantine Cappadocia: the Archaic Group of Wall Paintings. – In: The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. London, 1989, p. 33.

[39] R o d l e y, L. Halaç monastery. A Cave monastery in Byzantine Cappadocia. – JÖB, 32, 1982, 5, p. 428.

[40] M o u r i k i, D. The Portraits..., 273–274.

Basil in the Ravna monastery certainly was a product of monastic milieu and moreover, its was intended to function in such a milieu. Then, the next question would be, what form did the prototype take?

THE SOURCE

As mentioned above, the graffito-image of the monk-saint Basil as well as of the other two graffito-images next to it, are not sloppily scratched, but were made by people who tried to follow particular features in the depiction of the faces, the proportions of the bodies, the gestures, the details of the costume and the attributes. In respect to this, it is noteworthy that the height of the graffito-images – 8.2 cm (Fig. 4 and 5), 10.5 cm (Fig. 6), and 10 cm (Fig. 7) – is quite close to the dimensions of human figures in miniatures: for example, in the ninth-century Chludov Psalter and the eleventh-century Moscow Menologion gr. 175 the height of the human figures varies between 6.5 and 8 cm[41]. Therefore, it can be assumed that these graffiti were replica of miniatures and were scratched by some of the monks-calligraphers as many of the graffito-drawings in between the scriptorium and the north wall of the church were. However, the graffito-image of the monk-saint Basil was not scratched by a very skilled hand and it might be suggested that its author had not had much experience in illuminating. Perhaps, he had seen the representation of St Basil in a book and tried to reproduce it by memory on the church wall[42].

We can make a step further, then, and speculate about in what kind of book the graffito-author might have seen the "monastic" image of St Basil. One of the probable suggestions could be a portrait in an illuminated Synaxarion. Although the Synaxarion were rarely illustrated, it is generally accepted that a Synaxarion was the immediate model for the earliest illuminated Methaphrastian Menologia after the second half of the tenth century[43]. Moreover, the type of a single figure of a saint in a frontal posture, which can be seen in the Menologion of Basil II, and particularly in the Menologion from the eleventh century (Vat. gr. 1516), is considered a type created for the illustrations of Synaxaria[44]. However, the consistency in representing St Basil the Great as a bishop-saint in the surviving illustrated Menologia makes doubtful the existence of preceding Synaxaria with a monk's portrait of the saint.

Another and more feasible mediator of the unusual "monastic" iconographic type of St Basil the Great might be *florilegia* of the type of the *Simeonov (Svetoslavov) Izbornik* of 1073 AD for two reasons. The first is the fact that St Basil became known in medieval Bulgaria through translations of such *florilegia* rather than

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[41] Щ е п к и н а, М. В. Миниатюры Хлудовской псалтыри: греческий иллюстрованный кодекс IX века. М., 1977.

[42] The practice of borrowing books by monks in the Ravna monastery would be very probable, if one relies on the well-established popularity of the Stoudios *Typikon* in Bulgaria at this time. According to this *Typikon*, in the days free from physical activities the brothers could borrow books form the library (ει τον τοπον των βιβλιων) and read them until the evening. See Г о ш е в, И. Правилата на Студийския манастир (увод, текст и изяснения). – Год. СУ, Богосл. фак., 17, 1939/40, с. 33.

[43] D e r N e r s e s s i a n, S. Remarks on the Date of the Menologion and the Psalter Written for Basil II. – Byzantion, 15, 1940–1941, 104–125.

[44] M o u r i k i, D. The Portraits..., p. 253.

through complete translations of his works[45]. The second argument is provided by the ninth-century *florilegium Sacra Parallela* (Paris. gr. 923)[46]. There St Basil the Great is the most frequently depicted personage – 26 full or half figures, 62 busts, and 48 medallions. However, there again, with rare exceptions (e.g. fol. 176^{v} and fol. 350^{v}), the saint is represented in the costume and with the attributes of a bishop (Fig. 12).[47]

Nevertheless, the unique illustrated copy of the *Sacra Parallela* suggests one more idea about the probable source of the monk's portrait of St Basil the Great. To be more precise, the idea is suggested by the illustrations of the passage entitled "The Words of Abbot Moses to Abbot Poimen concerning virtues" (fol. 237^{v}). There, except for the medallion of Abbot Moses who wears a *koukoulion*, four other illustrations of a hooded monk in different actions, which closely illustrate the text, are placed in the margins. According to John B. Martin and K. Weitzmann, these four illustrations are evidence for a non-surviving cycle of illustrations of the *Apophtegmata Patrum* (The Sayings of the Fathers)[48]. Moreover, the fact that of the ascetic literature quoted in the ninth-century *Sacra Parallela* (Paris. gr. 923) only the *Apophtegmata Patrum* seems to have been illustrated leads J. B. Martin to assume that "compilations of the Sayings of the Fathers with other ascetic writings were provided with extensive pictorial cycles" at least as early as the ninth century, and even in the pre-iconoclastic period[49].

Therefore, I believe that the most probable source of the graffito-image of the monk-saint Basil as well as of the other two graffiti of monks in the Ravna monastery was such a work of monastic literature and art. There are two arguments in support of this hypothesis. The first is the fact that the *paterika*, miscellanies of stories and sayings of monks, and particularly the miscellanies known as *Skitski*, *Sinajski*, *Rimski*, *Azbuchno-Ierusalimski*, and *Egipetski Paterik* were translated and known in Bulgaria between the last quarter of the ninth and the end of the tenth century[50]. Moreover, the translation of St Basil's *Sermo asceticus xii. De ascetica disciplina* together with the Stoudios recension of St Basil's *Constitutiones asceticae* are included in some codices of *Egipetski Paterik* which was translated in the tenth century[51].

The second argument is a Coptic manuscript of the *Apophtegmata Patrum* (Naples, Bibl. Naz., cod. 484, eleventh century) which contains two miniatures, each representing an aged monk with nimbus, standing frontaly in *orant* posture[52]. Obviously, these miniatures are the closest parallels of the graffito of the monk-saint Basil and the other two graffito-images of monks in the Ravna monastery. Thus,it can be concluded that these graffiti provide rare evidence for the spread of illustrated ascetic texts in tenth-century Bulgaria.

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[45] The Slavic translation of St Basil's *Sermo asceticus xii. De ascetica disciplina* is included in another *florilegium*, the *Izbornik* of 1076 AD. See T h o m s o n, Fr. Continuity..., p. 143 and note 82.

[46] W e i t z m a n n, K. The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallela. Parisinus Graecus 923. Princeton, 1979, 8–23.

[47] W e i t z m a n n, K. The Miniatures..., 210–219.

[48] M a r t i n, J. B. An Early Illustration of the Sayings of the Fathers. – Art Bulletin, 33, December 1950, 294–295; W e i t z m a n n, K. The Miniatures..., p. 250, Figs. 729–730.

[49] M a r t i n, J. B. An Early Illustration..., p. 295.

[50] For the most recent extensive study on *paterika* see Н и к о л о в а, С. Патеричните разкази в българската средновековна литература. С., 1980, 5–27 and the quoted literature.

[51] T h o m s o n, Fr. Continuity..., p. 143 and note 84.

[52] M a r t i n, J. B. An Early Illustration..., p. 260.

Fig. 12. Portraits of St Basil the Great. Miniatures, Sacra Parallela, Paris. gr. 923 (after K. Weitzmann).

However, the identification of the prototype and the source of the graffito-image of the monk-saint Basil does not answer the intriguing question about the reason for scratching the image of St Basil the Great on the church wall and its function. The unskilful manner of representation of the saint, previously mentioned, excludes, from my view, the possibility that this was an exercise of a certain monk-calligrapher. Therefore, I suggest that the graffito cannot be considered a reproduction, but rather a repetition of the image of St Basil the Great. The restoration of holy images by worshipers is interpreted as a result of the belief that the images were devices that act directly[53]. Thus, the graffito of St Basil the Great from the Ravna monastery poses a more general question: the question about the actual perception and function of the holy images on popular level in the post-iconoclastic period in the Slavic Orthodox world.

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РИСУНКА-ГРАФИТ НА СВ. ВАСИЛИЙ ВЕЛИКИ В СВЕТЛИНАТА НА НЕГОВИЯ КУЛТ В ИЗТОЧНОТО МОНАШЕСТВО

(Резюме)

Ранното формиране на култа към св. Василий Велики като един от отците на Светата църква с огромен принос за развитието на тринитарната доктрина и автор на една от трите византийски литургии води до трайното налагане на неговия епископски портрет като прототип на светителския му образ. Не по-малко значение обаче има св. Василий за утвърждаването на монашеското общежитие в източната аскетична практика. Ето защо е твърде странно, че тази роля на светеца за развитието на християнското монашество, както и неговият личен житейски опит като монах, не оказват особено влияние върху художествената интерпретация на неговия образ и житие през Средновековието.

Една рисунка-графит от ранносредновековния манастир при с. Равна, Провадийско, съпроводена с надпис на гръцки език ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΗΛΕΟΣ, хвърля повече светлина върху този проблем. Според облеклото, и най-вече монашеския кукул, както и според атрибутите и специфичния жест „оранта", графитното изображение върху северната стена на манастирската църква се определя като изображение на монаха-светец. Нещо повече, въз основа на голямата популярност на св. Василий Велики в България през X в. благодарение на старобългарските преводи на откъси от неговите теологични и аскетични творби, както и на неговото житие, се предлага идентификация на рисунката-графит като изображение на светеца като монах. Що се отнася до оригинала, който графитът възпроизвежда, в статията се прави предположение, че рисунката-графит е копие, направено от монах, на миниатюра от ръкопис, който е бил в манастирския скрипторий или библиотека. Възможно е такъв образ на св. Василий да е бил видян в илюстрован синаксар, за който са били характерни единичните портрети на светци във фронтална поза. Но по-правдоподобно е предположението, че образът на монаха-светец св. Василий Велики е станал познат в Равненския манастир посредством florilegium и най-вероятно чрез илюстровани откъси от аскетикон, които са били включени в него.

[53] M a g u i r e, H. Magic and the Christian Image. – In: Byzantine Magic. Washington, 1995, 68–69.