

Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel and its Byzantine Models

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No one denies that the frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel by Giotto are towering masterpieces in human history. Nonetheless, Giotto's murals contain great iconographic enigmata. Italian art scholars tend to comment on strange and unexplained iconography as a Byzantine influence and discuss it no further. Scholars of Byzantine art have, on the other hand, made no attempt to systematically discuss Giotto's iconography thus far. By comparing works of Byzantine art with Giotto's, this paper aims to explain a previously unexplained iconographic peculiarity, while simultaneously reaffirming Giotto's innovations⁽¹⁾.

Even from the perspective of Byzantine art historians, stating with certainty which genre of Byzantine art Giotto could have referred to is impossible. There is no indication that Giotto visited the land where the Byzantine frescoes remained. Although icons are easily transported, their number is considerably larger when the entire cycle of the Virgin Mary and Christ is included. Manuscripts of the four Gospels with numerous illustrations can be envisioned as model books; there could also have been model books for painters in the form of a codex or unbound parchment, although few such model books remain⁽²⁾.

Giotto placed the Annunciation scene divided on both sides of the apse⁽³⁾, and in the eastern bay of the vaulted ceiling, five medallions of the busts of Christ, and four prophets, including St. John the Baptist⁽⁴⁾, surrounding it. This follows the decorative program of a typi-

(1) For a non-specialist, covering the vast bibliography of Giotto is impossible. For publications up to 1970, see Salvini (1970). This article refers to the principal works, mainly those of recent years. The author would like to thank his colleague, Professor Yoshie Kojima, for her guidance regarding Giotto's bibliography and examples of Italian churches (n.3).

(2) An exception is: H. Buchthal, *The "Musterbuch" of Wolfenbüttel and its Position in the Art of the Thirteenth Century*, Vienna 1979.

(3) The placement of the Annunciation on the left and right sides of the apse is a standard feature of the Byzantine church decoration, and examples of the Byzantine influence can be seen in Italy in the form of sculpture; examples of the placement of the Annunciation on either side of the apse window can be seen in Sagra di S. Michele near Turin, S. Maria di Vezzolano, and Duomo di Piacenza (exterior wall), and so on.

(4) According to Bellinati (1997), 20, John the Baptist, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Micah.

cal Byzantine church with a cross-in-square plan, with the Annunciation divided on both sides of the apse, the medallion of Christ Pantocrator on the dome, and the four Evangelists on the pendentives at the base of the dome. There are, of course, churches in Italy, such as S. Pietro in Otranto (with surviving frescoes from the tenth to sixteenth centuries) and la Cattolica in Stilo, which were built under direct Byzantine influence in both architectural form and decorative program. Did Giotto have such three-dimensional experience, or did he have a two-dimensional copy of the Byzantine decorative program?

The form of the Byzantine model Giotto saw can only be imagined today. What will emerge from the following discussion, however, is that Giotto may have had knowledge of the Byzantine iconography of the same period (late thirteenth century), as well as of older Byzantine iconography (tenth century).

The Flight into Egypt⁽⁵⁾

The author of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew states, on their journey to Egypt, “there were with Joseph three boys, and with Mary a girl.”⁽⁶⁾ The four secondary characters Giotto depicts, other than the Holy Family, are consistent with this description. Is the young man leading the Holy Family by the reins of the ass then one of the three boys who were with Joseph?⁽⁷⁾ However, it is self-evident to those familiar with the wall paintings in the rock-cut churches in Cappadocia that this young man is James, the Brother of the Lord (Mk. 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9,12; Jas.1:1), and Joseph’s son from a previous marriage⁽⁸⁾. A group of tenth-century wall paintings, known as the Archaic Group⁽⁹⁾, depicts the infancy cycle of Christ in great detail, inscribing the characters to inform local viewers unfamiliar with Byzantine iconography of who they are.

(5) Hereafter, for Giotto’s fresco, I will only cite the URL of the Web Gallery of Art. <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris04.jpg> (All the URLs in this article are accessed on 23 Jul., 2023)

(6) J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford 1993, 94.

(7) Bonsanti (1985), fig.83 and Spiazzi (2013), 40 take this position. Frugoni (2005), 155: “two grooms and a servant”; Filippetti (2017), 70: “persona coronate d’edera”; Pisani (2020), “giovane”; Zuffi (2012), 37: Joseph asks a traveler for directions, but the traveler is unable to answer, and instead an angel provides direction; Bellinati (1997), 74: “a girl, symbolizing joy and friendship, guides the group”.

(8) The biography of James, the Brother of the Lord, considered to be written by Andreas, bishop of Crete, who had a great influence on Byzantine art, also mentions Joseph as the father of James. J. Noret, *Un éloge de Jacques le frère du Seigneur par un pseudo-André de Crète*, Toronto 1978, 72. On the other hand, according to the *Legenda Aurea*, James, the Brother of the Lord, was born to Maria, daughter of Cleophas, and Alphaeus, and he was therefore a cousin of Jesus.

(9) R. Cormack, “Byzantine Cappadocia: the archaic group of wall-paintings,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, ser. 3, 30 (1967), 19-36.



Fig.1: The Flight into Egypt, Old Church of Tokalı Kilise, Göreme, Cappadocia (Turkey)

suggested that the woman in the red robe is Salome, a midwife (*Protevangelium Jacobi* 19:3-20:4); this is an overinterpretation. In Byzantine art, Salome does not appear in any scene following the Nativity. Giotto did not adopt the personification of Egypt that awaits Christ's arrival, as seen in the Cappadocian painting.

For example, the Flight into Egypt in the Old Church of the Tokalı Kilise (Göreme no.7)⁽¹⁰⁾ [Fig.1] employs the same composition as Giotto, with the inscription *ĪAKOBOC* for the young man who reins the ass. Giotto used this type of Byzantine iconography as a model for this painting; therefore, the three figures behind the ass are probably extras with no thematic significance, placed there simply to balance the composition. Some have

The Lamentation of the Virgin (Pietà)⁽¹¹⁾

The Lamentation in the Church of Panagia Peribleptos, Ohrid⁽¹²⁾ (North Macedonia) [Fig.2].

(10) G. de Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce. Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin*, Paris 1925-1942, vol. I-1, 273-74; C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et des ses abords*, Paris 1991, 95-96.

(11) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris20.jpg>

(12) The Church was painted by the painters from Thessaloniki, Michael Astrapas and Eutybios in 1294/95. The duo—Eutybios is thought to be Michael's father—left their signatures on six church murals in the Balkans through the 1320s, beginning with the Peribleptos Church, and are also thought to have been associated with three more churches. They are the most important painters in the history of Late Byzantine art, of whose signatures and multiple examples survive, some of them securely dated. As for the Peribleptos Church, no monograph has been published till today, despite its importance as the church that marked the beginning of the Palaeologan art. Their iconography of the Dormition of the Virgin (*Koimesis tes Theotokou*) sometimes includes a Western-style Assumption of the Virgin, suggesting a close connection with Italy, though the specific route of transmission is not known. R. Hamann-Mac Lean, H. Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, Gießen 1963; H. Hallensleben, *Die Malerschule des Königs Milutin*, Gießen 1963; R. Hamann-Mac Lean, *Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien*, Gießen 1976; P. Miljković-Pepek, *Делото на зографите Михало и Еутиј*, Skopje 1967; E.I. Kouri, *Die Milutinshule der byzantinischen Wandmalerei in Serbien, Makedonien, Kosovo- Metohien und Montenegro (1294/95- 1321)*, Helsinki 1982; M. Marković, "Iconographic Program of the Oldest Wall Paintings in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Ohrid: A list of frescoes and notes on certain program particularities," (in Serbian with English summary) *Zograf* 35 (2011), 119-43.

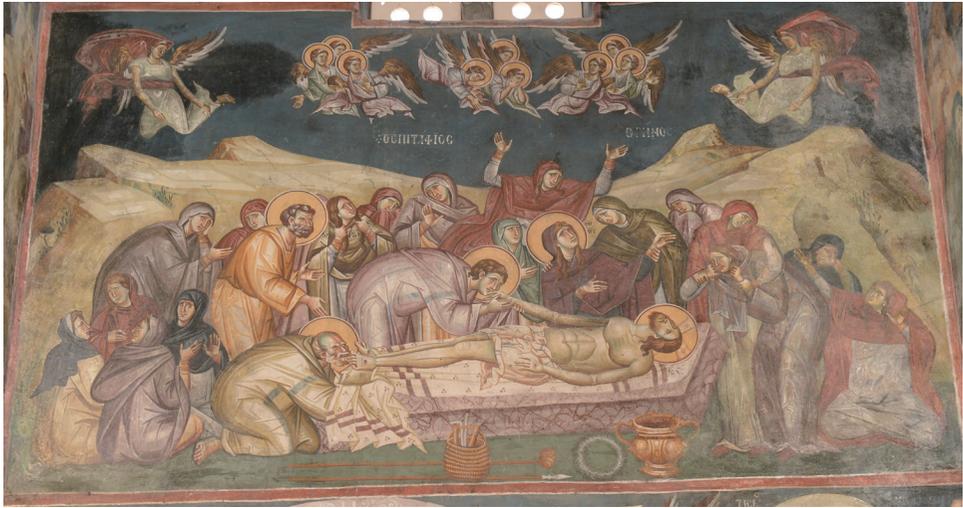


Fig.2: The Lamentation, Panagia Peribleptos, Ohrid (N. Macedonia)

is almost from the same period as Giotto, and a comparison of the two clearly shows how Giotto depicted three-dimensional space convincingly, while referring to a Byzantine model. In Ohrid, angels flying above and grieving are depicted as if attached to a picture surface, such as pressed leaves or insect specimens, and no depth is expressed in their arrangement. In contrast, Giotto's angels are depicted with their heads turned toward the foreground in a shortened style, vividly expressing depth.

In the Byzantine example, the woman behind the Virgin raises her hands high in grief, a traditional gesture since antiquity. Her gesture is also attached to the picture surface, and there is no expression of depth. In Giotto, this gesture of grief is applied to two figures. One is a woman on the left side of the composition whose left hand is partially hidden by her nimbus, and the overlapping of objects effectively indicates a sense of depth. The other is St. John, lamenting in the center; he creates depth with his entire body by extending his left hand to the front and his right hand to the back.

The most effective device Giotto made is the women placed around the body of Jesus; five women are placed around Jesus, including the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, two of whom face backward, with their faces not visible. Particularly, the woman in the green robe hides part of Jesus' body, something that should not be done theatrically. Contrarily, in the Byzantine example, all of Jesus' body is exposed to our eyes, and the poignancy of the Passion is further emphasized by the placement of the Arma Christi in the foreground. The two backward-facing women painted by Giotto have no thematic necessity; however, by painting them, Giotto cre-

ated a circle of five women surrounding Jesus; when the heads of the five women are connected, they form a collapsed oval, indicating that a three-dimensional depth has been brightly created around Jesus. In the Byzantine example, we notice a circle of four women, including two backward-facing women, on the left side of the composition. Perhaps Giotto's bold modification of this female circle in the Byzantine model, using the forbidden technique of hiding Jesus' body, deepened the space of the painting. Comparing it to the Byzantine example, one can clearly see the changes Giotto made to the Byzantine iconography to achieve three-dimensionality. Giotto's rock also appears to have inherited the Byzantine method of expression.

The Raising of Lazarus⁽¹³⁾

Giotto's paintings depict the events in their most dramatic moments. In his Raising of Lazarus, however, four events at different times and places are conflated⁽¹⁴⁾ because it inherits the Byzantine model. Let us examine the story step by step.



Fig.3: Giotto, Part 1 of the Raising of Lazarus

1) When Jesus comes to the entrance of the village of Bethany, sisters of Martha and Mary greet him and say, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" [Fig.3]. Jesus, sighed deeply, distressed himself over it, and asked "Where have you laid him?" (Jn. 11:20-37) This part corresponds to Jesus and the two women at his feet. In the Gospel of John, this Mary is described as the woman who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair (11:2, 12:1-3),

and since the Middle Ages, she has been identified with Mary Magdalene.

In the Cypriot scene⁽¹⁵⁾ [Fig.4] from the early twelfth century, Martha, in black, kneels,

(13) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris09.jpg>

(14) The composition of multiple times and places in a single picture plane allows for a complex reading. This is probably why scholars of the aesthetics are particularly interested in this scene. E.g., M. Imdahl, *Giotto Arenafresken: Ikonographie, Ikonologie, Ikonik*, Munich 1980; A. Danto, "Giotto and the Stench of Lazarus" (1985) in: *Philosophizing Art: selected essays*, Berkeley 1999.

(15) On the Church of Panagia Phorbiotissa at Asinou, Cyprus (1105/06), see M. Sacopoulo, *Asinou en 1106, et sa contribution à l'iconographie*, Brussels 1966; A.W. Carr, A. Nikolaïdès (eds.), *Asinou Across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, Washington, D.C. 2013.



Fig.4: The Raising of Lazarus, Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (Cyprus)

Lazarus? There are liturgical considerations at work here. Eight days after Lazarus' Saturday is Easter, the resurrection of Christ himself. The first witness to this was Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:11-17). The presence of Mary Magdalene is emphasized as a common witness to the two resurrections, Lazarus' and Christ's. The Byzantine model that Giotto saw seems, however, to have been one in which Mary Magdalene does not look back.

Of course, Giotto's expression integrates two different times; Martha and Mary went to Jesus separately, each whining, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." As the lines spoken by the two were the same, Giotto depicts Martha and Mary as if they were kneeling at Jesus' feet at the same time. In Duccio's work from the same period⁽¹⁶⁾, only one woman (Mary Magdalene) kneels at Jesus' feet, whereas Martha restrains him from removing the lid of the tomb (Giotto's second scene).



Fig.5: Giotto, Part 2 of the Raising of Lazarus

2) The location shifts from the entrance of the village to the tomb of Lazarus at the edge of the village [Fig.5]. When Jesus says "Take away the stone," Martha stops Jesus by saying "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days" (Jn. 11:38-39). This is the second scene, which corresponds to Jesus speaking with his right hand raised, and the two women on the right edge of the picture covering

while Mary Magdalene turns and witnesses the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus. Lazarus is resurrected in the fourth scene, which belongs to a different time and place from the kneeling sisters; Mary sees Lazarus' resurrection beyond time and space. Why does Mary Magdalene witness the resurrection of her brother

(16) The Maestà: https://www.wga.hu/art/d/duccio/maesta/predel_v/pre_v_9.jpg

their noses with their garments. The woman on the far right gestures restraint by pointing her right palm toward Jesus⁽¹⁷⁾. Here, a contradiction exists in the relationship between the text and image; according to the text, it is Martha who restrained Jesus, but one of the two women kneeling at Jesus' feet was also Martha. Heterochronous representation was no longer prevalent in Giotto's work, and he did not like the repetition of the same figure in one scene. The woman on the left of the two covering their nose on the far right is depicted with a nimbus. Therefore, considering this woman as Martha is possible, but her attire does not match that of either of the two kneeling women. Giotto dares to treat the appearance of the two right-most women ambiguously because he does not want to depict Martha in a repetitive manner. Giotto and Duccio used different time cut-offs for this scene, with Giotto's being closer to the Byzantine model. In Asinou's fresco, however, the man covers his nose, which diverges from the textual description. Giotto, more faithful to the text, depicted the nose-covering female but avoided explicitly identifying her as Martha.

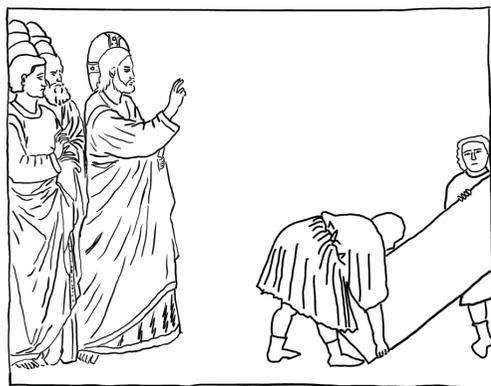


Fig.6: Giotto, Part 3 of the Raising of Lazarus

3) The third scene is also at the tomb of Lazarus, where Jesus says, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" and they took the stone away (Jn. 11:40-41) [Fig.6]. Note that in Asinou, a small man removes the lid of the tomb, while in Giotto, two figures who appear to be children remove the lid. In Byzantine art, the size of the figure is determined by its importance; Christ is naturally depicted as the largest, while Martha, Mary, and the

man who removes the lid of the tomb are represented in smaller sizes, as they are in the foreground and obstruct the main figures. In Giotto's grammar, on the other hand, the size of the figures is not determined by their hierarchy; almost everyone is of the same size and depicted in a naturalistic manner. However, depicting the grave lid-takers in the foreground interferes with the main character, Lazarus. To avoid disturbing the narrative, Giotto depicted the lid-takers as small as children, and since it was unnatural for one child to be able to remove the

(17) Frugoni erroneously interprets the woman as a "thoughtful Jew", and the gesture of raising her right hand as one that stays the crowd. Frugoni (2008), 181.

heavy lid, he chose to depict them as two. In other words, the motif, which in Byzantine painting was “an adult man depicted small,” was transformed in Giotto into “small figures because they are children.” Additionally, Giotto devised a way to construct a small cliff under Jesus’ feet so that Martha, Mary, and the two lid-takers below do not obstruct the story.



Fig.7: Giotto, Part 4 of the Raising of Lazarus

4) The fourth scene is the final scene and climax. Jesus cries “Lazarus, come out,” and the Jews are amazed to witness the resurrection of the dead (Jn. 11:43-44) [Fig.7]. The right arm of the man in the green robe in the center is depicted in a shortened manner, with his fingertips pointing toward us, which is typical representation of Giotto. The only others identifiable

in Asinou’s example are the two disciples behind Jesus: Peter, the representative of the Apostles, and Thomas, based on Jn. 11:16. Of the two disciples depicted by Giotto, one is Thomas; however, the other, an old man with a bald head, cannot be identified⁽¹⁸⁾.

In Giotto’s painting, the nimbed man unties Lazarus’ linen, which is problematic⁽¹⁹⁾. Middle Byzantine iconography depicts a man holding his nose and untying the cloth, as seen in Asinou. In the text, it was Martha who told Christ not to take the lid off the tomb because of the odor (11:39); the Byzantine painter replaced her with a male and combined it with a different time of untying the linen (11:44). However, in the Late Byzantine period, new details began to appear in a trend toward more characters in the scene and more theatrical and flamboyant gestures. A typical example is the Church of St. Nicholas (Sveti Nikola) in Prilep-Varoš⁽²⁰⁾ (N. Macedonia) [Fig.8], which was painted in the first half of the fourteenth century, probably after Giotto,

(18) Bellinati (1997), 88, identifies him as Simon the Canaanite, while the young man as John, not Thomas.

(19) Many recent Italian authors have identified the man who untied Lazarus’ cloth as St. Peter and the man (not woman) who covered his nose behind Lazarus as St. John. Frugoni (2005), 164; Frugoni (2008), 180-81; Filippetti (2017), 80; Pisani (2020), 66. Bellinati (1997), 88, identifies them as Peter and Thomas.

(20) E. Dimitrova, “The Church of St. Nicolas in Prilep,” in: E. Dimitrova et al., *Seven Churches in the Regions of Pelagonia, Mariovo and Prespa*, no date (https://www.academia.edu/40279328/Seven_Churches_in_the_Regions_of_Pelagonia_and_Prespa), 69-85; P. Kostovska, “The Painted Programme of the Church St. Nicholas in Varoš near Prilep and its Function as Funerary Chapel” (in Macedonian), *Зборник за средновековна уметност* 3 (2001), for further bibliography, 51-52, n.7.

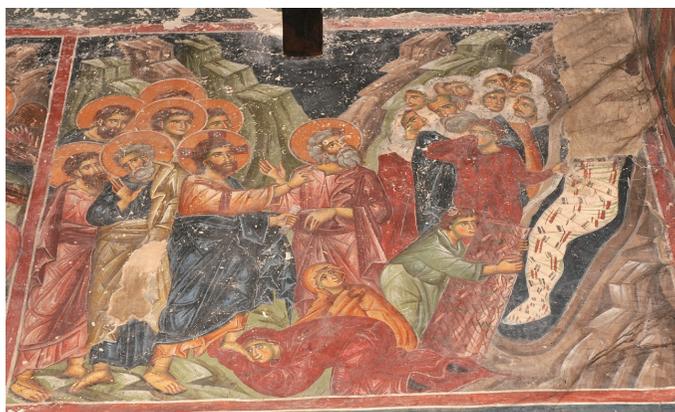


Fig.8: The Raising of Lazarus, St. Nicholas, Prilep-Varoš (N. Macedonia)

who referred to this type as a model. Behind Jesus, Peter makes a gesture of surprise, and between Jesus and Lazarus, another disciple (probably Andrew) witnesses the miracle. Who the disciple is in this position has no textual inevitability; it was created by a Late Byzantine painter to enhance the theatrical nature of the incident.

Giotto saw such a motif and painted the nimbed figure without understanding who it was. It is impossible to explain this puzzling figure in any other way unless one considers it based on a misunderstanding of the Byzantine model.

How can these four scenes be conflated into a single scene?⁽²¹⁾ In all four scenes, Jesus on the left speaks by extending his right hand. By overlapping this part and arranging the other parts around it, a scene with a complex heterochronous structure was completed. Heterochronism is not uncommon in Byzantine art, but is rarely multilayered, as in the Raising of Lazarus. The combination of a long-developing narrative and Jesus' constant speech may have given birth to this structure. Giotto created a rich drama with three-dimensionality in his images, while incorporating complex compositions of Byzantine origin. The painter successfully reinterpreted the man taking the lid off the tomb as two children. However, he avoided painting Marta twice, an aspect that had to be ambiguous. In Byzantine paintings, the size of the figures corresponds to the significance of the meaning, so the lid-taker and two sisters could be painted smaller; Giotto did not like to change the size of the figures.

The Presentation of Christ to the Temple⁽²²⁾

Giotto's Presentation to the Temple was based on the iconographic development of Byzantine art in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the eleventh-century Christ' Presentation (e.g. Monastery of Hosios Lucas⁽²³⁾ [Fig.9]), the infant Jesus is willing to be taken

(21) For the phenomenon of conflation in painting, see K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: a study of the origin and method of text illustration*, Princeton 1947 (1970).

(22) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris03.jpg>



Fig.9: Christ's Presentation to the Temple, Monastery of Hosios Lucas (Greece)

from his mother's hands by Symeon the Priest.

However, by the end of the eleventh century and into the twelfth century, the implication of the prediction of the Passion in this subject was emphasized, and Jesus,

unprepared for the Passion, did not want to be held by Symeon, and began to lash out in his mother's arms. A representative example is the Panagia Kykkotissa icon⁽²⁴⁾ [Fig.10], whose original was presented by the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to the Monastery of Kykkos on the island of Cyprus. This icon developed the iconography of the Virgin Mary grieving at the prospect of the infant's future death—the Virgin of the Passion (*Panagia tou Pathou*)—around the theme of the Presentation to the Temple. In this version of the Virgin and Child, a variation of *Eleousa*⁽²⁵⁾, Jesus grabs his mother's maphorion with his left hand and thrashes about his legs, moving violently. After this, Jesus is handed over by his mother to Symeon the Priest, and in the example from Lagoudera (1192)⁽²⁶⁾, Cyprus [Fig.11], Jesus in Symeon's arms

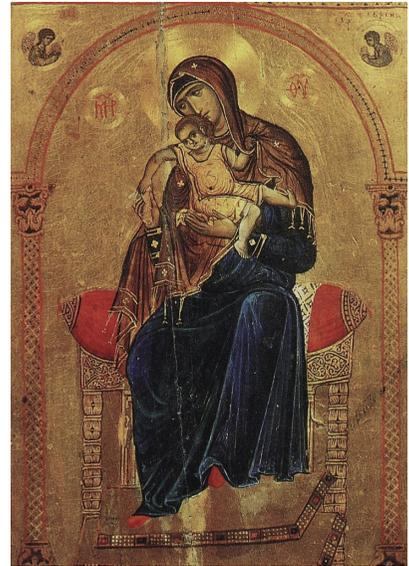


Fig.10: Icon of Panagia Kykkotissa (detail), Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai

(23) N. Chatzidakis, *Hosios Loukas*, Athens 1997.

(24) D. Mouriki, "Icons from 12th to the 15th Century," in: K.A. Manafis (ed.), *Sinai. Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, Athens 1990, 102-24; A.W. Carr, "The Presentation of an Icon at Mount Sinai," *DChAE* 4-17 (1993-94), 239-48.

(25) Iconographic type of the Infant Jesus rubbing his cheek against his mother Mary. A typical example is the Virgin of Vladimir (Tretyakov Museum, Moscow). A. Grabar, "L'Hodigitria et l'Eléousa," *ZbLikUmet* 10 (1974), 3-14; id., "Les images de la vierge de tendresse. Type iconographique et theme," *Zograf* 6 (1975), 1-19.

(26) On the Church of Panagia tou Arakos at Lagoudera, Cyprus, see D. and J. Winfield, *The Church of the Panaghia tou Arakos at Lagoudera, Cyprus: The Paintings and Their Painterly Significance*, Washington, D.C. 2003; A. Nicolaïdes, "L'église de la Panagia Arakiotissa à Lagoudera, Chypre. Étude iconographique des fresques de 1192," *DOP* 50 (1996), 1-137.

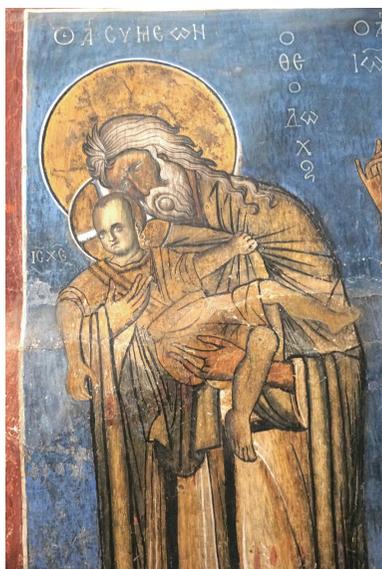


Fig.11: Symeon with Christ Child, Panagia tou Arakos, Lagoudera (Cyprus)

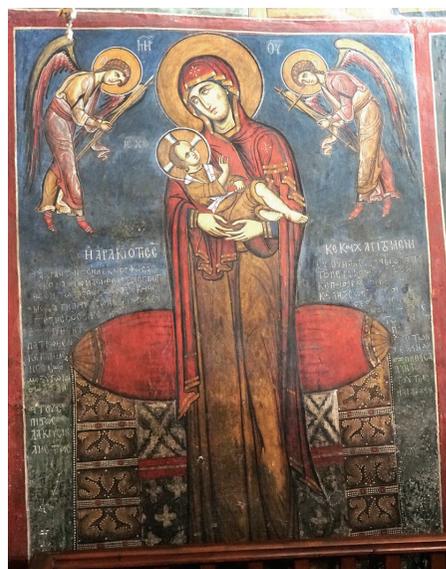


Fig.12: Panagia Arakiotissa, Panagia tou Arakos, Lagoudera (Cyprus)



Fig.13: Christ's Presentation to the Temple, St. Stephan, Kastoria (Greece)

is flailing in the same gesture⁽²⁷⁾. Symeon predicts Jesus' Passion: "a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (Lk. 2:35); however, Jesus is not yet ready.

Facing the wall depicting Symeon *Theodochos* (=one who embraces God) in Lagoudera is the famous fresco icon of the Virgin and Child, Panagia Arakiotissa [Fig.12]. The angels offer Arma Christi to the Virgin and announce the future Passion of Jesus. Mary has a melancholic

expression on her face, but Jesus, embraced, looks soothingly at his mother and blesses her with his right hand. The transition of the story during this process is as follows: Jesus, embraced by Mary, lashes out in fear of his future fate; and Jesus, handed to Symeon by Mary, lashes out with the same gesture; Jesus, resigned to his future fate, comforts his grieving

(27) On Symeon holding Jesus, see H. Maguire, "The Iconography of Symeon with the Christ Child in Byzantine Art," rep. in: *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art*, Aldershot 1998, art. XIV.

mother. In Byzantine art, this delicate interpretation of the Presentation to the Temple developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The model Giotto saw would have been of the Kykkotissa lineage. The echo of the Kykkotissa icon remains in Giotto's way in which Jesus' left knee is raised high as he is embraced by Symeon. However, Giotto did not refer directly to the Kykkotissa icon, but rather to iconography, such as that of St. Stephan (Hagios Stephanos) in Kastoria⁽²⁸⁾ **[Fig.13]** (Greece, early thirteenth century), a variant of the Kykkotissa.

The Last Supper⁽²⁹⁾ and Washing of the Feet⁽³⁰⁾

According to the Gospel account (Jn. 13:1-30), Jesus washed the disciples' feet before his death, and then ate together. However, Giotto first depicted the Last Supper and then arranged for the Washing of Feet. In the Last Supper, Judas is described as follows: "after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out" (Jn. 13:30); however, in the following Washing of the Feet, Judas is among the disciples. This indicates that the Washing originally preceded the Supper scene. Certain scholars have noted that this reordering resulted in the Adoration of the Magi above the Washing of the Feet⁽³¹⁾. Christ's kneeling gesture is similar to the actions of the old Magus. However, the Magus kneels to Christ, and it does not seem to make sense to superimpose it on Christ's own kneeling gestures.

In addition, Giotto places the Visitation⁽³²⁾ in the target position with Judas' Betrayal⁽³³⁾ on the right and left sides of the apse. The two paintings share a similarity in that the architecture is depicted on the right side of the composition, and the figures in the red and yellow robes are relative to each other. Although the two paintings are balanced in terms of form, they share nothing in common in terms of semantic content⁽³⁴⁾. Therefore, we cannot deny the possibility that Giotto wanted to balance the two paintings in terms of form, even though there is no semantic similarity between the Washing of the Feet and the Adoration of the Magi.

(28) S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, Athens 1984, 6-21.

(29) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris13.jpg>

(30) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris14.jpg>

(31) Alpatoff examines the possibility that Giotto intentionally created compositional relationships (parallelism) between various subjects: Alpatoff (1947). One could say that Alpatoff (Michail Vladimirovic Alpatov), an expert in Byzantine art, took a Byzantine view of Giotto's frescoes. His study on Giotto also includes Alpatoff (1971). Aside from Alpatoff, other studies, to the best of my knowledge, that have considered the program of murals throughout the Scrovegni Chapel include: Schlegel (1957); Derbes, Sandona (1988); Derbes, Sandona (2004).

(32) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/2virgin/mary10.jpg>

(33) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris12.jpg>

(34) Lavin tries to make sense of the contrast between the two scenes. Lavin (1990), 49.



Fig.14: North wall, Panagia tou Arakos, Lagoudera (Cyprus)

Byzantine art preferred linking pictorial subjects based on their similarities in form. On the north wall of the Church of Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera (1192), Cyprus [Fig.14], the priest Zachariah⁽³⁵⁾ in the Virgin's Presentation to the Temple at the top and the priest Symeon holding the infant Jesus below (iconic figure derived from Christ's Presentation) have similar forms: old men with rounded backs, white hair and beards, are placed above and below. The two have something in common, not only in form but also in meaning. Symeon succeeded in the priesthood of the Jerusalem Temple after Zachariah was murdered by King Herod (*Protevangelium* 24:4); Zachariah nurtures and

brings up Mary, while Symeon foretells to Mary the future death of her son, Jesus (Lk. 2:34-35).

On the west wall of the Panagia Church in the village of Thronos near Rethymno, Crete⁽³⁶⁾ (fourteenth century), the Birth of the Virgin is placed in the center, with the Visitation on the

(35) The priest in the Virgin's Presentation to the Temple by Giotto (<https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/2virgin/mary02.jpg>) is not a specific person (or Abiathar in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew [Bellinati (1997), 46]), but Byzantine art assigns him to the priest Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist. Relying on a special tradition of texts in the *Protevangelium Jacobi*, it is Zachariah who refuses Joachim's offering, who accepts three-year-old Mary into the Temple, and who presides over the marriage of Joseph and Mary, all of which are attributed to Zachariah. This establishes a narrative in which Zachariah has always watched over Mary, as God intended. Giotto does not adopt this Byzantine interpretation of the Life of the Virgin Mary, and in the Rejection of Joachim's Sacrifice (<https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/1joachim/joachim1.jpg>) at the beginning of the cycle, he does not make the priest Zachariah, but Ruben, based on the usual edition of the *Protevangelium*. There is little Byzantine influence in Giotto's Life of the Virgin. On the Byzantine Life of the Virgin, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en Occident*, vol. 1, Bruxelles 1965 (1992²). On the text of the *Protevangelium*, see É. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques: recherches sur le papyrus Bodmer 5 avec une édition critique du texte grec et une traduction annotée*, Brussels 1961; id., "Die griechischen Handschriften des Protevangeliums Iacobi," rep. in: D. Harlfinger (ed.), *Griechische Kodikologie und Textüberlieferung*, Darmstadt 1980, 577-612.

(36) I. Spatharakis, T. van Essenbergh, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete, vol.3, Amari Province*, Leiden 2012, no.33; M. Bissinger, *Kreta. Byzantinische Wandmalerei*, Munich 1995, no.37/123; K. Gallas, K. Wessel, M. Borboudakis, *Byzantisches Kreta*, Munich 1983, 278; K. Kalokyres, *The Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, New York 1973, 39, 40.



Fig.15: The Meeting at the Golden Gate and the Visitation, Panagia Church, Thronos near Rethymno, Crete (Greece)

left and the Meeting at the Golden Gate on the right [Fig.15]. Both subjects are similar in form, with the two figures embracing each other; moreover, both have in common the conception by the grace of God. Unlike Giotto's counterpoints of the Visitation and Judas' Betrayal,

the two Byzantine subjects share both form and meaning. Giotto, however, faced the constraint of painting the story as it progressed⁽³⁷⁾. This differs from Byzantine painters, who were relatively free to arrange their narratives.

Whether Giotto sought contrast in the kneeling figures by placing the Adoration of the Magi and the Washing of the Feet above and below is not discussed here. From the standpoint of Byzantine iconography, the interchange of the Washing of the Feet and Last Supper is easily explained. Byzantine art stressed the relationship between the liturgy and the placement of images in churches⁽³⁸⁾. The Last Supper is often placed around the altar because the dogma of the Eucharist is set forth by Christ in the scene. The relationship with the liturgy was more important than the temporal order of the Life of Christ.

A typical example is the Church of Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid (N. Macedonia, 1294/95). The conch of the apse depicts the Virgin Orans with the Communion of the Apostles in the frieze below: it is a liturgical iconography in which Christ gives bread and wine to the Twelve Apostles and announces the dogma of the Eucharist. The Last Supper is depicted on the southern wall adjacent to the Communion (inside the sanctuary) [Fig.16]. If the Communion of the Apostles is an image that represents the Eucharist as a liturgy, the Last Supper is a narrative image that describes the historical origin of the Eucharist. The doctrine of the Eucharist is emphasized in different modes by placing the two images next to each other. The depiction of the Eucharist in various modes around the apse was a favorite in Byzantine art. The Philoxenia of Abraham was the subject of the Eucharist prefigured in the Old Testament, and the Supper

(37) On Giotto's arrangement of the scenes, see Lavin (1990), 43-50.

(38) Ch. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982.



Fig.16: Bema, Panagia Peribleptos, Ohrid (N. Macedonia)

In the Peribleptos Church in Ohrid, the Washing of the Feet is placed on the east wall adjacent to the Last Supper; the large-form Prayer at Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-46) follows on the adjacent south wall [Fig.16]. The story continues with the Washing of the Feet, the Last Supper, and the Prayer at Gethsemane in that order, but it is not appropriate to depict the Washing of the Feet next to the Communion of the Apostles, which is inside the sanctuary. It was liturgically inevitable to place the Washing and the Supper in reverse order. In the context of Byzantine church decoration, it was natural to place the



Fig.17: The Last Supper and the Washing of the Feet, St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki (Greece)

at Emmaus⁽³⁹⁾ (Lk. 24:30-32), the breaking and giving of bread (24:30) was considered a repetition of the Eucharist by Christ himself. The *Melismos*⁽⁴⁰⁾, where the body of Christ is placed on the paten on the altar, metaphorically represents the bread as Christ's body. In addition to the Last Supper, based on the Gospels, these themes decorate around the apse of the Byzantine church.

Washing and Supper in reverse, that is, to give priority to the Supper over the Washing. In the Church of St. Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki⁽⁴¹⁾ (1320s), the stories are also arranged on the north wall of the bema (inside the sanctuary) in the order of the Last Supper and Washing of the Feet [Fig.17].

In the Scrovegni Chapel, the

(39) N. Zarras, "Ο Χριστός ἐν ἐτέρᾳ μορφῇ," *DChAE* 28 (2007), 213-24.

(40) Ch. Konstantinidi, *Ο μελισμός*, Thessaloniki 2008.

(41) Ch. Bakirtzis, *Άγιος Νικόλαος Ορφανός*, Athens 2003; Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *The Church of St. Nicholas Orphanos*, Thessaloniki 1986; A. Tsitouridou, *Η εντομία ζωγραφική του Αγίου Νικολάου στη Θεσσαλονίκη*, Thessaloniki 1978.

Marian and Christological narratives are arranged according to the temporal order of the stories, and there is no free arrangement for liturgical considerations, as in the Byzantine church. Therefore, the different orders of the Supper and Washing are noticeable at a glance, but if the model is Byzantine, this arrangement can be regarded as natural.

The Baptism⁽⁴²⁾ and the Marriage at Cana⁽⁴³⁾

The Baptism of Christ and the subsequent Marriage at Cana depict a mysterious old man. It is no exaggeration to say that he is the major iconographic puzzle of the Scrovegni Chapel. However, this is also addressable with knowledge of Byzantine iconography. Let us begin with the Baptism; behind John baptizing Jesus are two figures. One is a nimbed old man with white hair and a beard and the other is a young man without a nimbus⁽⁴⁴⁾. The old man with his characteristic curly hair and beard is often assumed to be Andrew, whom Jesus calls as his disciple. Who, then, is the young man next to him? Is he just an extra person, and not a specific person, as he has no nimbus?

In the Byzantine iconography of the Baptism, a type in which two or three apostles are depicted behind John as witnesses existed⁽⁴⁵⁾. Andrew, John and James: Cod.Paris.gr.75 (twelfth century, Four Gospels), f.95r⁽⁴⁶⁾; Cod.Vat.Urb.gr.2 (twelfth century, Four Gospels), f.109v⁽⁴⁷⁾. Andrew and Peter: Cod.Vat.gr.1613 (eleventh century, Menologion of Basil II), p.299⁽⁴⁸⁾; Andrew and John: Cod. Dionysiou 587 on Mount Athos (eleventh century, Gospel Lectionary **[Fig.18]**); Panagia Mavriotissa in Kastoria (eleventh century **[Fig.19]**); and Monreale Cathedral in Sicily (twelfth century). In the beginning of his religious activity after the Baptism, Jesus first called

(42) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris07.jpg>

(43) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris08.jpg>

(44) In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a variety of theories were already proposed. For example, Ruskin (1853), 95, refers to “two of John’s disciples,” Quilter (1881), 80, to “Mary and Joseph,” and Perkins (1902), 100, refers to the old man as St. Andrew. To cite recent interpretations: Barasch (1987), 112: John’s followers in the desert; Bellinati (1997), 84: two of the Baptist’s disciples, Andrew and John; Frugoni (2005), 161; Frugoni (2008), 173: two disciples of St. John the Baptist, Andrew and John; Zuffi (2012), 40: “personaggi”; Spiazzi (2013), 41: the unimbed young man as the disciple of the Baptist; Filippetti (2017), 70: Andrew and John; Pisani (2020), 59: Andrew.

(45) On the Byzantine iconography of the Baptism, see G. Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’Evangile au XIVe., XVe et XVIe siècles d’après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, Paris 1916, 170-215.

(46) <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10029494d/f201.item>

(47) https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Urb.gr.2

(48) https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613



Fig.18: The Baptism, Cod. Dionysiou 587 on Mount Athos, f.141v



Fig.19: The Baptism, Panagia Mavriotissa, Kastoria (Greece)

two pairs of brother fishermen as his disciples (Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20). The Byzantine Baptism does not depict four disciples, but rather reinforces two pairs of brothers who are called, by depicting Andrew from the brothers Peter and Andrew, and John from the brothers James and John⁽⁴⁹⁾. The model that Giotto saw included two unimbed disciples, Andrew and John, as in the Dionysiou Lectionary [Fig.18] or Monreale. Giotto understood one as Andrew from his characteristic physiognomy of putting a nimbus on him, but did not consider the other an apostle and left him unimbed.

There is a definite iconographic oddity in the subsequent Wedding at Cana. To the left of Jesus sits the groom and to his left is a nimbed old man with white hair and a beard. The second person to the left of the old man, almost in the center of the composition, is the bride. The fact that the bride and groom, who should be the main actors of the wedding ceremony, sit far apart is quite unnatural, and the nimbed old man sitting next to the groom cannot be explained by conventional iconography. Two theories have been proposed to answer the latter question: the Apostle Andrew or Joseph, Mary's husband⁽⁵⁰⁾. As Andrew also appears in the Baptism, can we assume that he was depicted in this scene in succession? There is no iconographic basis for Andrew's appearance at the Wedding at Cana. As for Joseph the Carpenter, the last possible scene in which he appears is Christ among the Doctors⁽⁵¹⁾ (Lk. 2:41-50), and it is impossible

(49) On the Church of Panagia Mavriotissa in Kastoria, Pelekanidis, Chatzidakis, *op.cit.*, 66-83, fig.13. On the Lectionary Cod.587 in the Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos, S. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol.1, Athens 1973, 443, fig.255.

(50) Although the first occurrence of this theory could not be confirmed, it was already proposed by several authors at the beginning of the twentieth century: Moschetti (1904), 83; Thode (1910), 116.

(51) <https://www.wga.hu/art/g/giotto/padova/3christ/chris06.jpg>



Fig.20: Christ among the Doctors, Panagia Peribleptos, Ohrid (N. Macedonia)

for Joseph to appear in the Public Life of Christ.

Incidentally, Giotto depicts Joseph in Christ among the Doctors, but Joseph is never depicted in Byzantine iconography; the Church of Peribleptos in Ohrid is almost the only exception. In this church, Christ among the Doctors is depicted over two scenes, with the main scene depicting Jesus surrounded by the Judaeen doctors in the temple, while the small section next to this **[Fig.20]** depicts the mother Mary saying, “Son, why have you treated us so?” In response to her words, Jesus turns around and says, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (2:49). Jesus’ line is recorded on the scroll of his left hand. It is a rare iconography depicting the concerns of his parents; such an iconographic tradi-

tion existed in Byzantine art slightly prior to Giotto.

To explain the unnatural composition in which the bride and groom are seated separately, with the bride awkwardly facing the front, a bizarre interpretation has long been offered by Italian scholars on the basis of the *Legenda Aurea* and the Meditation on the Life of Christ by Pseudo-Bonaventura, quite implausible interpretation in the eyes of scholars of Byzantine art: they assumed that the bridegroom is the Apostle John, unimbed since before his calling, and that the bride is Mary Magdalene⁽⁵²⁾. Would Giotto accept an interpretation too specific only for this scene, while in other scenes he adopts an authentic and traditional iconography based on the Gospels? Additionally, this interpretation does not explain St. Andrew’s presence.

Again, we must look at a Cappadocian example to identify the nimbed old man depicted in the Wedding at Cana and explain why the bride and groom sit apart. In the Old Church of Tokalı Kilise, Göreme no. 7⁽⁵³⁾, the Wedding at Cana is depicted in two scenes **[Figs.21, 22]**, from the final scene of the second frieze of the south wall to the north wall. In the first scene, the four figures are seated on a square table. The figure with the crossed nimbus on the far

(52) I have been unable to confirm the first appearance of this theory. Bonsanti (1985), fig. 87 (Old man as Joseph); Frugoni (2005), 162; Frugoni (2008), 175; Pisani (2020), 63. Bellinati (1997), 86, says only that the groom is John.

(53) Jerphanion, *op.cit.*, vol. I-1, 276-77; Jolivet- Lévy, *op.cit.*, 95-96.

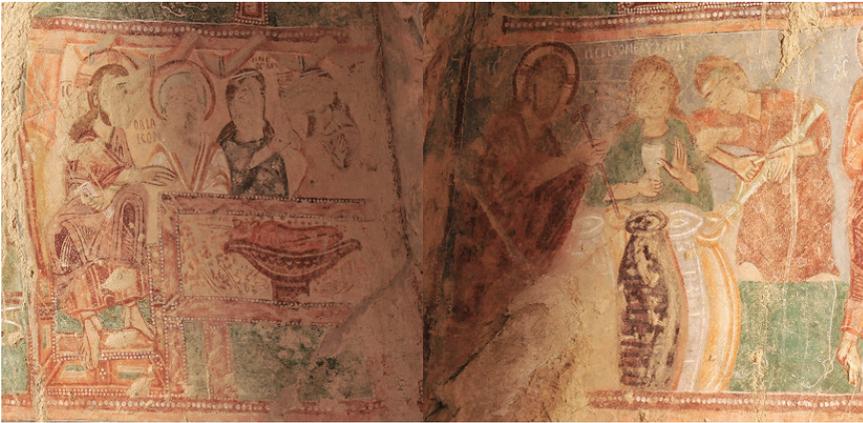


Fig.21: The Wedding at Cana, Old Church of Tokalı Kilise, Göreme, Cappadocia (Turkey)



Fig.22: Sketch of Fig.21 based on Jerphanion's photograph

left is Christ (inscription: IC XC), extending his right hand in conversation ("Fill the jars with water" (Jn. 2:7)). The nimbed old man to his left has white hair and a beard (inscription: Ο ΔΙΑΚΟΝ(OC), the servant/ deacon). The third and fourth figures from the left, male and female, both wear diadem on their heads and are inscribed Η ΝΕΟΓΑΜΥ⁽⁵⁴⁾ (new spouses) in the center. The bride holds her hands to show her surprise; a fifth figure (gender unknown) appears to hold out a glass-like object with the right hand from behind the bride. There is an inscription on this figure which Jerphanion did not read and is completely eclipsed today.

In the second scene, Christ is repeated. Christ, with a crossed nimbus on the left, is stir-

(54) οί νεογάμοι. The Cappadocian inscriptions are full of orthographic errors: in Jn. 2:9 the word νυμφίος is used for the bridegroom.

ring a jar with a T-shaped scepter in his right hand. Six amphora-shaped jars on the ground can be identified (2:6). A long-haired, beardless figure behind the jars holds a wineglass in her/his right hand and raises her/his left hand in surprise⁽⁵⁵⁾; the inscription Ο Α[ΡΧΙ]ΤΡΙΚΛΙΝΟC (ὁ ἀρχιτρικλινος; the master of the feast (Jn. 2:8, 9)) indicates that the figure is male, although gender cannot be determined from the pictorial representation. The figure on the far right shows the water poured from a small urn into a jar on the ground, inscribed Ο ΑΝΤΑΙΟΝ⁽⁵⁶⁾ (man drawing water). Above the center figure's head, the subject of the scene is inscribed ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΝ ΕΞ ὙΔΡΙΟΝ (On (the story) from water); the story is usually given as *περὶ τοῦ ἐν Κανᾶ γάμου* (On the marriage at Cana)⁽⁵⁷⁾.

It is the second person in the first scene of Cappadocia that we should focus on in relation to Giotto. The word *diakonos* (servant) is used twice in the plural in the Biblical text (Jn. 2:5, 9). In the Byzantine period, however, the original meaning of the servant evolved, and the word was often used to mean a deacon who assisted the priest (*hiereus, episkopos*)⁽⁵⁸⁾. If he were a servant, he would not have been given a nimbus; however, the Cappadocian painter interpreted him as a deacon and gave him a nimbus. This is not a misinterpretation of the meaning of the word, but rather an emphasis on the sacramental connotation of the Wedding at Cana as a mass, with Christ as the priest (*episkopos*)⁽⁵⁹⁾ and man as the deacon (*diakonos*). Many Church Fathers have been interpreted this episode as representing the Eucharist⁽⁶⁰⁾.

It can be assumed that this man was also depicted in the model to which Giotto might have referred⁽⁶¹⁾. Giotto did not understand who the nimbed old man with white hair and a beard was and gave him the appearance of Andrew, who had appeared in the preceding Baptism. However, of the disciples invited to the Wedding at Cana (2:2), it is not necessary to

(55) Giotto gives this figure a fat physique and depicts him drinking wine.

(56) <ἀντλέω: to draw (water).

(57) Jerphanion, *op.cit.*, vol. I-1, 277, n.1.

(58) G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, s.v. διάκονος II.

(59) "now, you have been brought back to him (Christ), your shepherd and *episkopos* (guardian/ Overseer) of your souls" (1Pet. 2:25).

(60) E.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 9.8.8 (PG 22:684); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses mystagogicae quinque* 4.2 (PG 33:1097); Romanus Melodus, *Kontakion on the Marriage at Cana* 7.20 (M. Carpenter (trans), *Kontakion of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist, vol.1: On the Person of Christ*, Columbia 1970, 67-74).

(61) What is suggestive about this iconography is the words of St. John Chrysostom: That He had made the water wine, He had the servants for witnesses (τοὺς διακόνους μάρτυρας εἶχε) (*Commentarius in sanctum Ioannem* 22.3, PG 59:136; NPNF 1-14, 78, <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf114/npnf114.iv.xxiv.html>). The *diakonos* (servant=deacon) must be depicted close to Jesus because he is the witness of Jesus turning water into wine.

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depict only Andrew, and it is not at all likely that Joseph would appear here. In the Byzantine model, Giotto saw a figure in which the servant changed from a liturgical consideration to a deacon.

Furthermore, the Cappadocian Wedding at Cana reveals the meaning of the bride raising her right hand away from the groom in the center of Giotto's composition; she is not the lonely bride who will be divorced by St. John in the near future. Giotto did not understand the meaning of "the master of the feast" in the Byzantine painting, who is surprised to see water turned into wine, but he depicted her as an expressionless bride.

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【Photo Credit】

Fig.2, 20: Professor Hirofumi SUGAWARA, Kanazawa University, Japan

Fig.10: K.A. Manafis (ed.), *Sinai. Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, Athens 1990, p.151, fig.19.

Fig.18: S. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol.1, Athens 1973, fig.255.

Figs.1, 3-9, 11-17, 19, 21-22: author