

A lost encolpium and some notes on early christian iconography.

Mit 1 Tafel und 1 Abb. im Text.

In Windsor Castle is a series of volumes of drawings purchased by King George the Third to form a part of the Royal Library. They come for the most part from the collection of the Commendatore Cassiano dal Pozzo (d. 1657) and were purchased in 1762 from Alessandro Albani's library. It is in volumes X and XI, entitled "*Mosaici antichi*"¹⁾ that there are given drawings of mosaics and other works of art in Rome from the hand of some Italian artist of the seventeenth century. Among these drawings are sketches of the two faces of what appears to have been a medallion (Vol. XI, fol. 28, nos. 9069, 9070).

This medallion (figs. 1, 2), which bears on the front a representation of the Flight into Egypt and on the reverse an Ascension, was probably an encolpium, or amulet to be worn upon the breast. It was composed of two plaques of stamped gold joined together in order to present two faces and to leave a space in which there should be concealed either a miniature copy of the Gospels or some wonder-working relic.

Although the number of complete encolpia or amulets of this kind that have come down to us is small, there are several plaques of stamped gold that afford excellent parallels in style and iconography. Two of these are described by Charles Diehl. One, in the museum of Cantanzaro²⁾, is a medallion of stamped gold on which is depicted the Adoration of the Magi. At the left of the scene the Madonna, wearing a nimbus, her head enveloped in a veil, and her body clothed with a heavy mantle, is seated upon a throne. The Christ Child, whom she holds on her knees, wears a cruciform nimbus wholly out of proportion to the others. The three Magi, all bearded, wear crowns like those of Byzantine Emperors. Above them, beside the guiding star, hovers a nimbed angel, with great wings, holding a spear. It was during the IXth and Xth centuries, after the Iconoclastic controversies,

1) A. Michaelis, *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain*, p. 718.

2) Diehl, *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 1890, p. 301.

that the representation of the Magi as Orientals with Eastern garb and Phrygian caps was changed to the aristocratic conception of the Magi as kings either wearing or carrying their crowns. As the crowns appear at the close of the tenth century in a Byzantine Codex (Cod. Vat. graec. 1613)¹⁾ of the Vatican Library which dates around 976, and in the Codex Egberti (977—993 A. D.)²⁾ of western origin, it would appear that the change had taken place in the East during the latter part of the tenth century and appeared in the West in the same century. This appearance of the crowns on the Codex Egberti corrects the statement recently made by Mr. Dalton in "*Byzantine Art and Archaeology*" (p. 654) where he says that "crowns first appear in the West in the twelfth century". Diehl³⁾ and Strzygowski⁴⁾ are, therefore, doubtless correct in dating this medallion in the ninth or tenth century.

The other medallion⁵⁾, described by Diehl, is in the Reggio Museum and is very similar to the one in the Catanzaro Museum though superior in workmanship. This also is adorned with the scene of the Adoration. Here, however, the Magi wear the Phrygian caps and at one side of the scene is shown the crib back of which appear in restricted proportions an ox and an ass. To the right and left of the crib are two personages representing, without doubt the shepherds. This medallion is dated by both Diehl and Strzygowski in the sixth century.

Another medallion preserved only in a fragment and published by Garrucci⁶⁾, has the Virgin with the Christ figure contained in a medallion on her breast as is seen on the Syrian miniature of the Etschmiadzin Gospels.⁷⁾ This medallion Strzygowski dates in the sixth century.

The gold encolpium⁸⁾ from Adlana, now in the Ottoman Museum in Tchynili Kiosk at Constantinople, is the most perfect and complete example of the group and the most important for the dating of the lost encolpium which is the subject of this article (fig. 3). It is composed of two plaques of stamped gold of Eastern workmanship and depicts various scenes from the life of Christ. On the front face in the upper zone is represented an Apocryphal Annunciation of the Palestinian type, in which the Virgin sits with a basket of wool by her side as the angel accosts her, and the Visitation; in the middle zone

1) Kehr, *Die heiligen drei Könige*, Abb. 49.

2) Kraus, *Die Miniaturen des Codex Egberti*, Pl. XV.

3) *op. cit.*, p. 301.

4) Strzygowski, *Byzantinische Denkmäler*, I, p. 104.

5) *op. cit.*, p. 302.

6) Garrucci, *Storia*, vol. VI, Pl. 479, 4.

7) Strzygowski, *Byz. Denkmäler*, vol. I, Pl. VI, 1.

8) Strzygowski, a. a. O. vol. I, Anhang I, Pl. VII.



Fig. 1.
Pozzo drawing (Windsor Library).



Fig. 2.
Pozzo drawing (Windsor Library).

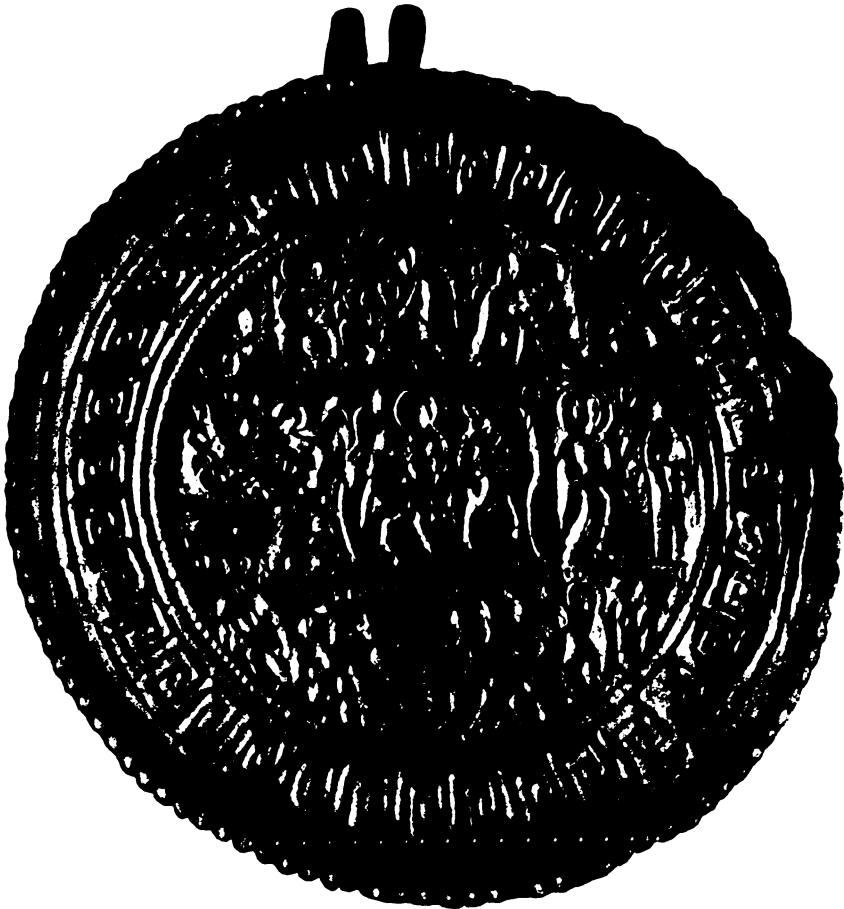


Fig. 3. Encolpium: Constantinople Museum. (Strzyg. Byz. Denk. I, Pl. 1.)

Byzantinische Zeitschrift. XX/III. 1.2.

From the ninth century on, in the East, it was usually the custom for both the personification and the city itself to be represented.¹⁾ Also at this time the attendant²⁾ becomes one of the *dramatis personae* in the East. Whom this attendant was meant to represent is problematical. Rohault de Fleury³⁾ cites a tradition of the Greek church according to which the young man would be St. James Minor, first Bishop of Jerusalem.

Returning to the encolpium of the Ottoman Museum we find that its simple iconography separates it by two centuries from any other representations of the same scene and that it is wholly different from that which appears after the sixth century.

In the Windsor drawing of our lost encolpium the scene of the Flight into Egypt shows some very close analogies to the encolpium of Constantinople. In the drawing the Virgin wears a nimbus, is mounted upon the ass, and holds the Child, who is without a nimbus, in a frontal position after the hieratic fashion noted before. Joseph, wearing a long mantle and carrying a walking stick over his left shoulder, leads the ass to the right. The Tyche, clad in a tunic with a mantle thrown over her left shoulder and wearing a turreted crown, comes forward to greet the Holy Family.

Comparison with the encolpium in the Ottoman Museum reveals certain striking resemblances in iconography. The ass in the Pozzo drawing, with his left foreleg raised in the most thorough-bred manner, is identical with the beast on the encolpium. In both representations the Virgin and Christ are shown in the early frontal attitude and the Virgin wears the nimbus while the Child does not. Too much emphasis can not be laid on the fact that in both monuments the Christ Child is without the nimbus. As was natural, practically all the representations of the scene after the ninth⁴⁾ century depicted the Child with

1) Vatican Menologium (Cod. Vat. gr. 1613 Xth cent.), Fleury, *La Sainte Vierge*, Pl. XLII. — Vatican gr. No. 1156, Fleury, *op. cit.*, Pl. XLIII. — Ms. (Bibl. Nat. gr. 12117 XIth cent.), Fleury, *op. cit.*, Pl. XLIII. — Greek Enamel (XIth cent.), Cahier, *Les caractéristiques des Saints*, p. 408. — Frescos in Tokaykilisse, Amalykilisse (Gereme), Belikilisse (Soandere), and Susan Bayry (Xth to XIth cent.), Hans Rott, *Kleinasiatische Denkmäler in Pisidien*, p. 226, 219, 141, 206.

2) Bologna ivory (IXth cent.), Venturi, *La Madonna*, p. 305. — Vatican Menologium (Xth cent.), Fleury, *La Sainte Vierge*, Pl. XLII. — Ivory in the Louvre (Xth cent.), Fleury, *op. cit.*, Pl. XLII. — Enamel of Monte Cassino (Xth cent.), Fleury, *op. cit.*, p. 179. — Mosaics of San Marco (XIth cent.), Venturi, *op. cit.*, p. 306. — Greek enamel (XIth cent.), Cahier, *op. cit.*, p. 408. — Mistra, Metropolis (XI—XIVth cent.), Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra*, Pl. 66.

3) Fleury, *L'Évangile*, p. 77.

4) For examples see the references in notes 1 and 2.

the nimbus, which was usually cruciform. During the later centuries of Christian art an artist would scarcely have dared to deprive the Christ Child of his symbol of deity. An excellent illustration of this point is furnished by the ninth century medallion in the Catanzaro Museum where the Christ Child wears a cruciform nimbus out of all proportion to the other nimbi.

Joseph, though similar to the encolpium figure in that he is ahead and leads the ass to the right, is without the nimbus that occurs on the Constantinople encolpium. In the present case the artist copying the medallion may have failed to see an incised halo.

The Tyche, though not occurring upon the encolpium of Constantinople, was most characteristic of early East Christian Art. On the Post-iconoclastic Eastern examples¹⁾ of the Flight into Egypt we find the Tyche associated with a city, either mounted upon the walls or coming forth to meet the Holy Family. The Tyche of the drawing with her turreted crown appears among the miniatures of the Joshua Rotulus²⁾, whose original, in all probability, was executed in the third or fourth century by a Greek artist living in Alexandria. She also appears on the Calendar of 354³⁾ as the personification of Constantinople. Much the same representation of the semi-divinity occurs in the Entry into Jerusalem on the sixth century Syrian ivory book-cover⁴⁾ of the Etschmiadzin Gospels. But the Windsor drawing is the earliest example of her presence in the Flight into Egypt.

If our lost encolpium were later than the eighth century, the Child would unquestionably wear the nimbus, the Virgin would have a less rigid frontality, an attendant would be present, and the city as well as the Tyche would be represented. Moreover, its similarity to the Constantinople encolpium in iconography shows that the lost original of the drawing must have been of Syro-Palestinian origin, dating about the year 600 A. D.

The Ascension on the reverse confirms this conclusion and further defines the provenance. The Ascension as a subject does not belong to the first age of Early Christian art and one of the first examples is on the doors of Saint Sabina.⁵⁾ As a feast of the church the Ascension was already ancient and traditional in the fifth century, says Saint

1) Examples cited on page 220, note 1.

2) Garrucci, *Storia*, III, Pl. 163.

3) Strzygowski, *Jahrbuch des K. Deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, Ergänzungsheft, 1888, Pl. VI.

4) Strzygowski, *Byz. Denkmäler*, I, 1, 1.

5) Berthier, *La Porte de Sainte Sabine à Rome*, p. 60.

John Chrysostom¹⁾ (d. 405). Among the early examples, beside the doors of Saint Sabina which are somewhat problematic in date, there is a fragment of a sarcophagus at Arles²⁾ showing the Ascension, a sarcophagus at Clermont³⁾, a diptych at Munich⁴⁾, and the ciborium columns⁵⁾ of San Marco at Venice. Whereas four of the previously cited examples represent the Christ being drawn to Heaven by the hand of God, the San Marco representation depicts the Saviour raised to Heaven in a mandorla borne by two angels. The Christ wears no nimbus, is beardless, holds a book in his right hand, and raises his left hand in a gesture of farewell rather than benediction. On an engraved gem⁶⁾ of the sixth century Christ, wearing a nimbus, is shown seated in a mandorla borne by four angels, while below are twelve apostles in short tunics. The Christ on a fresco of the catacomb of San Gennaro⁷⁾ at Naples is represented as a single figure, beardless and with a nimbus, floating up into the sky. The representation of the Ascension on the Rabulas Gospels⁸⁾ of 586 A. D. from Syria, shows the Christ wearing a nimbus, with long hair and short beard, and standing in a mandorla borne by two angels and supported by the symbols of the Evangelists. In the foreground is the Virgin nimbed and standing at the center of the composition while two angels, on either side, direct the gaze of the twelve apostles upwards to the miraculous vision.

There were two manners of representing the Ascension in early Christian art: the Western or Hellenistic method, which depicts the hand of God reaching down from Heaven and pulling the figure of Christ into Heaven, and the Eastern method that represents the Christ, either seated or standing, in a mandorla which is borne by angels. The Western method is best exemplified on the Munich diptych from Alexandria where it probably originated and whence it spread into the west. It occurs on the doors of Saint Sabina, a sarcophagus of Arles a sarcophagus of Clermont, and later became the customary method of representing the Ascension in Carolingian art. The Eastern type⁹⁾

1) Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, s. v. *Ascension* col. 2926. 2) Le Blant, *Les Sarcophages chrétiens antiques d'Arles*, Pl. 60.

3) Le Blant, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXIII, 2.

4) Cabrol, *op. cit.*, col. 2929, fig. 988.

5) Venturi, *Storia*, vol. I, fig. 268.

6) Garrucci, *Storia*, VI, Pl. 478, 32.

7) Garrucci, *Storia*, II, Pl. 92, 1.

8) Garrucci, *Storia*, III, Pl. 139, 2.

9) For a discussion of the primitive Ascension type in East Christian Art its relation to the mosaic of the south cupola of Justinian's church of the Apostles in Constantinople, and the evolution of the type in the later Byzantine, see A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, Leipzig 1908, II, pp. 196 ff.

is represented by its earliest example, the Rabulas Gospels. It is this type of Ascension that persisted down through later Byzantine Art and in the sixth or seventh century spread from Syria into Africa where it was adopted in the Coptic Art of Egypt. Its appearance in Coptic Art is shown on the sixth or seventh century fresco at Bawit¹⁾ which represents the Christ upon a throne within a mandorla round which are grouped the symbols of the Evangelists. The Christ is beardless and wears a nimbus. In the foreground the Virgin stands, and on either hand are six apostles wearing nimbi and arranged in a conventional and hieratical group, showing the greatest frontality. Towards the mandorla fly two angels bearing in their hands the crowns of glory for the Ascending Christ.

At an early date art in Egypt fell under the influence of Syria, and with the growing tendency toward a more austere outlook upon life among the Copts, the local style began to draw on Syria for artistic elements, which soon transformed the Hellenistic Art of Alexandria. This adoption of Syrian ideas, customs, and motives, though evinced in the language, the monastic institutions, and the ornamental forms used in Coptic art, is equally well shown, here, in the Ascension, as the Bawit example is a manifest adaptation of the Rabulas Ascension. The Coptic representation shows not only the mandorla type, but also the features of the symbols of the Evangelists supporting the mandorla and the two angels bringing to Christ the Crowns of Glory, which are both seen on the Rabulas Gospels. In the foreground the arrangement of the twelve apostles and the Virgin, though drawn from the Rabulas example, are presented in a rigid frontality largely characteristic of monastic art in Egypt. The influence of Syria on the iconography of Coptic Art is further evinced by the scene of the Massacre of the Innocents on a fresco at Antinoë²⁾ which shows a scene that is clearly related to that in the Rabulas Gospels.³⁾

The Monza ampullae⁴⁾ picture the largest number of scenes of the Ascension, all of which are of Eastern type. Whether or not these sixteen bronze ampullae in Monza Cathedral were the gift of Gregory the Great to Theodelinda, the Lombard queen, they are certainly of the sixth century and from Palestine, as their inscriptions prove. On all the Monza Ascensions Christ, bearded and wearing a cruciform

1) Clédat, *Mémoires de l'Inst. français d'Arch. orient. au Caire*, vol. XII.

2) Cabrol, *op. cit.*, fig. 791.

3) Garrucci, *Storia*, III, Pl. 130, 2.

4) Garrucci, *Storia*, Pl. 433, 8. 10; 434, 2; 424, 3; 235, 1. The scene on the ampulla represented in Pl 434, 3 is interpreted by A. Heisenberg (*op. cit.*, II, p. 198) as a Pentecost rather than an Ascension.

nimbus, is seated upon a throne within a mandorla borne by four angels who also wear nimbi. The Christ carries a book with his right hand. Below the mandorla, in the foreground, is the Virgin crowned with a nimbus and in the attitude of an *orans* while on either side are the apostles crowded about in manifest excitement.

In the Windsor drawing, the Ascension, showing the mandorla borne by four angels, bears a strong resemblance to the Monza type.¹⁾)



Fig. 4. Ampulla: Cathedral at Monza.
(Garr. Storia, VI, Pl. 435, 1.)

We have no idea how well preserved was the original encolpium from which the draughtsman drew his design and the accuracy of representation can be questioned, in fact, must be questioned because of the lack of nimbi. By the fifth century in both the East and the West it was the universal custom²⁾) for the Christ figure to be depicted with a nimbus. It is obligatory to imagine that on the original encolpium the Christ wore a nimbus. Therefore, if the artist failed to observe the nimbus in this case, he may have persisted in his lack of observation and have left out the nimbi of the other characters.

A glance at the Constantinople encolpium will show that it is very difficult to distinguish the minor details of iconography and, therefore, it is not surprising that an artist, giving only a cursory interest to his work, should fail to note a detail of this sort.

The Christ in the Windsor drawing is dressed in a tunic and pallium similar to that worn on the Monza ampullae and bears in his left hand some indistinguishable object, while he blesses with his right hand. His hair is the long flowing locks parted in the middle which is characteristic of the Palestinian Christ. In the foreground of the drawing there are depicted thirteen figures, presumably apostles. It is the invariable custom on the Monza Ascensions to represent the Virgin at the center and six apostles on either hand. If now we com-

1) Garrucci, *op cit.*, Pl. 433, 10.

2) Adolf Krücke, *Der Nimbus*, p. 78.

pare the Ascension on the Monza ampulla (fig. 4) we find that the central apostle in the Windsor drawing agrees quite closely with the figure of the Virgin on the ampulla and the other twelve figures are easily paralleled in the violently gesticulating apostles on the ampulla. In other words, the draughtsman copied some such figure as that of the Virgin on this ampulla, confused the figure with that of an apostle, and thereby finished with thirteen.

For all the seeming inconsistencies that have to be evaded by burdening an unknown artist with the responsibility of misrepresentation, the Ascension, nevertheless, accords most strikingly with the same scene on the Monza ampullae. Therefore, in view of the similarity of the Ascension scene to the same scene on the sixth century Monza ampullae from Palestine and the analogies observed between the iconography of the Flight into Egypt in the drawing and that on the Palestinian encolpium in Constantinople, we are safe in saying that the lost encolpium dated about 600, came from a region about Palestine and was the product of the Syro-Palestinian school of Early Christian Art.

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