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THE PEREGRINATIO PAPHNUTIANA
AND JERUSALEM MS 285

Students of medical history will probably be intrigued by the following description: "... he plunged his fingers into my side and clove it as with a sword, drew forth my liver — and it hurt greatly — and he showed me the sores which were upon it, blackened and infected, and he cleaned it with his hand ... and he approached me and set my liver once more into its place completely cured¹".

The narrative of this exciting surgical procedure which was executed in the middle of the Egyptian desert is only one of the many events relayed by a monk St. Paphnutius about another strange monk, St. Timothy by name, who chose to spend his life in the inner desert in the company of a herd of buffalos. This remarkable event is important not only for its intrinsic interest, but also because it is part of the experiences of the monk St. Paphnutius, himself an ascetic living in the same desert.

One day he decided to set out and see what other strange individuals he could find in the desert. His personal diary is included in manuscript no. 285 of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, containing the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, dated 1430, from the Crimea².

On looking into the manuscript as if it were a picture album, we discover that it contains illustrations of many personalities in different poses and scenes. Each picture has its own heroes, but among them one group of five pictures is particularly noteworthy (see Plates 1-5). In these a single individual appears repeatedly. He is bearded, holds a cane and is wearing monastic habit and a cloak. From an examination of the stories told in the manuscript it emerges that all five pictures illustrate a single literary piece that was translated into Armenian in the twelfth century and eventually entered our fifteenth century document³.

¹ Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate, manuscript no. 285, p. 573.

² N. BOGHARIAN, *Grand Catalogue of St. James Manuscripts* (Jerusalem, 1967) 2.107-112 (in Armenian).

³ Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate, manuscript no. 285, p. 591; *Haranc' Vark'*, (Lives of the Fathers, Constantinople, 1720) 431, col. 1.

This is very interesting because, from the colophons of Avramec', the creator of our manuscript, it is impossible to determine which literary model he used. He says that he copied, added or corrected where needed⁴. The manuscript contains an edition of the *Lives of the Desert Fathers* which, according to Leloir was made in the fourteenth century⁵. It was printed in New Julfa in 1641 and again in Constantinople in 1720. A comparison of the text of the printed editions with that of Ms 285 shows that they were not made from it, but from a different copy or copies of the fourteenth century edition.

The colophon at the end of the *Peregrinatio Paphnutiana* sheds some light on its history. It tells that the manuscript was translated in Egypt by "Reverend Gregory, Catholicos of the Armenians". This took place in the year 1110⁶. The views on the identity of Gregory have been varied. One group of scholars would emend the date and so make the translation the work of the well-known translator and editor of hagiographic texts, St. Gregory Martyrophile. Not only was St. Gregory Martyrophile famous for the translation of hagiographic and martyrological texts, but in his profound attraction for these spiritual figures he even visited Egypt to walk in their footsteps. St. Gregory Martyrophile died in 1105, however, and the colophon places the translation of the *Peregrinatio Paphnutiana* to 1110. Consequently, it seems more likely that we should avoid emending the date and assume that the work was translated by his nephew, Gregory, whom he consecrated primate over the Armenians of Egypt and who was also styled "Catholicos of the Armenians". Martyrophile's visit to Egypt was even earlier, taking place in the year 1076-7, while some even suggest that he visited Egypt a second time, departing before 1087⁷.

⁴ See colophon in ms 285, p. 72-88.

⁵ L. LELOIR, *Apophthegmata Patrum. Paterica Armeniaca a P.P. Mechitaristis* (CSCO Vol 353; Subsidia, Vol 42; Louvain: 1974), VI.

⁶ Ms 285, p. 591, col. 2.

⁷ The early date is also maintained by H. Ačařyan, *AnjB, s.v.*; GAREGIN KATOLIKOS, *Yisatakarak' jeragrac'* (Colophons of Manuscripts, Antelias, 1951), p. 283-288 prints a number of colophons of St. Gregory Martyrophile of the years 1101-2 on such works as the translations of the Lives of St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory Nazianus and St. Stephen of Rome. There is further information about him in other sources: see J. DASHIAN, *Katalog der armenischen Hss. der Mechitaristen-Bibliothek zu Wien* (Vienna, 1895) 25b, 26a, 92a, 348b, 565b, et al. See rich material in the article by Angèle KAPOIAN-KOUMJIAN, "Le Catholicos Grégoire II Martyrophile (*Vkayasēr*) et ses pérégrinations", *Bazm* 132 (1975) 3-22 (separatim), esp. p. 15-19. She supports the early date and also raises the possibility of *Vkayasēr*'s second visit.

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Gregory, primate of Egypt, is known to have continued his uncle's work in the translation of hagiographic texts. Consequently, it is difficult to assume that the translator of the *Peregrinatio Paphnutiana* was any other than him. The translator found it important enough to work on this particular literary group.

Like the translator, the painter of our manuscript also thought that this document was of special interest since he devoted no less than five pictures to it, illustrating four incidents. These are experiences of the monk St. Paphnutius. St. Paphnutius Cephalas (9 February), generally known as "St. Paphnutius the Hermit", was probably born between 301 and 311 C.E. He became a follower of St. Anthony the Great and then retired to the desert to live as a solitary and finally joined the community at Scetis, though dwelling apart and in a remote cell.

He became the "father of Scetis" and is as such said to have travelled in the inner desert searching for hermits who lived in remote parts and were unknown to people generally. The result of his travels are two compositions which survive from the tenth century in Coptic:

1. Stories of the Monks of the Desert in which he describes his travels to upper Egypt⁸;
2. The Life of St. Onophrius the Hermit and Other Hermits⁹ which describes his journey into the inner desert and is the document that interests us.

In addition, a collection of papyrus letters in Greek from that period was discovered. They were written to a certain monk Paphnutius, most likely our hero, and probably formed part of his private archive. In them, sick people ask him to pray for them and to help them recover. In the words of one of these correspondents — Valeria — she depends on his prayers to obtain healing "for by ascetics and devotees revelations are manifested"¹⁰.

From this we can learn that St. Paphnutius was also known among the lay people as an ascetic monk living in the desert and that they were in need of his services. The narrative about St. Paphnutius and his many visits to the desert monks received the name *Peregrinatio Paphnutiana*. It includes five episodes from his meeting with a strange

⁸ British Library, ms. or 7029.

⁹ British Library, ms. or 7027.

¹⁰ H. IDRIS BELL, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1924) 109.

array of characters: the monk Timothy and his buffalos, St. Onophrius, the four old monks, and the four young monks.

EPISODE I: ST. PAPHNUTIUS, ST. TIMOTHY AND THE BUFFALOS
PLATE 1 (p. 192)

After a long and eventful journey into the desert, St. Paphnutius finds himself knocking on a cave door waiting for a sign that a monk lives there. While waiting, he hears a noise and looking ahead he perceives a herd of buffalos and in their midst a strange, wild-looking, naked human being with a long beard and long hair which only covered his private parts. After giving the accepted greetings the naked monk who was called St. Timothy told St. Paphnutius how he came to dwell there: After deciding to take up the solitary life he used to weave baskets and sell them to passers-by. A certain woman hermit came to buy baskets. A word here, a glance there — and she moved into his cell where they lived in sin for six months. After six months he had had enough. He left her and fled to the inner desert where he found this cave, a spring and a date palm. Here too he became afflicted in the liver and was cured by a holy man sent by God as described above.

The stories about the visits of travellers to remote monastic cells have certain constant elements. These include a spring of water and a fruit-bearing tree, necessary for sustenance. These are visible in our scene in which there is also a mountain and the cave which has a door on which to knock.

Composition

From a compositional point of view the scene is carefully organised, divided into two parts with the spring in the middle. While St. Paphnutius is modeled with good proportions, St. Timothy looks strange, perhaps to emphasize his ascetic sufferings.

Condition of the Illustration

The blue background is rubbed.

The Background

The background is divided into two parts. The upper two thirds are blue and the lower one third is olive green.

Description

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to right: the cave is modelled with stylized rocks. The stones are in earth colour, blue and white. In the centre there is a black area representing the mouth of the cave and below, a wall in which there is a double door. This is light orange with dark shadowing and brown outlines. The cave is represented to the full height of the painting. Its upper section is brown-red. At its side is a palm tree the full height of the painting.

The Palm Tree

The palm is painted with great precision: the trunk with the stumps of the fronds, the "head" with its branches from which heavy bunches of dates hang. The trunk is shadowed brown, and the branches have some green leaves and some yellow leaves and bunches of dates.

The Man with the Staff

On the other side of the palm tree St. Paphnutius stands -- a distinguished figure in a long, brown-red tunic and robe. He is wearing a dark belt with a buckle. On his feet are dark shoes. His head is crowned with a golden halo, his hair and beard are white. He has a pointed beard, divided into three parts. His gaze is directed to the man who is standing at the other side of the painting. Both his hands rest on a tall staff, and his body is bent and inclines forward. At his feet there is a stone construction shaped from which a stream springs, blue-white in colour. This stream reaches the feet of the opposite figure.

The Buffalos

On the right side of the picture is a herd of six buffalos. The legs of the three lower ones can be seen while only the bodies of the three upper ones are visible. The two lowest, which are innermost, are standing on the ground while the third is floating in the air. The three lower ones have a forward-moving stance. The animals are coloured a brown-shadowed grey, with dark grey outlines. They have laid-back horns and expressive faces with elongated muzzles. Their eyes are very large, painted with a great deal of white, and above them are eyebrows and prominent noses. They have divided, bovine hoofs.

The Elongated Figure

At the right of the picture is a very long, thin figure, the full height of the picture. This is St. Timothy. His head is adorned with a golden halo which extends beyond the border of the picture. He is

quite naked, with knee-length hair and beard. He raises his hands in questioning and looks towards the man at the other side of the picture. At the top of his forehead, in the hair, is a sort of white square or cube, reminiscent of phylacteries. His body is very elongated and its proportions are distorted. Clearly the painter is trying by this means to represent a thin, ascetic body. The hair and beard are painted in the same colour as the shadowing of the cave. This produces the effect of:

- a. a mandorla framing the body; and
- b. a counterweight to the bright (light) colour of the rocks on the other side of the picture.

The Spring

The spring which gushes forth in the centre of the picture gives a fitting weight to the compositional structure. The man and the mass of animals is over against the man and the mass of the cave, while between are the sky, the earth, and the gushing spring. This even attempts to create depth through diangular circumscription.

EPISODE II: ST. PAPHNUTIUS AND ST. ONOPHRIUS, PLATE 2 (p. 193)

Further on St. Paphnutius met a wild man girt with a belt of leaves, whose body was covered with hair. St. Paphnutius hid himself fearing that the man was mad, but he proved to be St. Onophrius himself. He told St. Paphnutius that he had at one time lived in a monastery, but had left it sixty years before and had lived in the desert ever since. Soon after that he blessed St. Paphnutius and died and St. Paphnutius buried him. In this scene too we can recognize some of the elements which were seen in the previous one. A naked man, (although partly covered), a cave (no knocking and no door), a date palm, and a spring of water. In many ways the composition is very similar to the previous one. St. Paphnutius is introduced with the usual attributes, viz. a monastic outfit, a cane and a white beard. St. Onoprius is modeled according to the accepted formula as recorded by Dionysius of Fourna¹¹:

¹¹ Dionysius was born c. 1670 in the village of Fourni in central Greece. He was educated in Istanbul and, at the age of 16 he went to Mount Athos and became a painter. He wrote *The Painter's Manual*, a purely technical workshop manual, probably based on an early model. See P. HETHERINGTON (ed.), *The Painter's Manual of Dionysius of Fourni* (London, 1974). The observations cited are drawn from p. 60 of this work.

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An old man, naked, with long hair and a beard down to his feet. He is tall and skinny like St. Timothy to emphasize the difficult conditions of living in the desert.

Composition

The symmetrical structure of the composition is also present here. The solitary stands at the mouth of his cave and the frame of the cave serves as a sort of mandorla for him. The cave itself is highlighted by white highlights. The great weight which is given to the right hand part of the picture by the cave and St. Onophrius is offset at the other side by the group of the tree and St. Paphnutius. In order to elevate the figure of the saint, the painter presented St. Paphnutius as bent over, but with an upright head. Over against this, he greatly heightened the tree in order to complete the balance. The tree extends outside the frame of the picture.

The Spring

Here too a spring arises at the side of the cave and its water flows to the tree. It forms a fine lower frame for this part of the picture. It corresponds largely to the frame of the upper right hand side of the picture which is created by differently coloured rocks. Thus the effect is created not just of two separate bodies, but of a flattened "s"-shaped imaginary line which relates them to one another.

St. Onophrius

St. Onophrius is represented frontally, with an attempt to paint him standing with one foot forward. His body has distorted proportions. In this scene a very interesting mutual influence can be discovered when the figure of St. Onophrius is examined. The figure is standing in the entrance of the cave-mandorla with hands raised in blessing, leaning a little on one foot. Similar figures may be found elsewhere, especially in Russian paintings¹². The whole story of St. Onophrius, designed to praise the saint, is clearly tendentious.

The next two episodes are the meetings of St. Paphnutius with two groups of four monks – the first, old monks and the second, young monks.

¹² V. N. LAZAREV, *A. Rublev and His School* (Moscow, 1966) fig. 109 (in Russian). This is only one of many examples.

EPISODE III: ST. PAPHNUTIUS AND THE FOUR OLD MONKS
PLATES 3,4 (p. 194-5)

One of four old monks finds St. Paphnutius. He brings him to the others and introduces them to him. The story is uninteresting and without any details. Besides the fact that they have been living in the desert for sixty years, they keep everything in secret and even refuse to tell St. Paphnutius their names. But the painter did not want to bore his audience and so he retailed to them the only two dramatic moments in this incident, the moment of meeting and the moment of parting.

The Meeting

A building and a church on a hill are set, following the written text, on a desert background. "I arrived at the door of a cell which was built on a high place" - a *cell*, not a cave, and a *church*. This is probably because the painter imagined that where a group of hermits live they would build a church. Also true to the text, "I arose and fell at his feet and prostrated myself to him" is the closed, balanced composition which moves diagonally into the background. The local hermit is placed against the deep blue sky, producing an effect of emphasis.

The Parting

The same setting, only on the opposite side and a closer-up, picture-like scene. St. Paphnutius is taking his leave and the four old men are blessing him.

Composition

This picture, like the others, is made of a closed composition. Around the central scene there is some form of frame. This time the picture is divided in a balanced fashion, both vertically and horizontally. Vertically there are three parts — the sky, the rocky mountain and the building with St. Paphnutius. Horizontally there are the rocky ground with the cave, the line of men, and the rocky mountain which towers above them and closes on the heavens.

The Rocks

The special white highlighting on the rocks is particularly prominent. The painter succeeded in diffusing this to that it forms a frame/halo for the group of holy men. It appears that the moment that is described

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St. Paphnutius

He is standing to the right of the picture. His arms are folded on his breast and he is somewhat bent over. The painter has encountered some difficulty in giving his face the same expression he had in the three other paintings of this cycle. In all the other paintings his clothing is made up of a brown garment with a greenish-brown cape, but here blue and white are prominent, from shoulder to foot.

The Four Old Men

In contrast he has painted the four monks very successfully, attempting to give each a different and individual countenance by varying the shape of the hair line, or the form of the beard, or the length of the hair. Their hands, which are raised to their breasts, are represented in different forms. Nonetheless, the painter preserves symmetry even as he creates variety. The first and third figures have short beards and brown robes while the second and the fourth have long beards and light, beige robes.

EPISODE IV : ST. PAPHNUTIUS AND THE FOUR YOUNG HERMITS

PLATE 5 (p. 196)

After another day's travel, St. Paphnutius next discovers a cave near a spring. Many kinds of fruit-trees were there and it was a spot so delightful that it seemed like the Paradise of God. Here again four ascetics live, but they are youths, pleasant and handsome and clothed in sheep-skins. They approach St. Paphnutius, greet him by name and give him fruit to eat. The visitor stays with them for seven days. Seven years before, a man of glorious appearance had guided these well-educated sons of prominent families of Oxyrhyncus to this place. They had been well-instructed "in sciences and studies" and had planned "to learn the pious life of monasticism for six years". But they were still there living the solitary life and meeting only on Saturday and Sunday for prayer and the Holy Mass administered by an angel. St. Paphnutius stayed with them for these services and then left to go back and tell the world about these and other holy people he had met.

Composition

The picture is divided into two scenes. To the left the youthful angel is standing at the mouth of the cave and offering St. Paphnutius the holy bread and wine of the Mass. A tree separates them and the background is green and blue coloured. To the right are the four young monks, apparently accompanying St. Paphnutius on his way. He is standing more or less in the middle and he provides the connection between the two scenes. There is a wealth of detail which fills all the area of the picture almost as if the painter was overcome by *horror vacui*.

The Right Hand Segment

On a background of thick vegetation four young men stand in a row, one behind the other. Their hands are raised to their faces in a gesture of prayer. They all have light, reddish hair and golden halos. They are unbearded and an attempt has been made to give each of them his own individual, youthful countenance. They are clothed in two-piece garments, the upper part being a short cape and the lower a loincloth apparently of leather. The garments are light brown while their belts are dark, and they are wearing sandals. Between them are plants, flowers and bushes. Before are fruit trees and behind them is a large fruit tree used as a frame. All four figures stand as if up in the air, with bushes beneath them. Here there seems to be an attempt to set the four figures on a more internal plane in the picture than that on which St. Paphnutius is placed, and perhaps to make them higher than him. Nonetheless his superiority as an older man is preserved and therefore they are not excessively elongated. The fruit tree that stands behind the last of them forms a tight frame for the whole painting and it follows the contours of the man. In exactly the same way the lines of the cave at the other side follow the shape of the angel's body.

The Left Hand Segment

At the other side of the picture, corresponding to the tree on the right, is a cave. Set amidst rocks, it is highlighted in white. The rocks broaden towards the top, exactly like the tree, and at their lower part an opening and a door can be seen, apparently leading into the cave. Parallel to the lines of rocks stands a figure on the same plane as that on which the four young men stand. At its feet there is a group of rocks, greenish in colour and highlighted in white.

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The Figure

The angel has reddish hair like the four young monks, and a gold halo. He is dressed in a blue garment with a purple robe and on his back are brown wings outlined in gold: he is wearing sandals. The angel is placed so that his face is turned towards St. Paphnutius. In his left hand is a golden chalice and in his right the bread which he is placing in St. Paphnutius' mouth.

St. Paphnutius

He is standing in a stance parallel to that of the young man from behind. His arms are held out towards the winged figure, he is a little bent over and does not lean on a staff. He is wearing his usual clothing and has a golden halo. He is standing on a closer plane than the other participants and because he is low in the picture, he is shorter than the other saintly figures. Between St. Paphnutius and the angel there is an upright tree with leaves, branches and a narrow crown. The two figures stand one at each side of the tree, reminding of an ancient composition (Assyria) and this forms in the present picture a separate scene from a compositional point of view. Furthermore, behind St. Paphnutius is a tree which ornaments this segment from the right. The angel's garments are different from and more ornate than those of the monks. Here again the artist chose to paint the most exciting moment of St. Paphnutius' visit with the four young monks, the Mass communicated by the angel. This event concludes St. Paphnutius' pilgrimage and he returns to Egypt where he relates his adventures to his fellow-monks. They "reduced them all to writing and straightway took them and ran through all Scetis" (see n. 1).

Conclusions

Of the many stories of the Egyptian desert fathers, the artist's eye was caught by the rich narrative of St. Paphnutius. The story was well known and St. Paphnutius was a revered figure in all the Churches. There were, however, others no less revered and other stories no less popular, yet Avramec' himself, or the painter of his model, chose to devote five major scenes to the St. Paphnutius narrative.

This had a number of causes. From one point of view, the St. Paphnutius cycle is rich and offers opportunities for varied and different

paintings. In opposition to other stories in the text which offer the possibility of only one painting or representation, and which are frequently similar to one another, here there is ample room for the painter to manoeuvre. For example, the unusual painting of the herd of buffalos; or the meeting of St. Paphnutius with the old monks in contrast with his meeting with the young monks which offers the painter the chance of painting figures of different ages.

The story so fascinated the creator of the paintings that he presented the whole cycle in detail. Thus, for example, the meeting between St. Paphnutius and the old monk who told him about his companions is treated as a separate scene, while the painter could have combined this meeting with the meeting with the group of old monks. In the scene of the young monks, he has the opportunity to set the scene in a beautiful garden, a rare one in the stories of the desert whose background and location did not offer much occasion for variety of description — just desert, mountains, and wasteland. There is also a variety of reasons for each of them to become an ascetic in the desert: St. Timothy, fornication; St. Onophrius, the search for solitude; the four young monks, curiosity.

Within the cycle itself the painter sustains continuity, uniformity, and connection between the scenes. The chief means employed for this is the figure of St. Paphnutius who appears in each of the five scenes as an identical figure, with similar features, clothes, hair and beard. The design and the colours remain the same for St. Paphnutius throughout the cycle. An exception is the case of the meeting with the four old monks in which the familiar figure is changed to some extent. This too may be sheer chance and the colours may have been slightly different and the angle of the head may have caused a certain change in his features and beard.

In Byzantine illumination, the technique of tying scenes together by the appearance of a key figure similarly represented in each of them is well known. Jerusalem 285 also uses this technique, even though there are those who would maintain that in the fifteenth century, with the Palaeologian style, it was no longer self-evident, since painters felt themselves to be less restrained. The independence of the artist, even within a narrative cycle, is one of the characteristics that distinguish the Palaeologian style from the Macedonian. In the narrative of St. Paphnutius in our manuscript we can recognise the transition between

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the one and the other. On the one hand there is continuity between the five scenes, while on the other hand each is independent and can be understood separately.

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յայն տեղի . և ևս որք զնորումսն տարաւ պիտի արդար . առնում ի խելս քան արդար
եկիր այդ . աղաքն զքեզ տասն , եկամ քանի մարդեք թեանկ ունե քում յայնմ



անուպատի՛ն՝ նախ որոյ պատճառիւն Արիւսեղոսն՝ ոչ խնդգիւնում Եւ-
սեւն յիւնէն եղապոյ՝ յառաւմագոյն՝ նստեկի ընդմիայն սկի ծառա՝ իմ տան Բոսքա

Plate 1 : St. Paphnutius, St. Timothy and the Buffalos.

ԾԳՆԱԾԻՆ ՆԵՂՈՒՐ



...and the ...

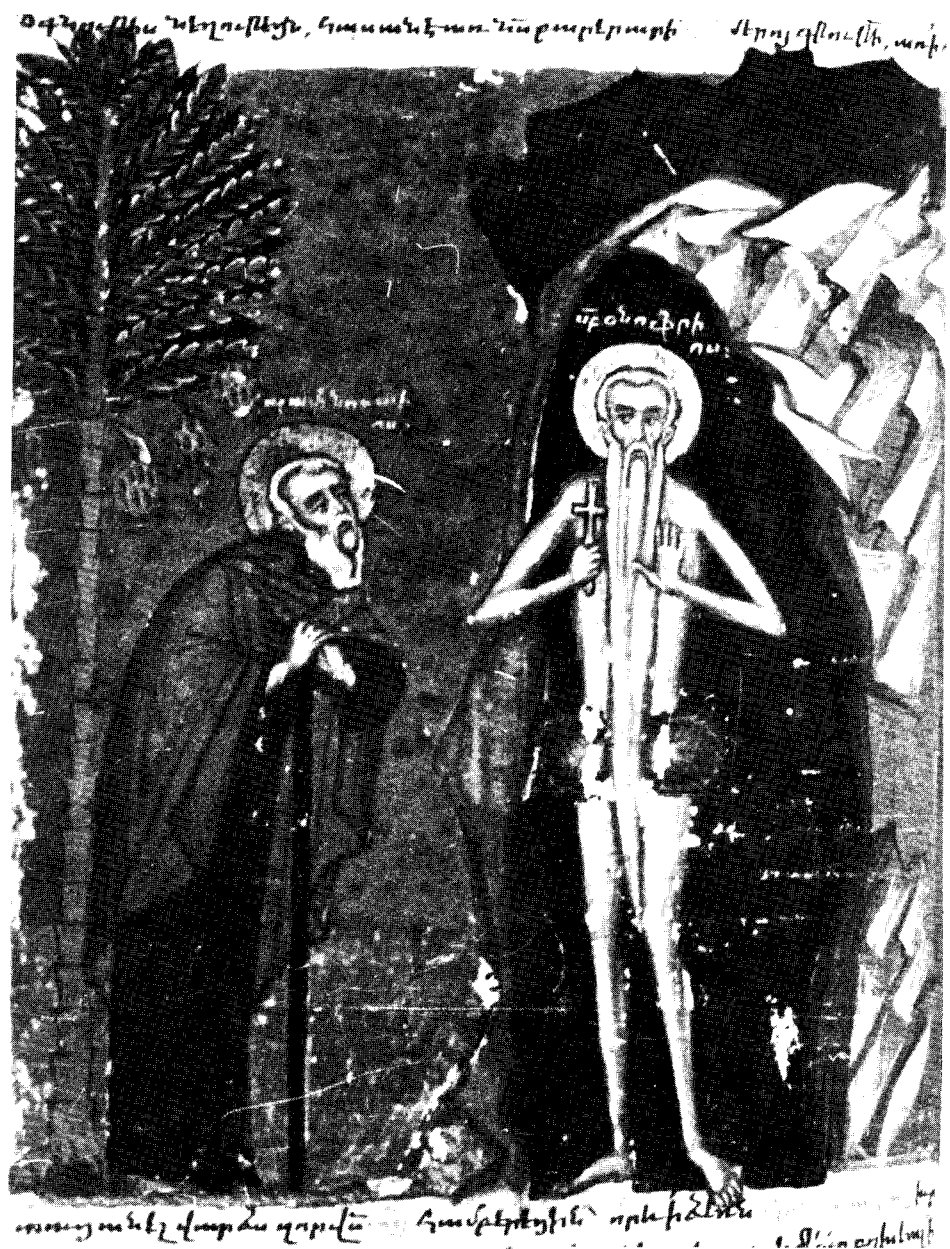


Plate 2: St. Paphnutius and St. Onophrius.



Plate 3 : St. Paphnutius and the Old Monk.



Pla



Plate 4 : St. Paphnutius and the Four Old Monks.



Plate 5 : St. Paphnutius and the Four Young Monks.

OBSERVATIONS ECONOMIQUES

En arménologie économique de l'A et parfois incertain sur la situation po bien que de la pre

M. Čamč'ean, f ne considère pas le arabe, mais caract fin du siècle comm «l'époque du gouv il nomme la périod des ostikans³», fa l'invasion définitive qu'en 855.

Aux XIX^e-XX^e sont rangés à son que d'autres points

M.-J. Saint-Mar Arabes au début d d'Arminiya des VI arabes (*ostikans*) gouverneurs arabes a été Abdallah, q H. Petermann, dan Marwan, nommé

¹ M. ČAMČ'EAN, *Hi*

² *Ibid.*, p. 359-376.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 376-453.

⁴ ST.-MARTIN, *Mém* p. 339-340.

⁵ ST.-MARTIN, p. 41.

⁶ G. INČ'EAN, *Géog*