

TRANSACTIONS

Syrian Stylites

Rereadings and Recastings of
Late Ancient Superheroes

EDITED BY BARBARA CROSTINI
& CHRISTIAN HØGEL



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SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL
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Stylites of Cappadocia*

The landscape of Cappadocia, with its unique landscape of valleys, pillar- and cone-shaped rocks – the characteristic ‘fairy chimneys’ – formed by erosion of the volcanic deposits [Fig. 1], has accommodated forms of monastic life since the early Christian period and the region played a particularly important role in the Byzantine church.¹ It was here that the thinking of the Cappadocian fathers – Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa² – originated and Basil developed a model of cenobitic monastic life that would become the most widespread in the Byzantine world.³

Cappadocia was a region steeped in profound spirituality, where the presence of natural caves and the ease with which the rock could be excavated favoured the spread of monastic cave settlements, some of which were very complex and featured churches, funerary chapels and refectories linked to residential complexes and production facilities. These were placed alongside the residential structures of the landed aristocracy, who were closely linked to the capital and owned vast estates in Cappadocia.⁴ The largely rural region, with just two

* This research began within the survey of Tuscia University (Viterbo, Italy), *Painting in the Rock Churches in Cappadocia. For a project of knowledge, restoration and enhancement*, directed by Professor Maria Andaloro, of whose team I have been a member since 2013. Images of landscape, settlements and rock paintings of Cappadocia in this article are from the survey archive (photographs: Gaetano Alfano, Domenico Ventura).

¹ On the formation of the Cappadocian landscape Akin and Orhan, “Geological Structure,” 119–24; Andaloro, “Natura,” 202–04. On the agrarian landscape and the changes to it Haldon, “Cappadocia,” 215–30; Cooper and Decker, *Life and Society*, 49–67; Barbera, “Agrarian Practices,” 102–03.

² Van Dam, *Becoming Christian*; Métivier, *Cappadoce*, 171–322.

³ Cooper and Decker, *Life and Society*, 110–11; Cremaschi, “Vita comune”; Bordino, “Development,” 95–98. The Cappadocian church had close ties with the Holy Land and played a key role in the spread of the Christian faith, towards more eastern kingdoms such as Armenia and Georgia: Gain, *Église de Cappadoce*, 6–7; Métivier, *La Cappadoce*, 252–66.

⁴ The exclusively monastic vision of Cappadocia (Kostof, *Caves of God*; Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*) was reviewed in studies carried out in recent decades through the identification and study of ‘courtyard’ residential complexes: Mathews and Daskalaris-Mathews, “Islamic Sryle”; Kalas, “Cappadocia”; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 271–368 and previous bibliography.



Fig. 1. Cappadocia, landscape. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

important cities, Caesarea (Kayseri) and Melitene (Malatya), was of strategic importance for defending the empire because it bordered with the Arab caliphates along the Taurus mountain range and the course of the River Lamos.⁵

The presence of paintings in churches and burial chapels from the sixth to the thirteenth century demonstrates the importance and continuity of the monastic settlements over time, up to the conquest of the territories by the Seljuk Turks.⁶

Cenobitic monasticism prevailed in Cappadocia, but hermitic practices were also widespread and referred to in the writings of the Fathers of the Church: Basil mentioned rocks and caves as places that awaited him;⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, in a letter to Basil dated 361 CE, described the place where he had withdrawn to spend time as a hermit – probably the Ihlara Valley – as deserted, wild and particularly difficult to reach.⁸

Later on, the same natural conformation of the region, with its rocky cones and pinnacles, favoured forms of stylite monasticism: rocky cones were particularly suited to the needs of ascetics who wanted to imitate the lifestyle of Saint Simeon the Elder and Saint Simeon the Younger.⁹

⁵ Haldon and Kennedy, "Arab-Byzantine Frontier."

⁶ Studies on painting in Cappadocia started in the 1920s with the Jesuit priest Guillaume de Jerphanion who conducted the first study and documentation campaigns. De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*; Thierry and Thierry, *Nouvelles églises*; Restle, *Byzantine Wall Painting*; Thierry, *Haute Moyen-Âge*, I; Thierry, *Haute Moyen-Âge*, II; Jolivet-Lévy, *Cappadoce médiévale*; Thierry, *Cappadoce*; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*; Andaloro, "Cappadocia."

⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Epistola CI ad Amphiloichium*, IV, ed. Deferrari, Saint Basil, *Letters*, 370–71; Thierry, *Cappadoce*, 201.

⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistula IV a Basilio di Cesarea*, ed. Barrois, *Fathers Speak*, 19.

⁹ Bordino, "Development," 94.

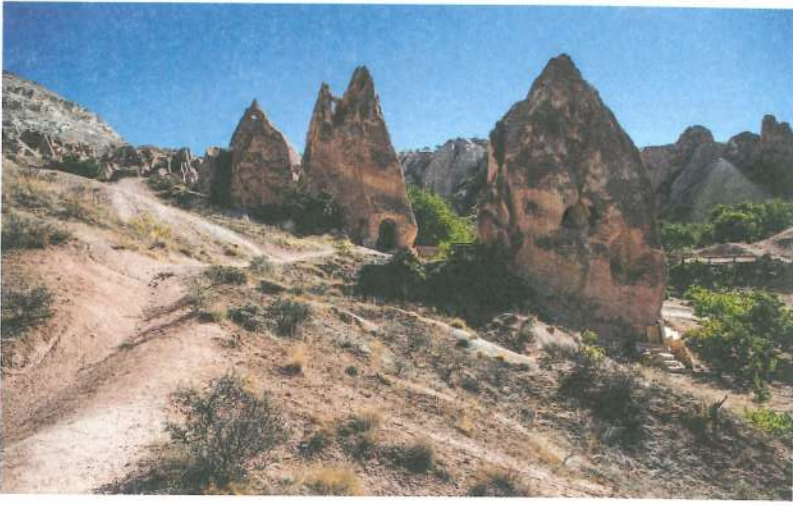


Fig. 2. Kızılçukur Valley. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

Rocks as columns

In Kızılçukur Valley (Red Valley) [Fig. 2] and Paşabağı Valley (Valley of the Monks) [Fig. 3] two hermitages of stylite monks remain: that of the monk Nicetas in Kızılçukur¹⁰ and that of the monk Simeon in Zelve, in Paşabağı Valley.¹¹ In both cases the term 'stylite' is attested in the inscriptions.¹² They were 'Cappadocian stylites' who, instead of living on columns, lived in cells carved into the top part of cones; these cells have been partly preserved to this day.

The possibility of the stylite's column being replaced by other tall elements is also attested in other instances. The sources, mostly hagiographies, report that in some cases ancient buildings were used instead of a column.¹³ St Alypius is mentioned in the sixth century in relation to a funerary monument with a column surmounted by the statue of a lion, an animal that he replaced with a cross, associating the place with the cult of St Euphemia;¹⁴ in Constantinople in the thirteenth century stylites are mentioned on the column of Theodosius and of Arcadius;¹⁵ and in the seventeenth century a stylite is mentioned on the lintel of the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens.¹⁶

¹⁰ Schiemenz, "Die Kapelle"; Thierry, "Art Byzantine"; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406.

¹¹ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, 351–80; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406–09.

¹² The inscription of monk Nicetas in Kızılçukur is transcribed by Nicole Thierry (Thierry, *Haut Moyen-Âge*, ii, 255–81); the inscription of monk Simeon in Paşabağı Valley by Guillaume De Jerphanion (De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 577).

¹³ Schiemenz, "Die Kapelle," 254–55.

¹⁴ Delchaye, *Saints stylites*, CXLIX and *Vita*, c. 9

¹⁵ Delchaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXIII and CXLIX; De Clary, *Prise*, 92.

¹⁶ Delchaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXIV. It is depicted on a drawing attributed to J. Carey (Omont, *Athènes*, 22).

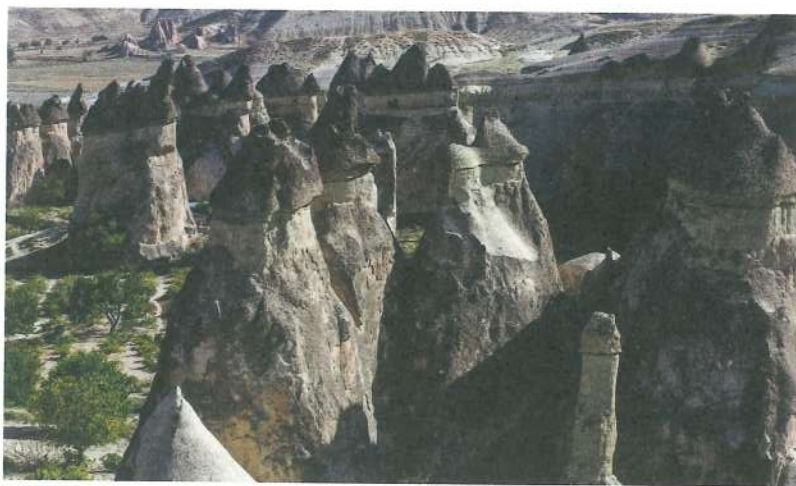


Fig. 3. Paşabağ Valley. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

To protect the stylite, who lived on a narrow platform enclosed by a balustrade, there was a shelter, made of skins or other materials,¹⁷ but sometimes, as was the case in Palestine, a closed cell was placed on top of the column and in such situations the column became ἐγκλεστήριος στῦλος, as John Phocas mentioned in 1177 in his description of the Holy Land with regard to the stylite John at the Holy Lavra of Saint Sabas.¹⁸ The monk's reclusion is combined with asceticism on the column.¹⁹ The variation between the two types of eremitism is also reported in other cases, for example for Neophytos the Recluse of Cyprus (1134 – after 1214) who, in the titles of his works, defined himself as Νεοφύτου τοῦ ἐγκλείστου, but is sometimes also referred to as a stylite.²⁰ After living for 17 years in the same cell, the saint, on moving to a new cell carved out higher up in the rock, compares this change to a process of ascension up to God, similar to that of the stylites whom he greatly admired.²¹

An alternative to the column in Georgia were the towers mentioned by Brosset. These were square towers close to monasteries, with a cell at the top to house hermits; they were known as swéti (column), like the one at the church of Oubé in Radcha mentioned in the inscription dated 1141²² and the one that was still inhabited in 1848 at the Martvili monastery in Upper Svaneti.²³

¹⁷ Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, CLV–CLXII.

¹⁸ PG CXXXIII, col. 952.

¹⁹ Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXII and CLIX.

²⁰ Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXVIII; Galatariotou, *Making of a Saint*, 102–05.

²¹ In particular Saint Alypius. Galatariotou, *Making of a Saint*, 104.

²² Brosset, "Douzième rapport," 104; Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXI–CXXXII. The inscription mentions the monk John Simcon who thanked God for having been able to construct a monastery and a column in 1141.

²³ Brosset, "Septième rapport," 16–17; Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXV. In the following decades there were reports of a monk who referred to himself as a stylite in Tismana, Romania.

The fact that the hermit lived in isolation enclosed within a structure brings this type of eremitism closer to that of the recluse, but it is interesting how it is the term 'swéti' that unequivocally assimilates the condition of the saint enclosed at the top of the tower to that of the stylite.²⁴

Confirmation that the column could be replaced by a natural, column-shaped element appears in the sources in reference to Mount Latmos, a highly important area for Eastern monasticism from the ninth century onwards.²⁵ In the Life of Paul the Younger it is recorded that in the time of Emperor Michael II (820–829) the monk Athanasios climbed a rock in the form of a column ἀχειροποίητον (not made by human hand), and remained there for 22 years.²⁶ A century later, Paul the Younger (+955), wishing to build a column on which to practise the ascetic life, was directed to use the same natural column as the monk Athanasios;²⁷ a monastic settlement was to be built around it, called ἡ λαύρα τοῦ Στύλου, a definition that offers an unequivocal analogy between a rocky pinnacle and column.²⁸

This use, which could be called extensive, of the term stylite is also documented in Thessaly in relation to Gregory, the spiritual father of Saint Athanasios of Meteora (1303/4–1380). He lived in a hollow on the side – and not at the top – of a rock near Stagi, and since the rock was known as στῦλος the saint took the epithet Saint Gregory Stylites (Γρηγόριος ὁ στῦλίτης), even though he lived in the lower part of the rock.²⁹

The Latmos testimony is similar to the Cappadocian cases where the demarcation between man-made and natural elements is more blurred, since all the structures, from monasteries to churches, from civil dwellings to production centres, are carved into the rock, as if made in the negative.³⁰ The 'stylites of Cappadocia' had their particular connotation in this very close relationship with the rock, despite also being closely linked to the tradition founded by Saint Simeon the Elder.

²⁴ In Georgia the devotion to stylite saints was very strong and widespread, in particular to Saint Simeon the Elder and to Simeon the Younger. To the latter the Georgians built the famous and impressive monastery near Antioch, on the Mons Admirabilis (541–565) (Djobadze, *Archeological Investigations*, 57–59. See also Lafontaine-Dosogne, "L'influence du culte").

²⁵ Wiegand, *Milet*, III–1, *Der Latmos*, 105–35.

²⁶ Τὸν ἀχειροποίητον τοῦτον ἀναβαίνει στῦλον: *Vita S. Pauli*, 43; Delchaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXII and CLIX; Schiemenz, "Die Kapelle," 254.

²⁷ Ὁ τοίνυν Ἀθανάσιος οὗτος ὁ τὸν στῦλον ἀξιώθεις δείμασθαι, διερμηνεύει τῷ μεγάλῳ στύλῳ ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον: *Vita S. Pauli*, 42.

²⁸ *Vita S. Pauli*, 43; Delchaye, *Saints stylites*, CXXXI, CXLVIII; Schiemenz, "Die Kapelle," 254–255; Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 502. The church of the monastery conserves paintings datable to the early thirteenth century (Schiemenz, *Die Malereien*, 46–53; Peschlow-Bindokat, *Latmos*, 82, 84, fig. 116).

²⁹ Nicol, *Meteora*, 92.

³⁰ Andaloro, "Natura e figura," 189–92 and previous bibliography.

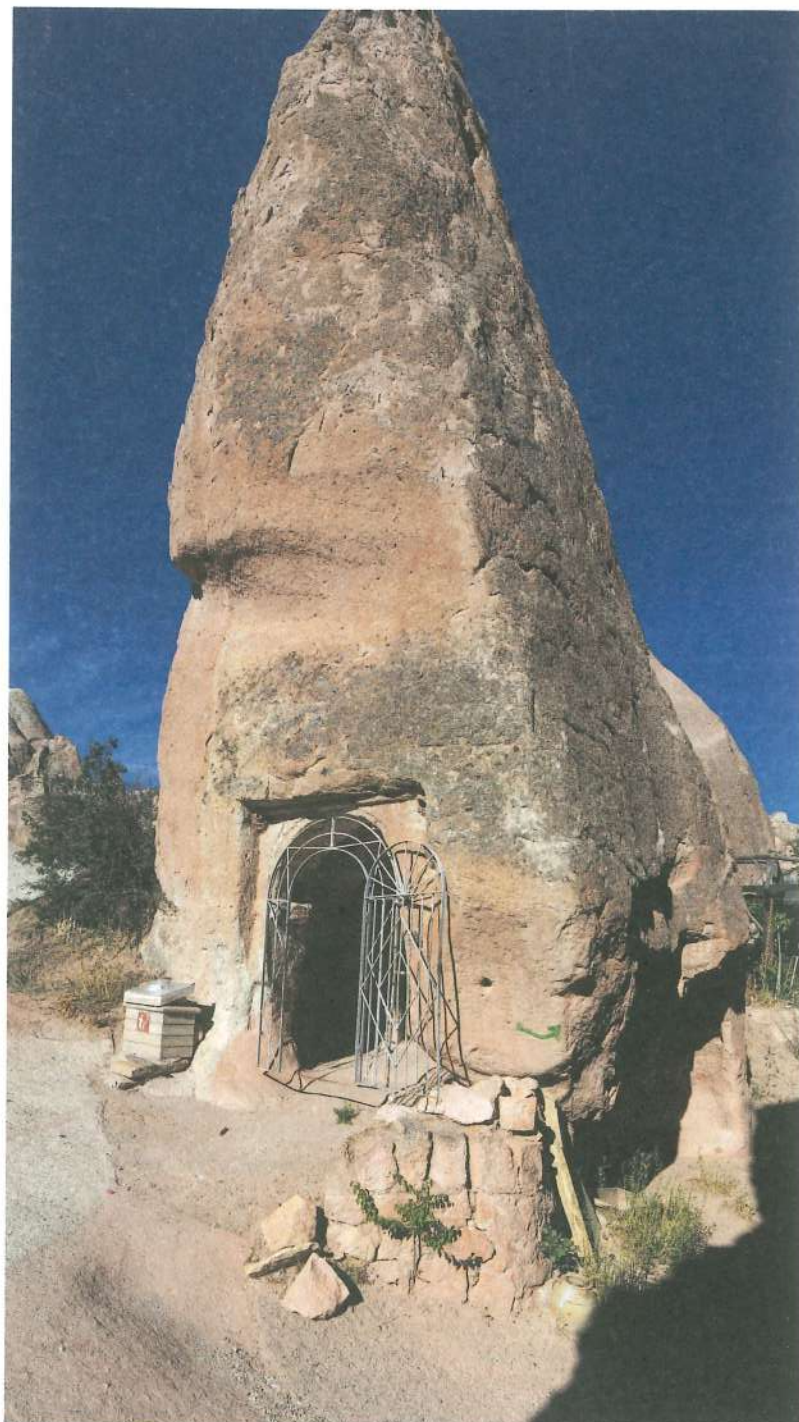


Fig. 4. Kızılçukur, cone of the Monk Nicetas. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

The Stylite Nicetas in the Kızılçukur Valley

The stylite Nicetas lived in the Kızılçukur Valley; his cell was in the highest part of the cone, while the church was in the lower part and preserves an image of Saint Simeon Stylites, which is probably the oldest one surviving as a wall painting [Fig. 4]. The church, known in Turkish as Üzümlü (Church of the Grapes), was excavated in the seventh century and the paintings, made after the monk's death at the behest of Eustratios *kleisourarch* of Zeugos and Klados, probably date to the same century.³¹ It has a single nave with an apse and a narthex. In the apse there are depictions of the Theotokos with the child among angels, a series of apostles on the walls of the naos, and a luxuriant plant decoration with bunches of grapes on the vault [Fig. 5]. On the wall leading to the presbytery there is an important painting of the Crucifixion, with Christ dressed in the colobium, at whose sides are the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist [Fig. 6]. They are joined on the left by the figure of Saint Simeon Stylites, who is juxtaposed on the right by Saint John the Baptist, considered to be the initiator of hermitic life. The image of the stylite is in a prominent place and was clearly visible to the faithful as they entered the church.

Simeon [Fig. 7] is depicted on an imposing white column, simulating marble, which ends with a stylised, Ionic capital with a simple red band and two small side volutes. Directly above it is a large clipeus enclosing the half-bust image of the saint; above this an inscription in red letters states his name without specifying whether he is the Elder or the Younger, which would suggest that he is the Elder.³²

Simeon's head is surrounded by a halo, and although the painting has suffered some damage in the area of the face, some distinctive features can be seen: the *koukoulion*, the typical headdress worn by monks, and a long dark beard.³³ In contrast to later depictions such as the portrait in the Menologion of Basil II

³¹ Thierry, *Haut Moyen-Âge*, II, 255–81; Jolivet-Lévy, *Eglises*, 55–56, 346; Thierry, *Cappadoce*, entry 15; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, I, 153–54; Andaloro, "Cappadocia," 66–68. The paintings were dated to between the 7th and 8th centuries by Thierry (*Haut Moyen-Âge*, 255–81; Thierry, *Cappadoce*, entry 15); to within the late seventh century by Andaloro ("Cappadocia," 66–68). A dating to the post-iconoclastic period, at the end of the ninth century, was instead proposed by Schiemenz and followed by Ousterhout (Schiemenz, "Die Kapelle," 256–57; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406).

³² Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 502–03. On the first depictions of Saint Simeon the Elder and Saint Simeon the Younger in the Syrian context in workshops linked to the large sanctuaries refer to Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Itinéraires*, 169–96; Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 36–37.

³³ The iconography of Saint Simeon the Elder, like that of Saint Simeon the Younger, has two variants, with or without a headdress, the former spread in particular from the eleventh century as in the refectory of Udabno in the desert of Davit Gareja (Georgia) (Eastmond, *Udabno Monastery*) or the church of the Anargyroi in Kastoria (last decades of the twelfth century) (Pelekanidis, *Kastoria*, fig. 11; Malmquist, *Byzantine 12th-Century Frescoes*, 90), without entirely replacing the image without a headdress which is still found in the mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios (1049–55) (Mouriki, *Mosaics*, I, 171–76; II, pl. 87b). They can also have beards of various shapes: short and

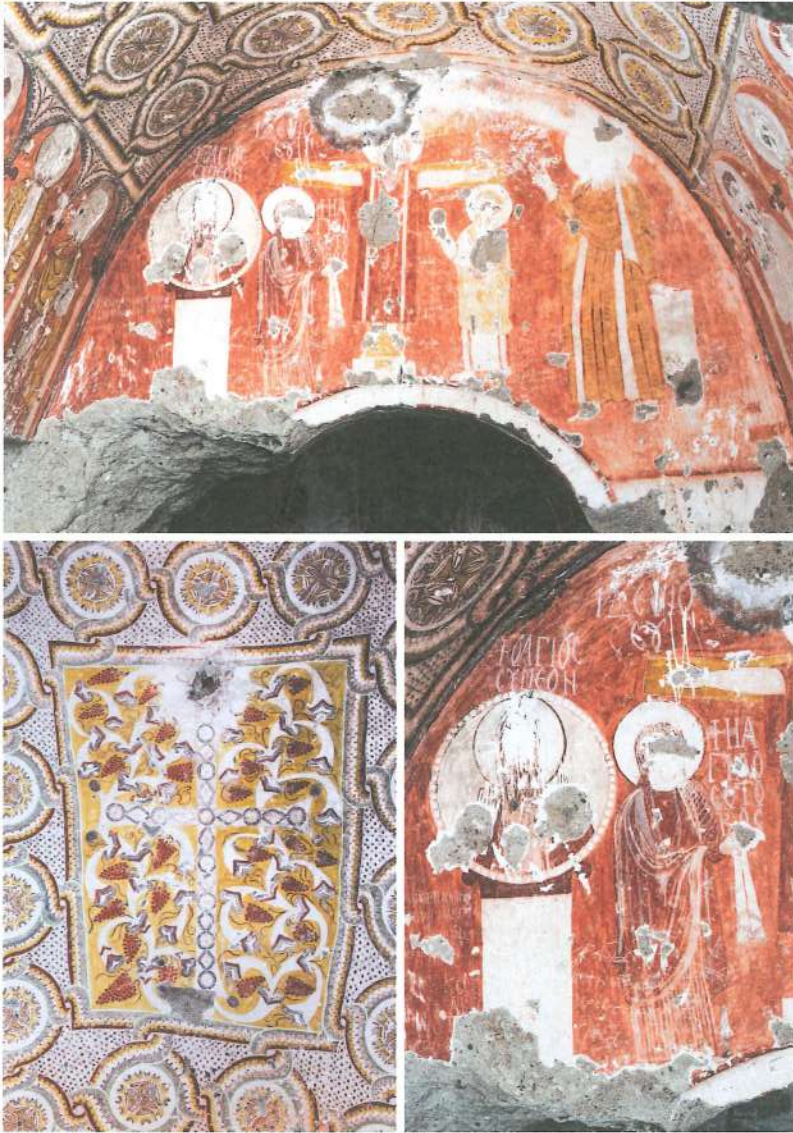


Fig. 5–7. Kızılcukur, Üzümlü (Church of the Grapes), vault and crucifixion scene with St Symeon. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

Fig. 8–9 (next page). Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. gr. 1613, *Menologion* of Basil II, f. 2r, Simeon the Stylite the Elder; Moscow, Hist. Mus. MS. D.129, *Khludov Psalter*, f. 3v, Simeon the Stylite the Elder. PD-Art.

(985 c.) (BAV, Vat. gr. 1613, f. 2) [Fig. 8], the bust is surrounded by a clipeus that connects directly to the column, without the balustrade that would later become a recurring element.³⁴ On the left side of the column there is a dedicatory inscription.

The direct connection between the end of the column and the clipeus containing the bust of the saint reveals the archaic nature of the composition; this element did not appear again thereafter and may be further proof of the early dating of the paintings.

In the miniature on f. 3v of the Khludov Psalter [Fig. 9] from the mid-ninth century, considered to be the earliest depiction of the saint in painting that can be dated with certainty, the saint is represented with short hair, bareheaded, with a medium-length beard that ends in a point, and is shown coming out of the shelter at the top of the column.³⁵

The great importance of the image of Saint Simeon in the church is made clear by the dedication painted in letters next to the figure of Saint Simeon: "For the prayer and salvation and the forgiveness of sins of Nicetas, stylite, by the faith of the ascetic...."³⁶ This refers to the monk Nicetas, who is described as a stylite and ascetic, and therefore lived according to the teachings of Simeon the Elder.

Nicetas lived in this same cone, in the highest part, in a small chamber about 10 metres high, which is still partly preserved today [Fig. 10].³⁷



rounded, long and pointed or divided into two parts, without these elements being distinctive (Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 37–38).

³⁴ Patterson Ševčenko, "The Imperial Menologia." The manuscript is available online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613. The depiction on the column, as Tomekovič points out, is not so much an effigy as a 'scene of normal life for the saint' who lived for 47 years on a series of taller and taller columns near the monastery of Telanissos, the last of which reached 40 cubits (Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 38–39).

³⁵ Ščepkina, *Miniatury*, c.3; Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 510–11.

³⁶ Thierry, *Haut Moyen-Âge*, 266–67.

³⁷ Difficult to access today, it was the subject of a photo campaign in 2016. Andaloro, "Cappadocia," 70; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406; Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 184–89.

There is a large sculpted cross on the vault, niches on the walls and a small room to the northeast.³⁸ Originally, an external staircase provided access to the room.³⁹ The ascetic appropriated the height of a natural cone to live in isolation and the column is perfectly replaced by the height of the rock from which Nicetas showed himself to the faithful, turning the cone into a sort of 'stone reliquary' that housed the sanctity of his life.⁴⁰



Fig. 10. Kızılçukur, Hermitage of the Monk Nicetas, cell. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

The Stylite Simeon in Paşabağı Valley

In Paşabağı Valley (Valley of the Monks), around one kilometre from Zelve, now part of the site of the Paşabağı and Zelve Ruins [Fig. 3], is the hermitage of the monk Simeon. This hermitage preserves the only cycle of wall paintings depicting stories from the life of Saint Simeon Stylites.⁴¹

The site, with its numerous characteristic 'fairy chimneys' with multiple shafts and 'hats', houses numerous chapels and hermitages, signs of a strong monastic presence. Within an isolated cone, with separate entrances and different levels, we find the stylite's dwelling in the upper part and a single-nave church in the lower part [Fig. 11].⁴²

The cell was accessed on the west side by a staircase carved into the rock, which featured simple notches used as footrests at the upper levels. The staircase leads to a quadrangular room that in turn, after a few steps, leads to the monk's cell. On the west wall of the cell there are two beds, complete with head pillows,

³⁸ Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406.

³⁹ Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 187.

⁴⁰ The expression was used by Andaloro, "Cappadocia," 71.

⁴¹ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 552–80; Thierry, *Haut Moyen Age*, II, 320–62; Thierry, *La Cappadoce*, entry 15; Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture*, 17–29; Gülyaz, "Paşabağı and Zelve," 193–99.

⁴² De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 552–80; Giovannini, ed. *Arts*, fig. 27; Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 189–92; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines*, 7–12; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 134–35; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 404–07.

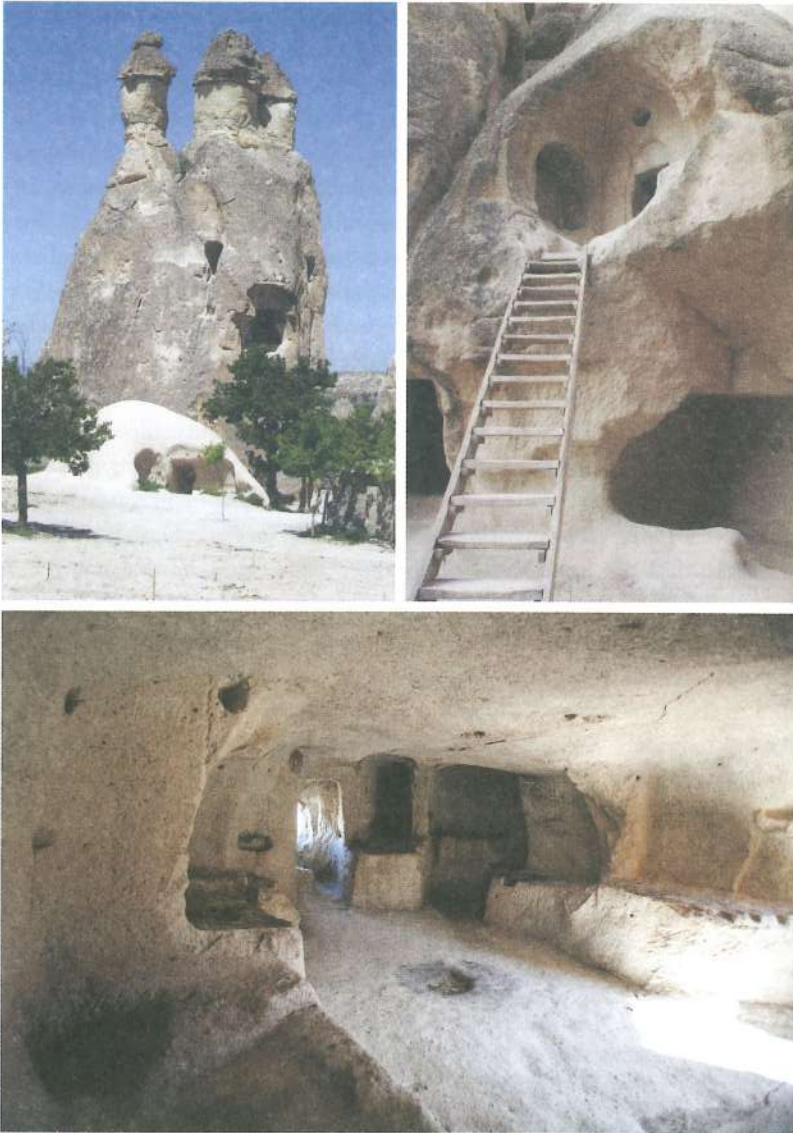


Fig. 11–13. Paşabağı, Hermitage of the Monk Simeon. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

carved out of the rock, and on the opposite side there is a table and a deep niche probably intended to house an altar [Fig. 12].⁴³

The church, accessed from the opposite side of the cone, has a deep narthex with an arcosolium at the northern end and four tombs dug into the floor

⁴³ Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 190–91; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406 and 407 fig. 4.40; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 134–35.

[Fig. 13].⁴⁴ Numerous graffiti on the walls invoke Saint Simeon Stylites, the saint to whom the building was likely dedicated.⁴⁵ The single-nave church was originally entirely painted. De Jerphanion left a detailed description of the paintings, most of which are now destroyed or difficult to read, and datable to the tenth century based on their similarity to the group of churches known as 'archaic'.⁴⁶ The apse shows Christ in a mandorla among four living beings, and on the south wall there is an unusual cycle with stories of Saint Simeon Stylites the Elder identified on the basis of the inscriptions accompanying the individual scenes, with other figures of saints on the walls.⁴⁷

The cycle with the stories of Saint Simeon is unique in wall painting and has no relation with the only other known illustration of the saint's life in the miniatures of the Athonite codex Esphigmenou 14, dating to the eleventh century.⁴⁸ The stories unfold on the south wall in five scenes, from right to left, starting at the counter-façade – thus not following the normal reading direction, but rather the movement of the faithful towards the apse – and concluding on the east wall, where the imposing figure of Simeon on the column is placed on the right, depicted in half-bust with a short white beard, headdress and in a praying position.⁴⁹

De Jerphanion noted that the inscriptions correspond precisely to the life of the saint written by the monk Anthony, a direct disciple of Simeon the Elder, known through Latin versions and, in particular, in the text used for the Bollandists' edition.⁵⁰ The inscriptions reveal that the redaction of the life of Saint Simeon was known in Cappadocia before the tenth century as it formed the basis for the Latin versions, and the paintings are the only evidence of the lost Greek text.⁵¹

⁴⁴ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.1, 55. There are two other arcosolia from a later period outside (Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406).

⁴⁵ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 568–69.

⁴⁶ The definition "décorations archaïques" is by de Jerphanion and indicates a group of churches with similar figurative programmes characterised by the presence of numerous evangelical episodes and the same stylistic features. De Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province*, I.1, 67–94; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 19. Also: Cormack, *Byzantine Cappadocia*, 19–36.

⁴⁷ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 553–69; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines*, 7–12; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 135–36.

⁴⁸ Christopoulos, Bardas, Pelekanidis, *Treasures*, II, 362, pls. 327–28. Jolivet-Lévy, "Contributions," 505.

⁴⁹ De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 137–38; De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 557–69. The paintings underwent a re-reading with minimum iconographic corrections by Jolivet-Lévy (Jolivet-Lévy, *Contribution*, 503–08 and figs. 3–4; Jolivet-Lévy, *Cappadoce médiévale*, 313–15; Tomeković, *Saints ermites*, 135–38, 296; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 135). The paintings in the narthex were already destroyed by the time of Jerphanion (De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 552).

⁵⁰ *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii Tomus Primus, 264–67.

⁵¹ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 566; Jolivet-Lévy, "Contributions," 504. On the life of Saint Simeon: Halkin, *Bibliotheca*, 256–59; Halkin, *Auctarium*, 175; Lietzmann, *Das Leben*; Delchaye, *Saints stylites*, I–XXIV.

On the south wall, the scenes graphically reconstructed by Jolivet-Lévy⁵² follow one another with no division and sometimes without respecting the chronological order. Starting from the right, the first is made up of two figures and depicts the vocation of the young Simeon as he asked an old man to explain the meaning of "contenance of the soul".⁵³ The second scene illustrates the moment when the hegumen of the monastery of Teleda, shown on the left wearing a headdress and scapular, accompanied by a monk, checked the form of penance that the saint had imposed upon himself by tying a rope of palm fibre around his waist, which had caused a deep maceration of the flesh. The saint has a naked torso and part of the rope running across his chest can be seen. The episode, mentioned in the long inscription, is only briefly described in the *Life of Saint Simeon* written by Theodoret of Cyrillus,⁵⁴ while it is related in greater detail in the *Life* by the monk Anthony. This *Life* derives from an original lost Greek text and is known in different Latin versions that emphasise the malodorous condition of the sores that bothered the community of monks.⁵⁵ The inscription below reports the hegumen's questioning of Simeon about the cause of the foul odour, his order to the monks to undress him, his anger at the discovery of the rope macerating his skin and his order to remove it, but not without suffering since it had penetrated the flesh.⁵⁶

The following scenes appear linked to each other and relate to miracles by the saint, who is never depicted in the scenes but only on the wall of the apsidal arch. The female figure, smaller than the previous figures, with a hand on her face as a sign of affliction, according to the inscription, represents the healing of a woman who had swallowed a small snake that had been growing in her stomach for three years.⁵⁷ At the bottom, a large snake, next to which De Jerphanion read the word 'wood' (ξύλον), is linked to the miracle of the snake that was wounded by a piece of wood stuck in its eye and had taken refuge at the saint's column, and was thereby healed.⁵⁸

The last scene is more complex; it depicts Saint Simeon's mother addressing the saint on the column, painted, as said, only on the eastern wall, with her hands in a gesture of intercession, asking to see him again, even though women

⁵² Jolivet-Lévy, *Contribution*, 503–08 and figs. 3–4; repr. in Jolivet-Lévy, *Cappadoce médiévale*, 314 (image) and in Tomeković, *Saints ermites*, fig. 158.

⁵³ De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 137–38; De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 558; Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 505.

⁵⁴ PG LXXXII, col. 1468.

⁵⁵ *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii Tomus Primus, 265 and 269.

⁵⁶ De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 139–44; De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 559–60; Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 505–06.

⁵⁷ *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii Tomus Primus, 267. De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 144–46; De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 561. The inscription once around the head of the figure indicated the duration of the illness.

⁵⁸ *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii Tomus Primus, 271; De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 146–47; De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 562–63; Jolivet, "Contribution," 506.

were forbidden from approaching the column; in response Simeon says that they will see each other again soon, in the next life.⁵⁹ The figure of the mother stretched out is repeated above, when, after her sudden death, she is miraculously transported to the foot of the pillar; Saint Simeon entrusts his mother to the Lord and upon hearing his voice she miraculously awakens for a few moments, smiling.⁶⁰

On the east wall, the figure of the saint on the column is not accompanied by any inscription. Due to the presence of the small figure dressed in a tunic embracing the column, De Jerphanion thought the image might refer to the episode of the repentant brigand who fled from Antioch and embraced the saint's column for seven days until his death,⁶¹ but in the absence of inscriptions it is more likely to be the representation of a supplicant, as proposed by Jolivet-Lévy, who wished to highlight the saint's role as an intercessor as well as a thaumaturge.⁶²

The only other cycle of Saint Simeon the Elder is in the miniatures of the codex Esphigmenou 14, and consists of just four entirely different episodes inspired by the text of the *Menologion* by Simeon Metaphrastes, which became widespread from the eleventh century onwards.⁶³ Fol. 2r depicts the arrival at the monastery of Teleda and, in the lower part, the penance in the well interrupted upon the order of the hegumen;⁶⁴ fol. 2v depicts the daily activity of the saint who blesses and welcomes knights and various kinds of people, and the lower part depicts Simeon's appearance to Daniel [Fig. 14].⁶⁵

In Paşabağı Valley, 120 metres to the east, there is another hermit-



Fig. 14. Simeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion*, stories of saint Simeon. Mount Athos, Esfigmenou Monastery. Cod. 14. PD-Art.

⁵⁹ De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 147–49; De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 564–66. *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii Tomus Primus, 266 and 271.

⁶⁰ De Jerphanion, *Voix*, 149–52; Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 506–07.

⁶¹ Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 135; pl. 43.3; *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii Tomus Primus, 266.

⁶² Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 504, note 11. Jolivet-Lévy detected the presence of several female saints in the iconographic programme, a good seven in the wall of the counter-façade, which she interprets as a sign of the role played by a female figure in the chapel's foundation and in the choice of the iconographic programme. Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 507–08; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 135, pl. 132, 3–4.

⁶³ Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 135–38; Patterson Ševčenko, *Illustrated Manuscripts*.

⁶⁴ PG 114, 337–40 and 340–41; Christopulos, Bardas, Pelekanidis, *Treasures*, II, 362, pl. 327.

⁶⁵ PG 114, 361–64 and 376–77; Christopulos, Bardas, Pelekanidis, *Treasures*, II, 362, pl. 328.

age with a chapel and two monastic cells, which de Jerphanion related to the church.⁶⁶ The narthex of the chapel houses the tomb of the monk Simeon within an arcosolium, excavated into the north side, which opens onto a burial chamber [Fig. 16]; around the arch there is a long epitaph painted in red letters on a white background, stating the name of the monk and the day of his death, though this was already missing the year by the time de Jerphanion made his transcription.⁶⁷ The long inscription reflects on human mortality and ends with the words “still living I prepared and excavated grave/ o, Tomb, receive me too, like (my namesake) the Stylite”, and continues: “the servant of God Simeon the monk, died the ninth of June... in the year...”⁶⁸

The word ‘Stylite’ is fully justified by the name of the deceased and by the desire to establish a comparison with the saint who inspired him; everything points to the idea that by choosing the life of the stylite saint as a model of life, the anchorite also took his name.⁶⁹ Opposite the church is the hermit’s cell,



Fig. 15. Paşabağı, Tomb of the Monk Simeon. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

⁶⁶ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 571–77; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 135–36. The interior of the church has paintings from different periods. The Theotokos in the apse with St George and St Christopher on either side can be dated to the eleventh century. Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 136; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 406.

⁶⁷ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 577; Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme*, 257–303; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 136 and 135, pls. 1–2.

⁶⁸ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 575–80. “I was formed an infant in my mother’s womb. For nine months not consuming normal nourishment,/ I came out from my own mother/ I saw the creation, and I recognized the creator/ I [learnt] the divinely-inspired scriptures/? and understood those sent to me/? Who came, sons of Adam, the first-created, /that he had died, and all the prophets./Still living, I prepared an excavated grave;/ so, tomb, receive me too, like (my namesake) the Stylite”. The English translation of the inscription is in Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 192; Gülyaz, “Paşabağı and Zelve,” 196.

⁶⁹ De Jerphanion proposed the integration of the word .ο.λ. ην in Στ[ο]ι[λ]ι[τ]ην on Cumont’s recommendation (De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 579).

with an arcosolium containing a bed carved into the rock and inscriptions with prayers by the monk Simeon.⁷⁰ On an upper level, accessed through a hole in the middle of the ceiling, there is a second cell with a niche on the east wall.⁷¹

De Jerphanion assumed that the monk Simeon mentioned in the inscription of the arcosolium is the same person as the one mentioned in the graffiti of the church containing the stories of Saint Simeon Stylites, based on the fact that the name Simeon was particularly rare in Cappadocia.⁷² According to this hypothesis, Simeon himself, a Cappadocian stylite, may have been the patron of the church's painting programme depicting stories about the saint, and in his old age he would have moved to a more easily accessible cell, abandoning the previous cell in the cone of the church.⁷³ However, the graffiti in the narthex of the church, like the epitaph on his tomb, do not provide conclusive evidence for this connection. Ousterhout prefers to think of two different personalities separated by time: a first stylite monk living in the early tenth century, in relation to the church with the paintings about Simeon, and a second non-stylite monk who lived about a century later.⁷⁴ However, it must be stressed that the choice of name in both cases cannot be accidental and, taking into account the rarity of the name Simeon in Cappadocia, the second settlement, even if it was later, would testify to the rootedness and continuity of this practice of asceticism in Cappadocia.

Similar hermitages, with cells excavated inside cones close to churches and burial chambers, have also been found in Güllü Dere near the Ayvalı kilise (church no. 4 and church no. 5).⁷⁵

Other Images of Stylites in Cappadocia

In addition to the only cycle with stories of Saint Simeon, Cappadocia also preserves a large number of images, dating from the tenth century onwards, of stylite saints in different forms: half-bust on a column, full-length without a column, half-bust within a clipeus. These various representations took shape within the general process of broadening the Byzantine sanctoral, which in Cappadocia was documented prior to the dissemination of the first illus-

⁷⁰ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 571; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 407; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 136 and pl. 133.

⁷¹ Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 407.

⁷² De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 571–80.

⁷³ Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines*, 76–79.

⁷⁴ Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 407. He notes that there is a burial site in the church and there was no need to make a different burial chamber for the stylite. The second settlement further to the east would not necessarily have been stylitic as the only mention of stylitism is in reference to the homonymy.

⁷⁵ Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 207–13; Lemaigre Demesnil, *Architecture rupestre*, 41–44, fig. 20.

trated edition of the Menologion by Symeon Metaphrastes.⁷⁶ As Jolivet-Lévy has pointed out, the presence of holy monks is only significant in a few cases where it is justified by the connection between the church and monastic complexes.⁷⁷ They are numerous: at Saint John's in Güllü Dere (913–920), linked to the Panagia monastery;⁷⁸ in the New Tokali (960), linked to the monastery dedicated to the archangels, as attested by the inscription on the cornice of the central nave;⁷⁹ in St. Eustachius, where there are numerous inscriptions with monks' prayers;⁸⁰ in Karabaş Kilise in Soğanlı, where monks are painted among the patrons, and the monk Niphon, linked to the aristocratic Skepidis family, is mentioned in the inscription of the second pictorial phase in 1060.⁸¹

The depiction of the stylites –Simeon the Younger, Daniel, Alypius, Arsenius– is recurrent from the tenth century onwards. In the paintings in the New Tokali the image of Saint Simeon is in the northern apse, in a panel he shares with Anthony, Timothy, the rare St Epiphanius and the Stylite Arsenius [Fig. 16]⁸² Simeon is not depicted on a column but instead in an entirely original way on a pillar resting on three steps at the base and without a capital; the structure of the pillar is similar to a tower.⁸³ The shelter, unlike that in the Khludov Psalter, is rendered as a gabled structure, with classical architectural forms [cf. Fig. 9], which would not occur later. The inscription above, of which only a small part remains, has been interpreted as *Συμεών*, identified as the Elder.⁸⁴ The saint, without a headdress, has white hair and a long pointed beard, a style which is generally more common for Saint Simeon the Younger.⁸⁴ The nearby Arsenius, with a damaged face, on the other hand, is not depicted on the column but standing, with short hair and a mid-length rounded beard, dressed

⁷⁶ Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 99. The oldest preserved examples of the Metaphrastic Menologion are from 1056 (Paris, BNF, ms gr. 580) and 1063 (Moscow, Historical Museum, ms 9).

⁷⁷ The absence of holy monks is justified in relation to the largely secular patrons, linked to the aristocratic families who lived on the region's estates and who for the most part financed the construction of the monasteries and burial chapels (Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises*, 347; Jolivet-Lévy, *Cappadoce médiévale*, 29–32).

⁷⁸ Bordino, "Monk Saints"; Thierry, "Ayvalı Kilise," 99–101; Thierry, *Haute Moyen-Âge I*, 137–38.

⁷⁹ Wharton Epstein, *Tokali kilise*, 33 and 79. Transcription in De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 304–07.

⁸⁰ Bordino, "Monk Saints."

⁸¹ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, II.2, 334–39, 356–59; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines*, 267, 270; Jolivet-Lévy, *Après Jerphanion*, 273–77; Bordino, "Monk Saints." Monks are also depicted in the first decorative phase of the church.

⁸² Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 508–09; Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 37.

⁸³ De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.2, 326; Wharton Epstein, *Tokali kilise*, 68, fig 106.

⁸⁴ Jolivet-Lévy pointed out the difficulty of identifying the saint with certainty due to the variations in the iconography of Saint Simeon the Elder and Saint Simeon the Younger, since the Younger is often depicted with the same features as the Elder, and suggests that, on the basis of the largely disfigured inscription, which does not allow a certain identification, we cannot rule out the fact that this may be a different saint from Saint Simeon (Jolivet-Lévy, "Contribution," 508 n. 26).



Fig. 16–17. New Tokali, north apse, Saint Antony and Saint Simeon; intrados of the arch of the prothesis, Saint Alypius. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

in a tunic and cape.⁸⁵ Alypius the Stylite is also depicted in the intrados of the arch of the prothesis, also full-length, without a headdress and in a praying position [Fig. 17].⁸⁶ In the church of St. Eustachius, which houses a number of rather rare saints, Saint Simeon was depicted full-length and without a column, both on the counter-façade, together with the stylite Arsenius, and on the south wall, now largely lost.⁸⁷

There are many variations in how the physiognomy of the stylites is depicted: Arsenius, for example, is shown without a headdress in the New Tokali and with short hair and a short beard, while in St John's in Güllü Dere he has a headdress, grey hair and a long pointed beard that reaches his chest [Fig. 19];⁸⁸ similarly, Alypius may have long or mid-length hair covering his ears.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ The saint was only shown on the column, surrounded by the grid closure, starting from the Menologion of Basil I (Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 39–40) and this is also the case in the mosaics of Nea Moni (Mouriki, *Mosaics*, 171–73, 175–76).

⁸⁶ Wharton Epstein, *Tokali kilise*, 67. Alypius is also portrayed together with Arsenius in the cistern church paintings of Avcılar (Göreme) from the first quarter of the eleventh century, but this time with a long white beard and hair, as part of the compact series of monk saints populating the arches and pillars (Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines*, 80–82; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 116; Thierry, *La Cappadoce*, n. 39).

⁸⁷ Such as Cattidius and Cattidianus of Egyptian origin on the south wall, or Justus of Rome on the east wall: De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.1, 147–70; Restle, *Byzantine Wall Paintings*, I, 68–69, 119–20; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises*, 112–16; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 39–41; Bordino, "Chiesa di Sant'Eustachio," 88.

⁸⁸ Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 39–40.

⁸⁹ Tomekovič, *Saints ermites*, 294.



Fig. 18. Güllü Dere, Church of St. John. Saint Arsenios. Archive of Tuscia University's Mission in Cappadocia.

In some contexts, the stylites occupy a prominent position: for example, in the Church of Saint Barbara in Soğanlı, Saint Simeon the Stylite and Saint Daniel the Stylite are in the apse, next to Saint John Caliste and Sabas of Jerusalem;⁹⁰ in the Saklı kilise (Goreme 2a), ca. 1070, Saint Simeon the Elder and Saint Simeon the Younger are depicted at the ends of the east wall.⁹¹

From this extensive evidence, Cappadocia appears to be particularly linked to the stylite tradition reformulated in the rock version. This inheritance is attested by the hermitages with cells at the top of rocky cones, the early presence of the painted image of Saint Simeon Stylites, the existence of a cycle of the saint's life, and the early spread of images of other stylite saints depicted with different iconographic variants, sometimes in particularly prominent positions.

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⁹⁰ Saint Daniel follows the most common depiction: he has no headdress and has shoulder-length white hair divided into bands. De Jerphanion, *Nouvelle province*, I.1, 314–15; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises*, 260; Tomeković, *Saints ermites*, 296.

⁹¹ Restle, *Byzantine Wall Paintings*, I, 50–52; II, fig. 20; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises*, 85–87; Thierry, *La Cappadoce*, 195–96 and entry 40; Jolivet-Lévy, *Un siècle après*, 51.

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