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THE CULT OF THE SAINTS NICHOLAS OF LYCIA AND THE BIRTH OF BYZANTINE MARITIME TRADITION

Lycia was a region with an ancient maritime tradition, like the other southern Asia Minor coasts of Caria, Pamphylia and Cilicia; ever since antiquity, its inhabitants were known for their excellent maritime skills and their engagement in piracy. It is not by chance that the ships of the Byzantine fleet, both commercial and military, were manned from these parts, as Prokopios informs us¹. Describing the southern coast of Asia Minor, Strabo depicts the coasts of Lycia as “rough and arduous, although possessing exceedingly good harbours and inhabited by sensible people”². On the other hand, its rich forests, full of coniferous cypresses, used mainly for ship building, constituted a primary source of wealth for its inhabitants³. The maritime tradition of its people and the availability of shipbuilding timber and good harbours define the character of the region of Lycia. These factors were decisive for the development of the region, especially from the later part of the seventh century onwards, when the theme of the Kibyrrhaeotae, of which Lycia was a part, was created. It is no wonder that St. Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors, would originate from the purely maritime region of Lycia, whose inhabitants, in contrast with those of other neighboring maritime regions, were well known for their prudence (*σωφρόνως ζῶντες*), as Strabo mentions⁴. The cult of St. Nicholas, chiefly as patron saint of

1. Prokopios, *De Bellis (Procopii Caesariensis Opera Omnia*, I, *De Bellis*, ed. J. Haury – G. Wirth, Leipzig 1962), III.11.14: *Ναῦται ... Αἰγύπτιοί τε καὶ Ἰωνεὶς οἱ πλεῖστοι καὶ Κίλικες*. Cf. Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Études d'histoire maritime de Byzance à propos du “Thème des Caravisiens”*, Paris 1966, 29-30. Hélène Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe-XVe siècles* [Bibliothèque byzantine. Études 5], Paris 1966, 23.

2. Strabo, 14.3.2 (Loeb).

3. A.H.M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, Oxford 1937, 101. Cf. Foss, *The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age*, *DOP* 48 (1994), 1 (= Idem, *Cities, Fortresses and Villages of Byzantine Asia Minor*, Aldershot 1996, II).

4. Strabo, 14.3.2: *Αἰγίοι δ' οὕτω πολιτικῶς καὶ σωφρόνως ζῶντες διετέλεσαν, ὥστε ἐκεῖνον διὰ τὰς εὐτυχίας θαλασσοκρατησάντων μέχρι τῆς Ἰταλίας, ὁμῶς ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἐξήρθησαν αἰσχροῦ κέρδους*.

sailors, is widespread throughout the Christian world from mediaeval times⁵ to the present day.

I. St. Nicholas of Myra and St. Nicholas of Sion

It is difficult to trace the figure of St. Nicholas historically. He appears to be a “synthesis” of two separate saints by the same name⁶, that of the bishop of Myra and the saint of Sion, who is connected with the foundation of the St. Sion monastery, near Myra. The first St. Nicholas, who seems to be relegated to the realm of tradition, was born in Patara of Lycia and was active in the fourth century. According to a later tradition he participated in the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, defending Orthodoxy passionately; he is reported to have punched the heretic Arius. However, the only evidence of this period with reference to Lycia mentions a bishop of Patara, named Eudemos⁷. The Acts of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (324), although they do not survive with the exception of a few canons, bear a subsequent addition dating from the sixth century which refers to Nicholas, bishop of Myra⁸.

On the other hand, Cilicia, also having a naval tradition, is known mainly as a pirate base and a centre for slave trade: Strabo, 14.3.2; 14.5.2; see Jones, *Cities*, 104-105. In the *Encomium* on St. Nicholas (BHG 1362), ed. G. Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos. Der Heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Texte und Untersuchungen. I.: Die Texte*, Leipzig-Berlin 1913, 422 (henceforth Anrich, *Nikolaos I*) –wrongly attributed to Andrew of Crete, according to Nancy P. Ševčenko, *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, Torino 1983, 26– Lycia is described as being “prudent” through St. Nicholas, who is called “the image of sensibility”: αὐτὸς δὲ ὄλον σαυτὸν σωφροσύνης εἰκόνασμα ... τῇ ἐπαρχίᾳ Ἀνγκίων ... ἐχρημάτισας. The references to texts concerning saints Nicholas are in the edition of G. Anrich, *Nikolaos I*. The subsequent quotations to the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion (BHG 1347) will be given by number of chapters, as the same chapter numbering is adopted in all the three editions: Anrich, *Nikolaos I*, §1-80; Nancy Patterson Ševčenko – I. Ševčenko, *The Life of St. Nicholas of Sion*, Brookline, Mass., Hellenic College Press 1984 (henceforth Ševčenko, *Life*) and the latest one by H. Blum, *Die Vita Nicolai Sionitae: griechischer Text*, Bonn 1997 (henceforth Blum).

5. The excerpt from the compiled *Life*, the so-called *Vita compilata* (BHG 1348c), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos I*, 211 and 269, –written around 860-975–, is characteristic: ... περιβόητος καὶ ... ἐξάκουστος, οὐπερ τὸ μέγα καὶ πολυθρύλλητον ... ὄνομα ἀπὸ περᾶτων ἕως περᾶτων τῆς οἰκονομένης κρηνητόμενον μεγαλύνεται καὶ δοξάζεται. See the comments by G. Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos. Der Heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Texte und Untersuchungen, II.: Prolegomena, Untersuchungen, Indices*, Leipzig-Berlin 1917, 302 (henceforth Anrich, *Nikolaos II*) and Ševčenko, *Life*, 11.

6. Ševčenko, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 18. Cf. Vera von Falkenhausen, Bishops, in: G. Cavallo (ed.), *The Byzantines*, Chicago-London 1997, 184-185.

7. Mansi, 2, 695C.

8. Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 301. E. Honigmann, La liste originale des pères de Nicée, *Byz* 14 (1939), 60. See also Ševčenko, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 18 note 3. In an exceedingly obscure passage in

The first known hagiographical text written in his honor is considered to be the *Praxis de stratelates* dating between 450-580; this text has been used as model by the later texts about St. Nicholas⁹. In the *Praxis de stratelates*, the saint is presented for the first time in the capacity of “savior”, since on two occasions he saved the three stratelates from certain death¹⁰. The texts dedicated to St. Nicholas of Myra are also based on the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, despite the fact that they do not directly mention him. Although these texts praise St. Nicholas bishop of Myra, they attribute to him properties of St. Nicholas of Sion, as recorded in his *Life*¹¹. Consequently, the particularly rich literary tradition

the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion (§76) there is a reference to the first St. Nicholas the “προπάτωρ”, as he is called, and to his participation in a council: ... τοῦ προπάτορος ἡμῶν τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου, κατήλθεν ἐν Μύροις τῇ μητροπόλει εἰς τὴν σύνοδον ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦλος Νικόλαος. Καὶ εὐξάμενος, καὶ ἀπολαύσας τῶν ἁγίων καὶ [τῶν] τιμῶν πατέρων καὶ συλλειτουργῶν τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἁγίας συνόδου, καὶ ἀσπασάμενος πάντας καὶ τὴν εἰρήνην πᾶσιν ἀποδεδωκώς, ἀνήλθεν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγεῖο αὐτοῦ μοναστήριον καὶ συνελήφθη ἐν ἀρρωστίᾳ. It is evident both from the tenor and the content of the text that the author is simply transmitting an old tradition, which he does not know. For the interest showed by the Iconodule hagiographers in St. Nicholas, see I. Ševčenko, Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period, in: *Iconoclasm*, 119; See also the version of the *Life* of St. Nicholas composed by Symeon Metaphrastes (BHG 1349), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 251.

9. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 368, 375-376.

10. *Praxis de stratelates* (BHG 1349z), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 70-71, 74-75.

11. On the first stages of his life, see the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §2, but see also the relative references in other texts: in the *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael (BHG 1348), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 114-115 –written around the 9th century: Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 263-264; in the *Encomium* by Methodius (BHG 1352z), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 156; in the *Vita compilata*, 217-218; in the *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 236; in the short version of the *Life* (BHG 1349u), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 277-278; in the *Life*, the so-called *Vita Lycio-Alexandrina* (BHG 1349a), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 301-302 –dated possibly to the 16th century: Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 326; in the *Encomium* by Neophytos (BHG 1364), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 393 –text of the 12th century. On the miracle with the falling of the tree, see the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §12-19 and the other texts: *Vita Lycio-Alexandrina*, 304-305; *Praxis de arbore* (BHG 1352d), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 333; the *Encomium* by Neophytos, 396. On the healing of the possessed, see *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §26, §61-66, §70-71, §73-74; *Vita compilata*, 229-231; *Vita Lycio-Alexandrina*, 302-303; *Life* of St. Nicholas, the so-called *Περίοδοι Νεολαίου* (BHG 1349c), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 325. The offer of sustenance: *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §37, §55-57; *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 117-118, 128-129; *Vita compilata*, 221; *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 238-239. The cleansing of the area from the ancient demons: *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §15-20; *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 127-128; *Vita compilata*, 227-228; *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 249-250; *Vita Lycio-Alexandrina*, 309-311; *Encomium* by Neophytos, 403. Aid to the sailors: *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §28-31; *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 131; *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 243; *Vita Lycio-Alexandrina*, 303; *Encomium* by Neophytos, 401. Aid during the famine: *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §52; *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 132; *Encomium* by Methodius, 160-161.

related to St. Nicholas, constitutes a medley of the elements of worship of both saints. The merging of the two saints is clear in the prefaces of a number of variations of the *Life* of St. Nicholas, which speak of puzzling and difficult to understand information regarding the life of St. Nicholas¹².

St. Nicholas of Sion was born in Lycia *ἐν χώρᾳ Τραγλασσῶν, ἐν χωρίῳ Φαρρῶα*¹³ around the middle of the sixth century. It is worth noting that the anonymous author of the *Life* attempts to connect Nicholas of Sion with the monastery of St. Sion in Lycia, a fact that he personally considers to be a divine sign and that he stresses mentioning it twice in the same sentence: *Καὶ τοῦ τοιούτου σφραγίσματος γεναμένον, ηὐδόκησεν ὁ δεσπότης τῶν ὄλων κνοφορεῖσθαι ἐν τῷ τῆς σφραγίσεως τῆς ἐνδόξου ἁγίας Σιών παρακεμμένῳ ἀγροῦ παιδίον εὐπρεπές, ...*¹⁴. His father was called Epiphanius and his mother Nonna and he is said to have died on the 10th December 564, that is to say, during the reign of Justinian (527-565)¹⁵. The information provided in the *Life* of Nicholas of Sion

The great number of depictions of St. Nicholas in frescoes and portable icons do not make a distinction between the two saints; see Ševčenko, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 18-19.

12. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §3; *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 114: ... *τὴν περὶ τοῦ μεγάλου τούτου ἀρχιερέως ἐξήγησαν σαφέστεραν ἐκθέσθαι καὶ τὰ ἄλλοις βαθέως ἄγαν καὶ ἰσχνῶς ποιηθέντα εὐνόησθαι τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσι προθεῖναι, ... ἄχρι γάρ τοῦ παρόντος ἡ πολιτεία τοῦ ... πομίνος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἄγνωστος πέφυκεν*; Methodius ad Theodorum (BHG 1352y), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos I*, 140: *Ἐπειδὴ ἡ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγων πλοκή τῆ ἀσαφείᾳ τῆς πωχονοίας τὸ γριφόν σοι ἐντυγχάνοντι ἐπέχεν νομίζεται*.

The author of each hagiographical text on St. Nicholas attempts to elucidate the mystery surrounding the saint's origin, without any success. Indeed, the patriarch Methodius, a well known hagiographer, in his two *Encomia* on St. Nicholas (Methodius ad Theodorum, 140 and *Encomium*, 153-154), attempts to recount his life and admits his utter ignorance; see A. Kazhdan in coll. with L.F. Sherry and Christina Angelidi, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)* [IBR/NHRF, Research Series 2], Athens, 1999, 378-379. The author of the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion (§1) begins his text attempting to summarize the scriptures: *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ηὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνακαφαλοοῦσθαι τὰς γραφάς*.

All this puzzling information pinpointed by mediaeval authors may reflect the merging of the two saints with the same name, which probably took place around the middle of the seventh century.

13. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §2. See the comments by Blum, 93.

14. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §1.

15. The *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §80 states the exact date of his death. The manuscript evidence provides varying information regarding the date of Nicholas' death, while the old Slav translation of the *Life*, written in the ninth century, states that Nicholas died during the reign of Constantine. Regarding his descent, the same text states that St. Nicholas was a peasant's son. See Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 215, 381. Blum, 93.

is overall obscure and the recounting of events is full of *hystera-protera*, while in many instances the anonymous author leaves the episodes he is recounting unfinished¹⁶. According to some scholars, the *Life* was written a short while after the saint's death, perhaps by one of his disciples, or by someone who knew the saint, because in many instances the first person plural is employed¹⁷. Nevertheless, the use of the plural may imply the anonymous author's intention to identify and associate with the saint. However, from the text of the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, and from what we deduce from further research¹⁸, it seems that the text could have been written later, that is after the mid seventh century. What can be stated with certainty is that the author of the *Life* is certainly familiar with the region of Lycia, since he portrays vividly the devotional ritual of the area, offering at the same time valuable information about the topography of Lycia¹⁹.

Describing the saint's miracles, the anonymous author defines his saintly attributes, among which the saint's intercession for safe navigation by sailors and the cleansing of the area of Lycia from the ancient demons hold a prominent position. It is worth noting that when the anonymous author recounts the saint's first miracle, which is of a maritime nature, he says that, St. Nicholas of Sion wishing to go to Jerusalem visited the shrine of the holy and glorious Nicholas²⁰, ὄπον θελήματι θεοῦ a boatsman appeared offering to convey him to Jerusalem, in the same manner that St. Nicholas had thought of. The author seems to attempt to combine the two saints, showing that his hero, the newer Nicholas of Sion, takes the place of the old Nicholas. The merging of the two saints is quite obvious in an old Slavonic text, which mentions that the saint is

16. *Die Schrift ist sehr lose aufgebaut*: Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 209.

17. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §9, §11, §28, §32. Cf. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 217, 221-228. Blum, 7-8. As regards the alternations of persons (first-third) in the narrative of the hagiographical texts, see M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* [WBSSt 22], Vienna 1999, 158ff, 176ff.

18. See further down, 100-102.

19. Researched basically by L. Robert, *Villes et monnaies de Lycie*, *Hellenica* 10 (1955), 188-222. Cf. Foss, *Cities and Villages of Lycia in the Life of Saint Nicholas of Holy Zion*, *GOTR* 36 (1991), 303-339 (= *Idem*, *Cities, Fortresses and Villages ...*, III). G. Fowden, *Religious Developments in Late Roman Lycia: Topographical Preliminaries*, *Μελετήματα* 10, Athens 1990, 343-372. Blum, *passim*.

20. Cf. Urs Peschlow, *Die Architektur der Nikolaos Kirche in Myra*, in: J. Borchhardt (ed.), *Myra. Eine lykische Metropole in antiker und byzantinischer Zeit* [Istanbuler Forschungen 30], Berlin 1975 (henceforth *Myra*), 303, 342-346, 352.

represented by two persons by the same name²¹, thus providing a valuable insight to our study.

II. The ancient cult of the sailors in Lycia

I would suggest that this dual form of St. Nicholas, protector of Myra, has its origin in non-Christian models. In any case, adaptations of ancient pagan devotional practices to Christian worship²² have also been detected in other regions of Asia Minor²³ and something similar is true about Lycia. The properties attributed to St. Nicholas are many. The hagiographical texts refer to the saint's *ἐνπροστάτευτον*²⁴ or of the saint's *πολυειδὲς τῶν ἀρετῶν*²⁵ and describe him as *σωτήρα* and *καθολικὸν προασπιστήν*²⁶: god of light, protector of the forest, of the waters and of sailors, protector of unmarried women, of soldiers in war, of strangers, of the sick, escort of souls. These attributes unfold

21. German translation by Anrich, *Nikolaos* I, 381. The slavonic text erroneously mentions the emperor Leo III (717-741) as Leontios and the patriarch Anastasius as Athanasios; according to this text the patriarch ... Athanasios observed that St. Nicholas was depicted as an archbishop together with Christ and the Virgin Mary, he began shaking and censured the artist for not having considered that he had depicted a peasant with the appearance of an archbishop: *Dies ist eines Bauern Sohn, der Sohn des Theophanes und der Nonna*, an obvious reference to St. Nicholas of Sion and to the names of his parents. See Ševčenko, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 20, note 14.

22. E. Kirsten, Artemis von Ephesos und Eleuthera von Myra, mit Seitenblick auf St. Nikolaus und auf Kommagene, in: S. Sahin – E. Schwertheim – J. Wagner (eds), *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens. Festschrift für Fr. Karl Dörner zum 65. Geburtstag*, II., Leiden 1978, 465. Pagan practices in daily life (feasts, sorcery, astrology, clothing of students of law) survive to the 7th century. The case described in the *Chronography* of Theophanes (*Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, I, Leipzig 1883), 390.26-391.2 and in the *Short History* of the Patriarch Nikephoros (*Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople. Short History*, ed. C. Mango [CFHB 13], Washington, D.C. 1990), 53.1-10 is very characteristic. According to these sources in 716, the inhabitants of Pergamum, –a city with a rich ancient tradition–, as part of their preparation to fight the Arabs, sacrificed a young pregnant woman and boiled the embryo in a pot, in which they dipped their swords. See W. Brandes, *Apokalyptisches in Pergamon*, *Bsl* 48 (1987), 1-11.

23. C. Mango (St. Michael and Attis, *ΔΧΑΕ* 12 [1986], 39-62) supported the link between the ancient Attis cult with that of the archangel Michael in Germia, while W. Brockhoff (*Studien zur Geschichte der Stadt Ephesos*, Jena 1905, 11-35) that of the goddess Artemis of Ephesus with St. John. In general, as regards the Artemis cult in cities of Asia Minor, see Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 508 note 1. Also see Fr. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529 A.D.*, I, Leiden 1993, 64-66; II, 130-133.

24. *Life of St. Nicholas* by Michael, 128: *τί δ' ἂν εἴπομεν περὶ τὸ προνοητικὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνπροστάτευτον ἐν τοῖς θλιβομένοις καὶ ἐνδεῶσι.*

25. *Encomium* on St. Nicholas, 420.

26. *Life of St. Nicholas* by Michael, 129, 137.

one after the other in the various miracles and they build his hagiological portrait. These elements bring to mind the ancient two-natured deity, the Dioscuri, that commonly appear as saviours having impressively common attributes²⁷ with St. Nicholas. Thus, it is not improbable that the merging of the two saints with the same name may echo the cult of the Dioscuri. St. Nicholas may have replaced the local ancient worship of the Dioscuri, who were the main protectors of sailors in antiquity²⁸. The worship of the Dioscuri in the region of Myra is testified in surviving inscriptions²⁹ and in the variations of the *Praxis de stratelates*, in which a certain square by the name of Dioscuri is mentioned, probably designating the centre of the city³⁰.

The connection of St. Nicholas with the abolition of the ancient devotional practices of the inhabitants, mostly sailors, of Myra seems to be confirmed in one of his first miracles: it concerns the eviction of the unclean spirit from the blessed wood (§15-19)³¹, a term that obviously refers to the cypress tree used for ship-building, if one is to judge its significance for the economy of the region. The reference fits well to the widespread worship of the ancient deity Artemis Eleuthera³², who, together with the Dioscuri, were the deities worshipped *par*

27. They suddenly appear in times of need and they protect soldiers in times of war, unmarried women, sailors, the sick, they are connected with the light and that is why in many cases they were worshipped together with Apollo: E. Bethe, *Dioskuren*, *RE*, V.1, 1087-1123, especially 1094-1097. M. Nilsson, *Die Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, I., München 1976³, 380-385. Another attribute recorded in the hagiographical texts related to St. Nicholas of Myra, which shows common elements with the corresponding attribute of the Dioscuri is the protection of unmarried women: *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 118-119; *Encomium* by Methodius, 157; *Vita compilata*, 221; *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 239; *Encomium* by Neophytos, 395. Regarding the cult of the Dioscuri in Byzantium-Constantinople, see G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Paris 1974, 338-344.

28. Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 504-505. Cf. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, I, 166-167, 184.

The saints Cosmas and Damianos, the Anargyroi, have been associated with the Dioscuri: see L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damianos. Texte und Einleitung*, Leipzig-Berlin 1907, 38-83, but this view is not widely accepted.

29. L. Robert, Un dieu anatolien: Kakasbos, *Hellenica* 3 (1946), 68 note 1. Idem, Villes et monnaies de Lycie, *Hellenica* 10 (1955), 198-199, 212.

On the introduction of the Greek pantheon into Lycia, see Jones, *Cities*, 100.

30. *Praxis de stratelates*, 69, 78, 84: *καὶ εἶναι ἐν τῇ πλατείᾳ εἰς τοὺς καλουμένους Διοσκούρους*.

31. Methodius ad Theodorum, 143; *Encomium* by Neophytos, 396. See Ševčenko, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 91-93. Blum, 101-102.

32. The following inscription is typical: *Ἀητῶ Κορυδαλλικῆ καὶ Ἐλευθέρα Μυραῖ*: Robert, Villes et monnaies, 212. See W. Ruge, *Myra*, *RE*, XVI.1, 1085-1086. J. Borchhardt, *Der Tempel der Artemis Eleuthera nach den Münzen von Myra*, in: *Myra*, 252-253.

excellence in Myra and who are depicted together in a 3rd century A.D. coin³³, as well as in a relief depicting Artemis with the Dioscuri on either side in a position of supplication³⁴. The episode in the *Life* truly symbolizes the purging from pagan elements; through St. Nicholas the utter dominance of Christian worship in the region not only of Myra, but of the whole of Lycia is exemplified: οὐ μόνον ἐκ τῆς παροικίας τοῦ ἐμοῦ δένδρου ἐξήγαγέν με, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν μεθοριῶν τῆς Λυκίας³⁵. This replacement of the ancient deity by St. Nicholas is reflected not only in the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, but also in hagiographical texts about St. Nicholas of Myra³⁶. Thus, the reference to the destruction of the ancient temple of Artemis Eleuthera in Myra by St. Nicholas does not seem to be accidental³⁷.

I believe it is clear that we are dealing with an adaptation of ancient devotional habits to the new Christian devotional perception. Of course, this involves a slow process of adaptation and re-modeling of popular beliefs³⁸. They

Another miracle performed by St. Nicholas is the expulsion of the unclean spirit from the drinking-water wells and the discovery of a new well untainted by the unclean spirit (§20-23). Artemis Eleuthera protected except from the cypress timber also the water (Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, I, 492), as did the Dioscuri (Bethe, *Dioskuren*, 1094). In the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §24, water is described as “κεχυμμένος θησαυρός”, an element which is sanctified from pagan practices through St. Nicholas, who since then has undertaken the protection of this “hidden treasure”. The tradition, which commenced in the ninth century, that myrrh welled from the saint’s tomb, could well be connected with the above-mentioned miracle.

33. The currency of the time of Gordian III (238-244) depicts a spirit driven out of the wood. On either side of the tree there are two men with pickaxes, who are identified with the Dioscuri: G.F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Lycia, Pamphylia and Pisidia*, London 1897, 71.11, fig. 15.6. See K. Kalokiris, *Τὰ ἱερά δένδρα καὶ τὸ ἐξ Ἀνατολῆς καταγόμενον δένδρον τῶν Χριστιουγέντων*, *Epistemonike Epeteris Theologikes Sch. Univ. of Thessalonike* 18 (1973), 333.

It is strange that in the *Life* of Nicholas of Sion, §16 it is mentioned that: ... τῆς τῶν ἀρχαίων ἡλθον κόψαι τὸ ξύλον μετὰ δύο ἀξίνων.

34. Robert, *Un dieu anatolien*, 68 note 1. Kirsten, *Artemis von Ephesos und Eleuthera von Myra*, 472-476.

35. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §17. Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 225-226. Blum, 102. Obviously during the early Christian era, miracles function as one of the methods for coming over to the Christian faith; cf. Helen Saradi-Mendelovici, *Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries*, *DOP* 44 (1990), 49.

36. *Encomium* by Neophytos, 396: τόποτε μισρὸν διὰ τοῦ δαίμονος γίνεται ἱερὸν διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ Νικολάου. Also see the *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 127-128.

37. *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 127-128; *Encomium* by Neophytos, 403. Cf. J. Borchhardt, *Der Tempel der Artemis Eleuthera nach den Münzen von Myra*, in: *Myra*, 252-253.

38. J.F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*, Cambridge 1990, 328-329. Cf. J.O. Rosenqvist, *Asia Minor on the Threshold of the Middle Ages*:

are to be found in abundance in the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion and then, in subsequent texts on the merged Saints Nicholas. Perhaps the unknown author of the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion records this change in the popular devotional customs of his region, which happened at about that time³⁹, when the region began to assume particular interest for the Byzantine navy, as we shall see further on, and he attributes them to his hero, St. Nicholas of Sion.

III. St. Sion at Lycia

One element which the anonymous author highlights in the *Life* of Nicholas of Sion is the erection of the monastery of Sion. The episode in the *Life* recounts that with the help of the parishioners of Arnea and Myra the blessed wood, the cypress, was hauled to the monastery of St. Sion⁴⁰. This event may well illustrate the transfer of the devotional customs of the inhabitants to the new religious centre of Lycia, the monastery of St. Sion. It is an impressive coincidence that the tree in Christian worship symbolizes Paradise and Heavenly Jerusalem, Sion⁴¹.

Sion is often used as a synonymous of Jerusalem, but it is a really unusual name for a monastery. At first glance, this name inevitably reflects the continuous contact by sea of Jerusalem with the region of Myra⁴². However, these close links of the two areas do not suffice to explain the emphasis the author lays on the reference to the monastery of St. Sion. In our view other reasons induced the founders of the monastery to give it this name.

The foundation of the monastery possesses a symbolism, which is developed in the first 14 chapters of the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion. The text stresses the factor of the divine intervention, through the Holy Spirit, in the choice of the location⁴³ (§1-2), and also in the choice of name (§1, §4). Moreover,

Hagiographical Glimpses from Lycia and Galatia, in: L. Rydén – J.O. Rosenqvist (eds), *Aspects of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium* [Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions 4], Stockholm 1993, 153-156.

39. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 508 considers that St. Nicholas of Myra was the successor to the Myran deity of Artemis Eleuthera and later in the sixth century St. Nicholas of Sion directed the battle against the vestiges of the cult of the ancient goddess.

40. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §19: ... ἰδοῦσα δὲ πᾶσα ἡ περιχώρος τῆς Ἀρνεατῶν καὶ Μυραίων ἐνορίας ὅτι διὰ τῶν εὐχῶν τοῦ ὁσίου Νικολάου ἐπρίοθη τὸ ξύλον, ἤρχοντο ἐξ εὐχῆς σύρειν αὐτό. σπρθὲν δὲ ἦλθεν ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ καὶ ἐνδόξῳ οὐκῶ τῆς ἀγίας Σιών. Καὶ πάντες ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεόν, τὸν δόσαντα τοιαύτην ἐξουσίαν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Νικολάῳ.

41. Kalokiris, *Τὰ ἱερὰ δένδρα*, 334.

42. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 235-237. Foss, *Lycian coast*, 27.

43. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §1.

the rebuilding is done through the appearance of the archangel Michael, who indicated the place where the monastery should be erected without human intervention, while again with divine counsel, Nicholas of Sion is indicated to “govern” the St. Sion monastery⁴⁴. Further on, it is stated that craftsmen under the saint’s supervision worked on the construction of the monastery (§39)⁴⁵. It is obvious that the text is full of ambiguities, which could be considered to cover an actual event with the mist of myth. The inaccuracies in the text may reflect the author’s intention to link in any possible way the foundation of the monastery with St. Nicholas of Sion, and moreover, to attribute the foundation of the monastery to the divine will. One could therefore assume that the St. Sion monastery was not built in the period, in which the author seeks to place it (approximately in the middle of the sixth century), but later. In order to provide an explanation for this mis-timing, the *Life* resorts to the fabrication of a symbolism.

According to the *Life* of Nicholas of Sion, in the region of Myra, at Acalissos, there was a monastery dedicated to St. John, which in the first introductory chapter of the *Life*⁴⁶ appears to be connected with the St. Sion monastery. The first fourteen chapters of the hagiographical text, full of *hystera-protera*, through prophetic messages and portents, “σφραγίσματα”, describe the establishment of the St. Sion monastery in Lycia. In fact we are given the impression that the text attempts to explain the change of the name of the monastery of St. John of Acalissos into the Holy Sion monastery –(and at this point, it is worth noting that the monastery of the Acalissos is not mentioned after §14 in the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion)⁴⁷. This change could have taken place after the loss of the city of Jerusalem. ... ἐγένετό τις ἀνὴρ θαυμαστός καὶ ὁσῖος παρὰ θεῶν, ὀνόματι Νικόλαος, ... κατὰ ἐμφάνισιν τῶν πάντων κτίστον καὶ δεσπότην Χριστοῦ ἐβουλεύσατο τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ βουλήσει εἰς μνημόσυνον καὶ ἱλαστήριον ἁμαρτιῶν κτίζειν τὸν ἔνδοξον καὶ ἀσάλευτον οἶκον τῆς ἐνδόξου ἁγίας

44. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §7.

45. On the other hand, the author complicates things further presenting as founders, initially the archimandrite Nicholas, uncle of St. Nicholas of Sion, archbishop Nicholas (§4, §6-7), while subsequently he refutes his statements, considering St. Nicholas of Sion to be the founder of the monastery. See Ševčenko, *Life*, 15.

46. See *infra*, the quotation in note 45.

47. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 230 considers the Holy Sion monastery as *Tochtergründung des Klosters von Akalissos*.

Σιών⁴⁸; here one could comment the followings on the vocabulary employed in the excerpt: the monastery was built as a “requiem of sins”, which of course could be a reference to human sins in general, or to the sins which had deprived Sion from its fame, requiring once again divine intervention to be rendered famous and unshaken (*ἀσάλευτον*). It could therefore be stated that the monastery was dedicated to St. Sion (*ἁγία Σιών* in the texts) after the fall of the authentic Sion to the Persians in 614 and its definite loss to the Arabs in 638⁴⁹. Although there is no conclusive evidence, the text provides the ground for such a hypothesis. The St. Sion monastery at Myra in the text is mentioned in the following way: *οὗτος ὁ τόπος ἐστὶν ἀντίτυπος τῆς ἁγίας Σιών Ἱερουσαλήμ* (§10). The excerpt refers to a place, a region⁵⁰, and not to a church. The meaning of the word *ἀντίτυπος* (copy)⁵¹ may refer to the emulation of the architectural plan of the church, but the mythical disguise that is attempted indicates the emulation of St. Sion. In any case, what was the need for a copy since the authentic still existed? Unfortunately, the information available with reference to the erection of the monastery derives exclusively from the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion and it is frequently contradictory, as we have already mentioned⁵². Without giving specific information, scholars speak about a number of building phases. However, the author of the *Life* attempts to explain the divine origin of the monastery attributing its paternity to Nicholas, employing fictitious accounts, in which he interweaves realistic contemporary elements. When St. Nicholas visited Jerusalem for the second time and while he was still at the Holy City, an angel of the Lord appeared, telling him: *Σπούδασον, βιάδιζε εἰς τὴν Λυκίαν, τὴν χώραν σου* (§35)⁵³. The true meaning of the angel’s words, which echo the words

48. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §13: *καὶ ἀναβλέψας εἶδον τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ κτισμένον ἐν πάσῃ ἐμπροσθέν, καὶ φῶς μέγα ἐλαμψεν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ*.

49. Literary and archaeological sources refer to the great destruction of churches, particularly in Jerusalem, in the beginning of the seventh century, while on the other hand the attempt of Heraclius to re-establish the patriarchate of Jerusalem seems to have been unsuccessful; see H. Kennedy, *The Melkite Church from the Islamic Conquest to the Crusades: Continuity and Adaptation in the Byzantine Legacy*, in: *The 17th International Byzantine Congress. Major Papers*, New Rochelle-New York 1987, 327-328.

50. Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 231.

51. Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. *ἀντίτυπος*=copy of an image. Antitype, in the sense of fulfillment of type.

52. Also see above, 94-95.

53. St. Efthymiadis, *The Function of the Holy Man in Asia Minor in the Middle Byzantine Period*, in: St. Lampakis (ed.), *Η Βυζαντινή Μικρά Ασία (6ος-2ος αι.)* [IBR/NHRF, International Symposium 6], Athens 1998, 152 note 6 considers those words as to be a divine order to return to his country. There is a passage from the *Life* of St. Paul the Younger (ed. H. Delehay, Vita S. Pauli

spoken to the Apostle Paul, could mean that, as a centre of Christian worship, Sion was no longer in Jerusalem, probably already conquered by the Arabs, but it had been transferred to Myra in Lycia. The subsequent hagiographical texts, with Nicholas of Myra as main figure, refer to the story of the monastery of St. Sion in only one or two lines. The difference in their wording and style indicate somewhat their differing conceptions⁵⁴, perhaps because the foundation of the monastery of St. Sion was an event of no interest at their time. One could therefore suggest that the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, in its extant form, was written a number of years after the death of its hero, probably around the middle of the seventh century, when Sion “was transported” from its original position to the – as yet – secure coast of Lycia.

As far as the meaning of the construction of St. Sion monastery is concerned, one could make the following observations: the author seems to be working on two levels, one symbolic and one real. St. Sion monastery is described in the imagery of light –*προέλαμπεν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ἐκείνῳ καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἐν νυκτί* (§11)– or is likened to a *λύχνον καιόμενον ... καὶ ὄλον τὸ ὄρος λάμπον ἦν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος* (§11), while St. Nicholas himself is likened as the “real light”, or *λαμπτήρ τῆς οἰκουμένης*⁵⁵, *λύχνος τοῦ ἀνάρχου φωτὸς τῷ κόσμῳ προσποσταλείς*⁵⁶. The frequent references to the symbolism of St. Sion monastery as an ever-burning beacon naturally imply that Sion was the centre of Christian worship, which radiates both because of its significance to Christians, and because of its name, since Sion means light in Hebrew⁵⁷. That is the first symbolic level. However, we can also discern a second level that is realistic: St. Sion monastery indeed radiates and marks its position and the land, acting as a beacon, to the sailors coasting the “rough and arduous” Lycian shores⁵⁸. The

Junioris in monte Latro cum interpretatione latina Iacobi Sirmondi S. I., *AnBoll* 11 [1892], 33), where the same motif is used to describe the immigration, through an “ἀγγελικῆ ὁδηγία”, of three hundred monks from Mount Sinai to Latros in an effort to avoid τῶν Σαρακενῶν ... φόνον.

54. *Vita compilata*, 220; *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 238; *Encomium* of Neophytus, 394, 402. Cf. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 230-233.

55. *Encomium* on Nicholas, 420: ... ἐπὶ τὸν ἀρχιερατικὸν θρόνον ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτὸς ἀνατεθείς, καθάπερ ἐν ἀνγυρῶ τῷ ἀφειγγεῖ τοῦ κόσμου χωρὶς πάντας ... πρὸς τὸ ἀνύπετον φῶς δαδονχῶν διαναγάζεις. *Ibidem*, 426: ... τῇ λαμπρῶν καταστραπτόμενος τῶν φωτιστικῶν ἀντιλήψεων, φανερώτερόν τε καὶ ἐκτυπώτερον ...

56. *Life* of St. Nicholas by Michael, 115: ... ἐκλάμπειν ἡλίον δέκην τοῖς τῶν ἀρετῶν ἀμαρύγμασι. *Ibidem*, 116. See Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 235-237.

57. Cl. F(oss), *ODB* 3, 1905.

58. Anrich, *Nikolaos* II, 236-237 in his exceptional commentary on the corpus of the texts on St. Nicholas considers that the light radiating from St. Sion monastery reminded the seamen plying

monastery could have served the needs of seafarers for visual contact with the land, if we take into consideration the impressive location of Karabel, which has been identified with St. Sion monastery⁵⁹. It is not a mere coincidence that at this spot the treasure with the 24 silver lamps and multiple-lamps (*πολυκάνδη-λα*), which most probably belonged to the same monastery⁶⁰, was found. All those lamps were creating a kind of lighthouse shedding abundant light all over the region up to the coast. It seems that the episode recounted in the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion⁶¹, according to which a Rhodian vessel, with the saint on board, solely through his intercession managed to anchor in the Lycian shores, under difficult weather conditions, using St. Sion monastery as a point of reference. The episode indicates both the necessity of a lighthouse in the harsh Lycian coasts, as well as the close relationship of seafarers with St. Sion monastery.

IV. The spread of St. Nicholas cult

However, the question when and under what conditions did the worship of the saint begin to spread remains to be answered.

In the early Byzantine era and approximately up to the seventh century, St. Phocas was the patron saint of sailors in Byzantium. The basic centre of his worship was located in Sinope of Pontus, since the Byzantines' naval interest was oriented more to this region⁶². Things changed when the Arabs appeared in the Mediterranean in the middle of the seventh century, challenging Byzantium's absolute naval supremacy in the region. It is from that time onwards that the signs of impressive changes in the naval affairs of Byzantium began. The

the Lycian coast that the place of the Holy Spirit was there. One can understand the close relationship of St. Sion monastery with seafarers from the following inscription *εὐχὴ Νικολάου ναυκλήρου μεσάτου*, discovered in the location where St. Sion monastery must have been; see R.M. Harrison, *Churches and Chapels in Central Lycia*, *Anatolian Studies* 13 (1963), 134-135.

59. *The site is a commanding one with fine views north and west ... and south, where the sea horizon can be seen over the forest*: Harrison, *Churches and Chapels*, 132, 150 note 165. Blum, 109.

60. Susan Boyd, *A Bishop's Gift: Openwork Lamps from the Sion Treasure*, in: Fr. Baratte (ed.), *Argenterie romaine et byzantine. Actes de la table ronde* (Paris 1983), Paris 1988, 191-209. Foss, *Lycian coast*, 32.

61. *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion, §36-38.

62. N. Oikonomides, 'Άγιος Φωκάς ὁ Σινωπεύς, *ΑΠ* 17 (1952), 201, 215. See also, Vassiliki Vlyssidou – Eleonora Kountoura-Galake – St. Lampakis – T. Lounghis – A. Savvides, *Η Μικρά Ασία των Θεμάτων: Έρευνες πάνω στην γεωγραφική φησιολογία και προσοπωγραφία των βυζαντινών θεμάτων της Μικράς Ασίας (7ος-11ος αι.)* [IBR/NHRF, Research Series 1], Athens 1998, 153 (with the correction regarding Myra of Lycia and of course not of Cilicia, see *errata*).

interest of the Empire now centered upon the southern coasts of Asia Minor, since the region was particularly exposed to the danger of the Arab raids. Up to that time, the coasts of southern Asia Minor, included Lycia, acted as a station for commercial vessels, as a pirate centre, along with a *kommerkiarioi* centre of great importance to Byzantium for tax collection purposes⁶³. The region had only commercial interest, and for this reason there was no apparent need of fortification, since up to that time there was no serious danger of enemy raids by sea⁶⁴.

In 655 a very important event took place in the waters of Lycia: it was the first known naval battle between the Byzantines and the Arabs, that was fought in Phoenix of Lycia. There, the Byzantine fleet under the emperor Constans II sustained a crushing defeat⁶⁵, with the result that not only the security of the region was shaken, but also the supremacy of Byzantine naval power in the Mediterranean was challenged⁶⁶. Phoenix of Lycia would become the target of another well-known Arab raid in 714/715, when the Arab fleet set sail from Alexandria in order to obtain *κυμαρισσίνη* timber –protected by St. Nicholas as we saw– from the area for the building of ships⁶⁷. It is evident that the southern coasts of Asia Minor were in a precarious position. The ever increasing danger of Arab naval raids was immediate and is reflected not only in the historical narrative sources but also in the hagiographical texts on St. Nicholas⁶⁸. The pressing need to organize the defense of the region from the Arab sea-raids gave rise to the creation of the maritime theme of the Kibyrraeotae, the first known

63. Cl. F(oss), *ODB* 2, 1257-1258.

64. This is how one could explain the absence of Lycia from Justinian's fortification works in Procopius' *De aedificiis*.

65. Theophanes, 345.28-346.18. See Ahrweiler, *Mer*, 18 and note 2. The port of Phoenix is mentioned in the *Life* of St. Nicholas of Sion (§37) with the other ports in the region, Andriake, the seaport of Myra and Tristomo, as suitable for going to St. Sion monastery by sea; see Blum, 109.

66. Apparently the Arab fleet wintered undisturbed in the "well-harboured" Lycia and Cilicia 671/2: Theophanes, 353.14-16. See E. Eickhoff, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik zwischen Islam und Abendland*, Berlin 1966, 7-11.

67. Nikephoros, 50.1-4. See also the editor's comments in p. 206, who considers that this refers to Phoenix of Perhaia of Rhodes and not of Lycia. Theophanes, 385.14. See also C. Mango – R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, AD 284-813*, Oxford 1997, 537.

68. *Encomium* by Methodius, 171ff, 175; *Thaumata Tria* (BHG 1355), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos I*, 189 (written around 850-900: Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 382); *Vita acephala* (BHG 1348b), ed. Anrich, *Nikolaos I*, 273-275 189 (written between 980-1050: Anrich, *Nikolaos II*, 320).

general of which is mentioned in 732⁶⁹. The new maritime Byzantine theme, according to the description of Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the *De Thematribus*⁷⁰, included the southwestern coasts of Asia Minor and the neighbouring islands, had Syllaion or neighboring Attaleia as its headquarters⁷¹ and took its name from the Kibyrrhaeotae soldiers⁷². The new Byzantine fleet was manned mainly with skilled Lycian sailors who had rich naval tradition and with equally experienced seamen, from the other coasts of Asia Minor⁷³. All these seamen had St. Nicholas as patron saint and protector “τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Λυκίων μεριμνητὴν καὶ ὑπέρομαχον”⁷⁴. Just like before, St. Nicholas continued to protect the region and its inhabitants, that now faced new dangers threatened by the Arabs who appeared in their waters since the middle of the seventh century. So it happened, for example in 807, when the Arabs raided Myra and the saint interceded and saved the people, sending “winds, waves, thunder and lightning” to the enemy ships⁷⁵.

Although it has been noted that the reasons for the spread of the cult of St. Nicholas in the eighth century are not fully understood⁷⁶, one could nevertheless, associate the extensive spread of the saint's cult with the devotional practices of the Lycian sailors of the surrounding regions, who basically constituted the fleet of the Kibyrrhaeotae theme. It seems that the sailors of the Byzantine fleet of the Kibyrrhaeotae theme, through the cult of St. Nicholas continued their traditional local devotional practices, thereby displacing the cult

69. Theophanes, 410.7. See N. Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles. Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire*, Paris 1972, 351. Martha Grigoriou-Ioannidou, Τὸ ναυτικὸ θέμα τῶν Κιβυρραιωτῶν. Συμβολὴ στὸ πρόβλημα τῆς ἰδρυσῆς του, *Byzantina* 11 (1982), 201-221. P. Yannopoulos, Η οργάνωση του Αιγαίου κατά τη μεσοβυζαντινὴ περίοδο, *Parnassos* 32 (1990), 200-224.

70. *De Thematribus (Costantino Porfirogenito De Thematribus. Introduzione, testo critico, commento*, ed. A. Pertusi [Studi e Testi 160], Città del Vaticano 1952), 79.42-43.78-79.

71. A. Savvides, Η Αττάλεια ὡς ἐδρα τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ ναυτικοῦ θέματος τῶν Κιβυρραιωτῶν, *Byzantinos Domos* 4 (1990), 144-145. Idem, The Secular Prosopography of the Byzantine Maritime Theme of the Carabisians/ Cibyrraeots, *Bsl* 59 (1998), 24-45.

72. *De Thematribus*, 79.39-40. See *DOSeals*, 2.59. For the origin of their name, see P. Yannopoulos, Cibyrta et Cibyrreotes, *Byz* 61 (1991), 520-529.

73. Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Caraviens*, 30, 75. See also Ahrweiler, *Mer*, 108ff, 399-400. *DOSeals* 2.70.

74. *Encomium* on St. Nicholas, 423.

75. Theophanes, 483.11-15.

76. Ševčenko, *St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, 22.

of St. Phocas –possibly an unusual saint for them–, and having St. Nicholas assuming the role of patron saint and savior of sailors. As the naval interest of the Byzantines shifted from Pontus to the Lycian shores, the patron saint of sailors changed accordingly. Moreover, it is not by chance that after the establishment of the theme of the Kibyrraeotae (c.732) the cult of St. Nicholas started to spread remarkably. As the soldiers in the region of southern Asia Minor, the Kibyrraeotae, gave their name to the Byzantine maritime theme, it would seem that they also “imposed” their already established cult of their local saint to the entire Byzantine navy. And as the need of Byzantium for a powerful fleet increased, so did the spread of the cult of St. Nicholas in Byzantine naval tradition* .

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