

Prolegomena to a Study of the Cyprus Plates

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FOUND IN 1902 at Lambousa on Cyprus was a set of silver plates with the exploits of the youthful David, which has since then been repeatedly published in its entirety.¹ It was suggested on the basis of the hallmarks on their backs that the plates themselves could be dated in the sixth or seventh century A.D. until some of these hallmarks in the form of monograms and imperial busts were identified as those of the emperor Heraclius (610–641). More recently the date could be limited still further to the years 613–629 or 630, i.e., a period which had produced on the coins a special type of that emperor which agrees with that of the hallmarks.²

The importance of the find for the history of Early Byzantine art in general has been recognized from the very beginning. Every handbook on this subject reproduces one or two of the plates, including almost always the great plate with the fight against Goliath (Figure 1), and a few remarks on their style and their place in the development have usually been added. Very little, however, has been written so far about the iconography of the David cycle and its source, although Dalton in his article in the *Burlington Magazine*³ clearly pointed the way for further investigation when he stated: "The real importance of the series lies in its relation to the illuminated Byzantine psalters. . . . For the scenes represented upon the dishes have an obvious relation to those found in the most famous psalters now preserved, for instance, no. 139 in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the well-known psalter of Basil II in the library of St. Mark at Venice, both of which belong to

what is known as the 'aristocratic' group. . . ." Dalton made these penetrating remarks without going into detailed comparisons between the plates and the corresponding miniatures and without having even discussed the great David and Goliath plate, which at that time was known, but not accessible to him.

Yet it is this very plate that establishes the closest connection with a miniature of the Paris Psalter (Figure 2), as has repeatedly been pointed out by Buchthal,⁴ Morey,⁵ myself,⁶ and other scholars who have

1. O. M. Dalton, "A Second Silver Treasure from the District of Kyrenia, Cyprus," *Archaeologia* 57 (1900) pp. 159 ff.; O. M. Dalton, "Byzantine Plate and Jewellery from Cyprus in Mr. Morgan's Collection," *Burlington Magazine* 10 (1906–1907) pp. 355 ff.; A. Sambon, "Trésor d'orfèvrerie et d'argenterie trouvé à Chypre et faisant partie de la Collection de M. J. Pierpont Morgan," *Le Musée* 3 (1906) pp. 121 ff.; C. H. Smith, *Collection of J. Pierpont Morgan. Bronzes: Antique Greek, Roman, etc., Including Some Antique Objects in Gold and Silver* (Paris, 1913) pp. 44 ff., pls. LXIII–LXVI; M. Rosenberg, *Der Goldschmiede Merkzeichen*, IV (Berlin and Leipzig, 1928) pp. 636 ff., nos. 9647–9716; E. Cruikshank Dodd, *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, no. 7 (Washington, 1961); A. and J. Stylianou, *The Treasures of Lambousa* (in Greek) (Nicosia, 1969) pp. 17 ff.

2. Cruikshank Dodd, *Silver Stamps*, p. 10.

3. Dalton, "Byzantine Plate and Jewellery," p. 361–362.

4. H. Buchthal, *The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter* (London, 1938) pp. 21 ff., pls. IV, 4, XXI, 44.

5. C. R. Morey, *Early Christian Art*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1953) p. 97, figs. 64, 94.

6. K. Weitzmann, "The Psalter Vatopedi 761. Its place in the aristocratic Psalter Rescension," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 10 (1947) p. 39, fig. 24. Cf. K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex, A Study of the Origin and Method of Text illustration*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1970) p. 32.



FIGURE 1

Silver plate with David and Goliath. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.396

approached the problem more from the point of view of book illumination than of the silver plates. If, indeed, silver plate and miniature are so closely related to each other that both depend on a common archetype—and no one seems to have contested this—then each silver plate should be investigated from the point of view of a possible parallel in the aristocratic Psalter recension. The Paris Psalter is incomplete, but there exists a considerable number of aristocratic Psalters with additional miniatures that either were lost or never did exist in the Paris copy. Consequently additional Psalter manuscripts must be examined in an attempt to find parallels to some of the events that are not depicted in the Paris manuscript.

The distribution of narrative scenes over a series of individual silver plates is highly unusual and actually without a parallel in the history of Byzantine silverwork, while this kind of storytelling in narrative cyclic form is most typical of book illumination. Thus there can be little doubt, as Dalton realized, that the archetype on which both monuments are dependent was indeed an illustrated manuscript produced prior to the seventh century, the date of the plates.

One of the aims of this study is to demonstrate that the silversmiths did not in each case slavishly copy their miniature models, but that they only adjusted them compositionally to a design suited for a silver plate. Since silver plates are more self-contained than miniatures in a book, especially in the case of a narrative cycle, the silversmith in some instances preferred a more centralized composition. He also had to adjust a square miniature to the round plate, a process that left the empty segment at the bottom, the exergue, to be decorated with motifs that in most cases did not exist in the miniature model. The degree to which the silversmith either depended on the miniature model or followed the tradition of his own workshop varies greatly with each plate. In order to demonstrate the principles involved, I have for this preliminary study⁷ selected two examples that constitute a polarity: the plate with the fight of David and Goliath in three consecutive phases (Figure 1), for its close association with the manuscript tradition, and the plate with David before Saul (Figure 10), for its preservation of estab-

lished formulae current in the workshop of the silversmiths.

The key to the understanding of the close relationship between the David and Goliath plate and the corresponding miniature in the tenth-century Paris Psalter cod. gr. 139 (Figure 2)⁸ is the central group consisting of David, who is about to throw the stone held in the sling and ready to defend himself with his raised arm wrapped in his chlamys, and of Goliath, who is advancing impetuously and attacking with a lance. There is only the slight difference that in the plate Goliath still holds the lance in his raised hand, while in the minia-

8. H. Omont, *Facsimilés des Miniatures des plus anciens Manuscrits Grecs*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1929) pl. rv; Buchthal, *Paris Psalter*, pp. 21 ff. and pl. rv. The attempt of C. R. Morey ("Notes on East Christian Miniatures," *Art Bulletin* 11 [1929] pp. 21 ff.) to date the Paris Psalter at the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century has not found wide acceptance.

FIGURE 2

David and Goliath. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, cod. gr. 139, fol. 4 v.



7. A more comprehensive study on all the plates by the author is in preparation.



FIGURE 3
David and Goliath (detail). Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, cod. gr. 17, fol. 13 v.

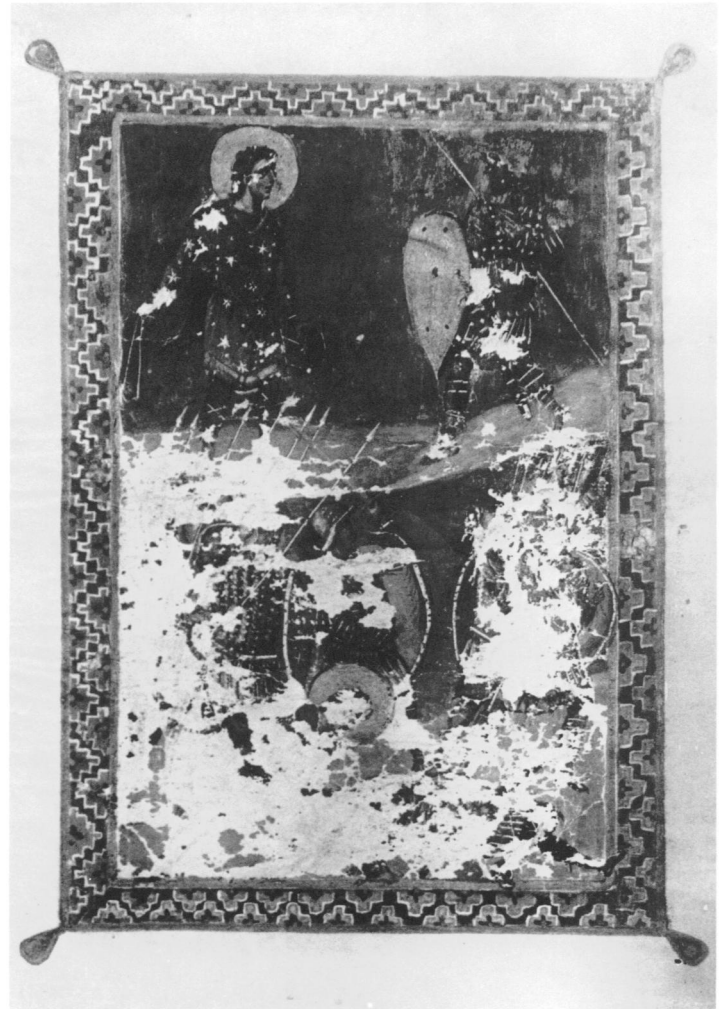
ture he has already released it. The agreement of the poses in general and of some details like the wrapping of David's left arm in the mantle excludes the possibility of two independent inventions and, therefore, makes the assumption of a common archetype necessary.

Yet in two points the two monuments show essential disagreement, which must be explained in relation to the common archetype. In both instances David and Goliath are flanked by a group of soldiers, the Israelites at the left and the Philistines at the right. But whereas on the plate these soldiers are grouped on the same level, they are in the Paris Psalter placed further below; yet they reach into the upper zone so that it becomes somewhat ambiguous whether they belong to the combat proper or the decapitation of Goliath below. Buchthal argued that the original place of these soldier groups is in the decapitation scene because an Early Christian fresco in Bawit has two groups of figures associated with the killing,⁹ while the arrangement in the silver plate he considered to be varied "because the combat scene as the compositional centre had to be accentuated by these accompanying figures."

9. Buchthal, *Paris Psalter*, p. 22 and fig. 31.

However, the soldiers are in each case so differently conceived that it seems in my opinion unlikely that they can derive from each other. In the miniature they stand at ease, apparently watching intently and awaiting the outcome of the battle, while in the plate the Israelites are about to move forward to attack the Philistines who have already turned to flee. Thus we deal here with two successive phases of behavior: the watching soldiers are more appropriate for the combat scene in which the outcome is still in the balance, whereas the attacking and fleeing soldiers are only meaningful after the defeat of Goliath and therefore more fitting for the decapitation scene. If this premise

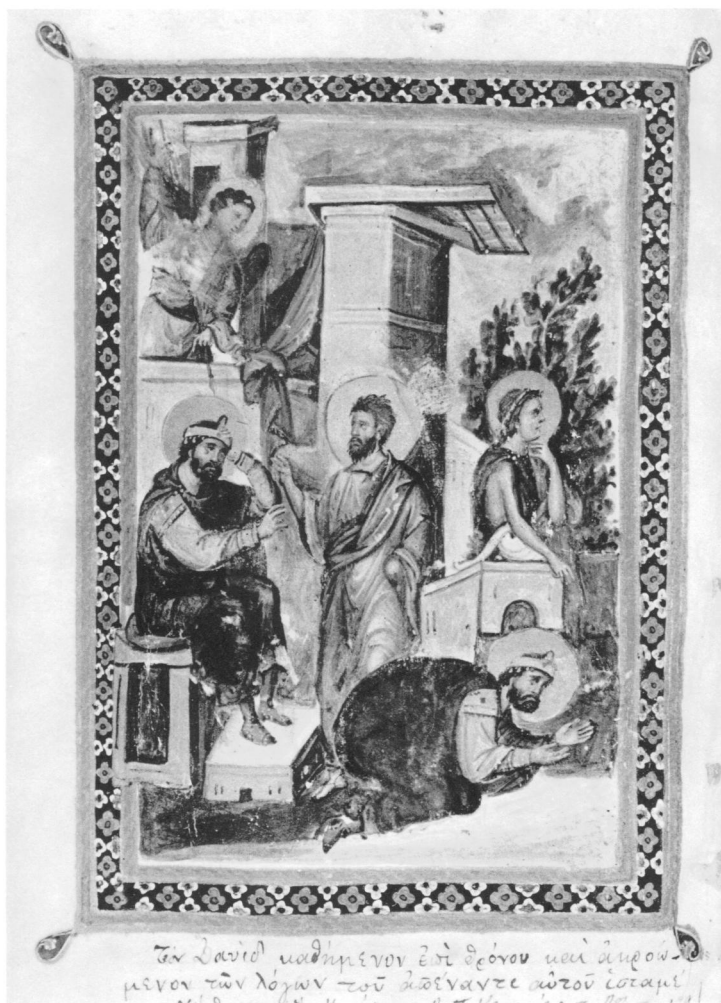
FIGURE 4
David and Goliath. Public Library, Leningrad, cod. gr. 274



is accepted, it must then be assumed that in each case the original position had been changed, apparently for formal reasons: in the Psalter miniature the soldiers have been transferred to the lower level because their original place behind the fighting David and Goliath has been assumed by personifications, and in the plate the attacking and fleeing soldiers have been moved upward because the limited space in the exergue forced the silversmith to confine himself to the decapitation proper.

Thus we assume that the archetype had for each of the two scenes an appropriate group of soldiers. For this assumption evidence can be adduced from miniatures

FIGURE 5
Penitence of David. Patriarchal Library, Jerusalem, cod. Taphou 51, fol. 108 v.



of other manuscripts of the aristocratic Psalter recension. In a miniature of a Psalter manuscript in Venice, Marciana cod. gr. 17, made for Basil II (Figure 3),¹⁰ there is among the six scenes that are combined on one page a representation of the confrontation of David with Goliath, and behind the attacking David, who is depicted in precisely the same pose as in the plate and the Paris Psalter, there is, partly hidden behind a mountain, a group of soldiers in a quiet pose with their lances grounded, i.e., the very group that is appropriate for this context. A miniature of an aristocratic Psalter is a better witness than the fresco of Bawit, which, moreover, has in the upper corner only heads of figures who are not necessarily soldiers.

Furthermore, my contention that the groups of advancing and fleeing soldiers originally belonged to the decapitation is likewise supported by a miniature of the aristocratic Psalter recension. There is in the Public Library of Leningrad, among the single leaves cut out by Porphyrius Uspenskij, one with the signature gr. 274, which has a miniature on either side. On one side is depicted the fight of David and Goliath (Figure 4),¹¹ obviously in the same tradition as the silver plate and the Paris Psalter. Although the miniature is very flaked, one can recognize at the lower left a group of Israelite soldiers who are just about to move and lower their lances, and at the lower right a group of receding Philistines similar to the corresponding soldiers in the silver plate. In addition, the group of Israelites has a leader who is singled out and attacks with a drawn sword. These armies are on a slightly higher level than the decapitation proper but nevertheless are meant to be placed on the same ground. The dense and spatially conceived groups hark back to a tradition that is grounded in the Greco-Roman past, and in this respect they reflect the painted archetype more closely than the silver plate, in which the artist confines himself to fewer

10. K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinische Buchmalerei des 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1935) p. 29 (here further bibliography) and pl. XL, 219–220. Buchthal, *Paris Psalter*, pl. xvii, 26.

11. Unpublished. The miniature is very damaged. The photograph requested after I had seen the leaf in 1966 is even less satisfactory than an older one from the Princeton collection here reproduced. The other side has a dedication miniature with a kneeling donor, almost completely rubbed off, before a standing figure in imperial robes whose head is completely gone, and in the upper left corner there is a bust of the Virgin. This dedicatory miniature may have been painted somewhat later on an originally empty recto.



FIGURE 6
Decapitation of Goliath. Vatopedi, Mt. Athos,
cod. 761, fol. 13 r.

and more clearly defined individual figures, standing side by side.

Benešević in his catalogue of the Leningrad manuscripts stated that he believed this miniature to be cut out of the Psalter cod. 38 in the Sinai monastery,¹² though he was not absolutely certain. His identification, however, is not correct, because I have elsewhere published four cutout miniatures, also in the Public Library of Leningrad, which are the very ones cut out of this Sinai Psalter,¹³ and they are quite different in style. In my opinion the single leaf under consideration originally belonged to a Psalter in the Patriarchal Library in Jerusalem, cod. Taphou 51, in which today only one miniature is preserved, the Penitence of David preceding Psalm 50 (Figure 5).¹⁴ Not only is the rather soft brush technique the same, but in such details as the frame with a similarly rough and simplified ornament and the identical drops at the corners, suggesting turned leaves, the same hand is revealed.¹⁵

The miniature with the Penitence is in every detail so close to the corresponding one in the Paris Psalter,¹⁶

including the personification of prayer who appears behind the prie-dieu-like altar, that it must be considered a direct descendant of an aristocratic Psalter of the tenth century, i.e., a manuscript contemporary with the Paris cod. gr. 139. Stylistically the Leningrad and Jerusalem miniatures must be ascribed to the thirteenth century, i.e., a period from which we possess more faithful copies of tenth-century models than from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁷ However, in the David and Goliath miniature the artist did not follow the version of the Paris Psalter, but one that had a better preserved earlier tradition, as evidenced by the groups of attacking and fleeing soldiers. This conclusion has wide-reaching consequences because it proves that the Paris Psalter does not in every detail reflect the archetype most faithfully, but shows omissions, changes, and, as we shall see, even additions, which were apparently made in the Middle Byzantine period.¹⁸ I have repeatedly tried to provide evidence that the personifications of Dynamis and Alazoneia in the Paris Psalter miniature are additions of the Macedonian Renaissance, and that not only the Cyprus plate, the earliest witness of this recension, but several Psalters of the aristocratic group do not have them.¹⁹ The Leningrad miniature now joins the group of Psalters that reflect the more original state of the archetype.

12. V. Benešević, *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Graecorum qui in monasterio Sanctae Catharinae in Monte Sina asservantur*, I (St. Petersburg, 1911) p. 611.

13. K. Weitzmann, "Eine Pariser-Psalter-Kopie des 13. Jahrhunderts auf dem Sinai," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 6 (1957) pp. 125 ff.

14. A. Baumstark, "Ein rudimentäres Exemplar der griechischen Psalterillustration durch Ganzseitenbilder," *Oriens Christianus* n.s. 2 (1912) pp. 107 ff. and pl. III; Weitzmann, "Pariser-Psalter-Kopie," p. 136 and fig. 7.

15. The Leningrad leaf measures 18.1 × 12.6 cm., whereas the Jerusalem manuscript is slightly larger and measures 19.5 × 14 cm. The difference is easily explained by the trimming of the margins.

16. Omont, *Facsimilés des Miniatures*, pl. VIII; Buchthal, *Paris Psalter*, pl. VIII.

17. Weitzmann, "Pariser-Psalter-Kopie," p. 137.

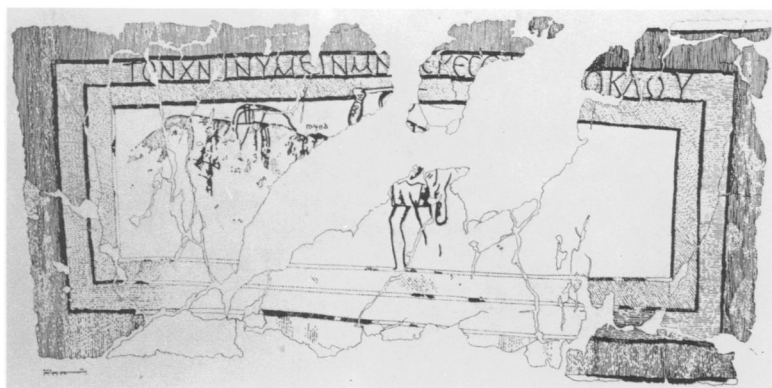
18. Cf. the author's remarks in: "The Psalter Vatopedi 761," pp. 48 ff.

19. K. Weitzmann, "Der Pariser Psalter ms. grec. 139 und die mittelbyzantinische Renaissance," *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 1 (1929) pp. 180 ff.; K. Weitzmann, "Geistige Grundlagen und Wesen der Makedonischen Renaissance," *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, fasc. 107 (Cologne, 1963) pp. 12 ff.

The attacking and fleeing soldiers and the absence of the personifications are not the only features that make the Leningrad miniature a witness of primary importance for the reconstruction of the Psalter archetype. The decapitation of Goliath is rendered in the silver plate in a rather unusual and dramatic manner: Goliath has fallen on his back, and at that moment David approaches his victim from behind, severing the head. This action is quite different from that in the miniature of the Paris Psalter, where Goliath has sunk onto his knees and confronts David. Once more the Leningrad miniature agrees with the plate. Though the lower part of the miniature is very badly flaked, the position of Goliath lying on his back is still discernible as well as that of David bending over to sever the head. The only difference is the position of the legs of Goliath, which in the plate are raised from the ground in order to fit the *exergue* and in the miniature are turned down to suggest that a moment earlier the giant was still standing up. In this point the miniature suggests the more original rendering.

Among the aristocratic Psalters the Leningrad miniature does not stand alone in this very specific rendering of the killing of Goliath, but has a parallel in the tiny, pocket-sized Psalter in the Athos monastery Vatopedi, cod. 761 (Figure 6). In a previous discussion of this miniature²⁰ I had left undecided which of the two schemes of the decapitation is closer to the archetype, but now with the strong support of the Leningrad miniature,

FIGURE 7
Decapitation of Goliath. Fresco of the Christian Building of Dura. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven



which had proved to be so reliable in the soldier groups, one is inclined to give preference to the version represented here and on the silver plate. It can even be shown that this version is considerably older than the silver plates. In what remains of the very damaged fresco of the Christian Building in Dura (Figure 7),²¹ dating to the third century A.D., Goliath is lying on his back and David comes from behind with the sword raised in his hand in order to sever the giant's head. Although this seems to have been the traditional iconography, it was at some time changed by substituting a different type of Goliath, i.e., the kneeling one which more closely resembles that of a conventional decapitation common in illustrations of the killing of a Christian martyr. It seems by no means improbable that some such model, perhaps a miniature from an illustrated Life of a Saint, caused the change.

At the top of the silver plate there is a third scene, which in the sequence of events precedes the other two: the mutual challenge (1 Kings 17:43-47). Goliath raises his hand in a gesture of speech, hurling invectives against David, and the latter, with a corresponding gesture, answers him with an equally boastful tirade. Goliath, fully armed, steps forward, and the lowering of his lance suggests that his attack is imminent, while David, clad in tunic and mantle, stands at ease and leans on a staff, which according to the text (verse 40) should be a shepherd's staff (= βακτηρία), but in reality is a scepter. In an anticipatory manner the silversmith bestowed one of the royal insignia upon David. Moreover, in conformity with his desire to give to David an elated appearance he represented him even slightly larger than the giant Goliath. A blessing hand of God reaching out of the star-studded sky is directed at David as a sign of assurance that his prayer for victory has found acceptance. Between the two opponents a river god reclines leisurely, leaning on a water urn and holding a reed. He has, I believe, correctly been identified as a personification of the valley of Elah (verse 2), just as the two flanking walled cities can be understood as the cities of Shochoh and Azekah (verse 1).

20. Weitzmann, "The Psalter Vatopedi 761," pp. 24, 41, and fig. 7.

21. P. V. C. Baur, *The excavations of Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of Fifth Season* (New Haven, 1934) p. 275 and pl. XLVIII, 2; C. H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building, The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report, VIII, part 2* (New Haven, 1967) pp. 69 ff. and pl. XL, 2.

Our main problem is whether this scene was ever represented in an aristocratic Psalter. As a scene in itself it does not exist in any extant copy, but there are, nevertheless, indications that it had existed in the archetype. The miniature of the Psalter in Venice (Figure 3) shows an obvious incongruity: whereas David in the receding pose, about to throw the stone with the sling, agrees with the fighting David in the silver plate (Figure 1) and the Paris Psalter miniature (Figure 2), Goliath, standing at ease and leaning on his spear and shield, must be considered a replacement of the one who is hurling his lance as in the two monuments just mentioned. Although he does not raise his hand in a gesture of speech, he is, nevertheless, to be interpreted as Goliath who is challenging David before he moves into battle. This, then, would suggest that the model *did* have the scene of the challenge and that the copyist, eager to condense a rich cycle, conflated two successive scenes in such a way that he took Goliath from a scene of the challenge and combined him with David of the fight proper. This is not the only example of such a conflation, as it occurs a second time in the Leningrad miniature (Figure 4), and here the challenging Goliath is even closer to the one in the silver plate: he is stepping forward and is just about to lower his lance, holding it at the same angle. The only change is once more in the omission of the gesture of speech and the addition of the shield, a change that seems sensible in view of the confrontation with the attacking rather than the speaking David.

Assuming, thus, a miniature of the challenge for the archetype, it must, however, remain an open question whether it included the personification of Elah. On the one hand the archetype did apparently possess a few personifications of localities, i.e., that type of personification which is self-centered and passive, whereas the majority of the personifications one finds in the Paris Psalter, actively interfering with the biblical narrative, I believe to be additions of the Macedonian Renaissance.²² Leisuredly reclining personifications are part of the repertory of silversmiths to fill an exergue, for which the Terra in the Theodosius missorium (Figure 12) is a striking example. It will be noticed that the personification of the David and Goliath plate is very competently designed in a three-quarter view, which is

22. Weitzmann, "Pariser-Psalter-Kopie," pp. 190 ff.



FIGURE 8
David and Goliath. Bodleian Library, Oxford,
cod. Barocci 15, fol. 343 r.

rather unique in the set of David plates, where the artist adheres consistently to frontal and side views. This then could suggest that the artist in this case had followed an older model within the workshop tradition. A similar uncertainty prevails with regard to the two walled cities, which are explained but not necessarily required by the biblical text.

With regard to the formal aspect of the silver plate it will be noticed that the three phases of the narration of the Goliath episode are separated from each other by horizontal groundlines, so that each phase becomes a self-contained unit. In contrast, there is no dividing line in the miniature of the Paris Psalter since the soldiers reach into the upper zone, thus creating a unified receding plane and thereby a spatial effect that is

totally lacking in the silver plate. The question must be raised as to which of the two compositional principles is to be associated with the archetype. Through an examination of the great mass of aristocratic Psalters from this point of view, it will become obvious that the compositional layout of the Paris miniature is rather the exception and that the majority of copies have a clear separation of the battle and the decapitation scene. In one case, the Psalter Oxford, Bodleian Library, cod. Barocci 15, from about A.D. 1105 (Figure 8),²³ a mere line separates the two scenes; in another copy, a Psalter of the Christian Archaeological Seminary in Berlin of about the same date,²⁴ the division is more ostentatiously marked by an ornamental border; and in a third copy, a Psalter formerly in the Athos monastery of Pantocratoros, cod. 49, and now in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington,²⁵ from around 1084, the green ground of the upper scene is sufficiently set apart from the gold ground of the lower scene. But even where a clear line does not separate the scenes, as, for example, in a miniature of the eleventh-twelfth-century Psalter in the Athos monastery Vatopedi, cod. 760 (Figure 9),²⁶ the underlying compositional arrangement is that of clearly distinguished upper and lower zones. For Goliath a groundline is suggested by the leveling of a mountain, while David is suspended and seems to float on the gold ground. One has clearly the impression of an omitted frame line rather than of a setting in receding space.

But plurality alone cannot decide the issue of the original layout in favor of separated strips. This



FIGURE 9
David and Goliath. Vatopedi, Mt. Athos, cod. 760, fol. 264 r.

23. H. O. Coxe, *Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae*, I, *Codices Graeci* (Oxford, 1853) p. 23; E. T. DeWald, "A fragment of a tenth-century Byzantine Psalter in the Vatican Library," *Mediaeval Studies in memory of A. Kingsley Porter* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1939) p. 148 and fig. 13.

24. G. Stuhlfauth, "A Greek Psalter with Byzantine Miniatures," *Art Bulletin* 15 (1933) p. 325 and fig. 13; DeWald, "Byzantine Psalter," p. 148 and fig. 12; Weitzmann, "Geistige Grundlagen," p. 13 and fig. 5.

25. O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1911) fig. 277; S. Der Nersessian, "A Psalter and New Testament Manuscript at Dumbarton Oaks," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19 (1965) pp. 157, 168, fig. 8.

26. Unpublished. For other miniatures of this Psalter see N. P. Kondakov, *Monuments of Christian Art on Athos* (in Russian) (St. Petersburg, 1902) p. 286 and fig. 99; G. Millet and S. Der Nersessian, "Le Psautier Arménien illustré," *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes* 9 (1929) p. 165 and pls. XIII-XIV; Buchthal, *Paris Psalter*, pl. xxvi, 80-81; Weitzmann, *Roll and Codex*, pp. 131, 148, 186, 190, figs. 113, 139.

problem is linked with that of the origin of the David cycle at large. It is important to realize that with the one exception of the title miniature, depicting David as the author of the Psalms—in the Paris Psalter²⁷ he stands between the two personifications of Sophia and Prophetia and in others he stands alone²⁸—no scene of the aristocratic recension was invented for the Psalter. The source for the narrative cycle of the Life of David is unquestionably an illustrated Books of Kings²⁹ like

27. Omont, *Facsimilés des Miniatures*, pl. vii; Buchthal, *Paris Psalter*, pl. vii.

28. E.g., Oxford, Bodleian Library, cod. Auct. D. IV. 1, fol. 15v. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinische Buchmalerei*, p. 63 and pl. LXVIII, 405.

29. Weitzmann, "The Psalter Vatopedi 761," pp. 32 ff.

that of the Vaticanus gr. 333 from the eleventh century.³⁰ In cases where the same scenes occur, as fortunately happens with the two depicting the fight against and the killing of Goliath, Psalter and Books of Kings agree iconographically so thoroughly that beyond a doubt we deal with the same recension.³¹ It will be noticed in the Vatican codex that not only are the two scenes under consideration separate entities, but that such separation is the basic principle of the entire extensive cycle. In this point the Books of Kings agrees with all illustrated books of the Septuagint that possess large narrative cycles, such as the Octateuchs, to name only the most striking example.³² It is only logical and self-evident that for the illustration of vast cycles the strip composition should be used to allow for a horizontal extension of complex narrative scenes, and at the same time it is the most economical system of intercalating a great mass of pictures into text columns. In manuscripts with full-page miniatures the number of iconographical entities decreases to the extent that individual pictures become more sumptuous; moreover, the change from the smaller to the larger picture format coincides with the change from the historical to the liturgical book. Consequently the full-page miniatures in aristocratic Psalters evolved out of strip-like smaller pictures in the Books of Kings, which therefore represent the older principle. The fact that so many of the aristocratic Psalters continued to have the strip picture definitely indicates that the transformation took place only gradually within the Psalter recension and that the Paris Psalter represents not the original but an advanced stage of this development. Thus it follows that the silver plate with its striplike compositions reflects the older principle, and this raises another problem: whether one can be certain that the silversmiths had, indeed, an aristocratic Psalter available in their workshop, or a Books of Kings. An answer to this question will have to be postponed until all the silver plates have been discussed.

The second plate to be analyzed (Figure 10) depicts David standing before Saul, who sits in the center, enthroned in frontal position and dressed like a Byzantine emperor. David, in a short tunic and mantle, approaching from the left, is counterbalanced by a bearded man, dressed in a long tunic with long sleeves and a mantle. Each is flanked by a bodyguard of Saul,

leaning on a shield as he holds a spear. According to the Bible text David was twice led before Saul. The first meeting (1 Kings 16:21) occurred when David was called to play the harp before him: "And David came to Saul, and stood before him; and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour bearer"; and the second (1 Kings 17:31-33) when he argued before Saul that he be sent into battle against Goliath: "... and he [Saul] sent for him. And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him. . . . And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him. . . ." Whereas most scholars believe it is the first passage that is depicted in the plate,³³ I believe that the artist intended to illustrate the second passage, because a noticeable emphasis was placed in the case of all three central figures on the raised hands that are characteristic of gestures of speech. The passages quoted above indicate that words were not exchanged at the first meeting, but at the second a lengthy conversation went on between David and Saul until it was agreed to let David go into battle against Goliath.

Unfortunately the episode under consideration exists neither in the Vatican Books of Kings cod. 333, nor in any aristocratic Psalter. Yet this does not mean that it never did exist before in the archetypes of either, because it can be demonstrated that the Vatican codex has an abridged picture cycle,³⁴ and as far as the Psalters are concerned, it is quite evident that the extant copies do not have the full cycle of the archetype preserved. Moreover, there are indications that the scene under consideration actually did exist in richly illustrated Books of Kings. There is a twelve-sided ivory box in the Cathedral treasure of Sens belonging to the eleventh or twelfth century that has the early life of

30. J. Lassus, "Les Miniatures Byzantines du Livre des Rois," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 45 (1928) pp. 38 ff. and figs. 6, 7.

31. Weitzmann, "Geistige Grundlagen," p. 13 and figs. 4, 5.

32. E.g., the Octateuch in Istanbul, Seraglio, cod. 8 (T. Ouspensky, *L'octateuque de la Bibliothèque du Sérail à Constantinople* [Sofia, 1907]), and the Octateuch formerly in Smyrna and now destroyed (D. C. Hesseling, *Miniatures de l'octateuque grec de Smyrne, Codices Graeci e Latini photographice depicti*, suppl. VI [Leiden, 1909]).

33. Smith, *Collection of J. Pierpont Morgan*, p. 45; Cruikshank Dodd, *Silver Stamps*, p. 182; Rosenberg, *Goldschmiede Merkzeichen*, p. 647; Stylianou, *Treasures of Lambousa*, p. 25.

34. K. Weitzmann, "Die Illustration der Septuaginta," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 3-4 (1952-1953) pp. 105 ff.



FIGURE 10

Silver plate with David before Saul. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.397



FIGURE 11
David before Saul. Detail from an ivory box.
Cathedral treasure, Sens

David depicted in great detail, and among its scenes of purely narrative character is also the episode of David being brought before Saul (Figure 11).³⁵ There can be little doubt that such an elaborate cycle harks back to a miniature model, which in this case was more likely a Books of Kings than a Psalter because it ends with illustrations of the adventure in the cave of Engedi, told in chapter 24, which one has no reason to assume ever existed in an aristocratic Psalter. Here David is led to Saul by an old man whose identity as the Prophet Samuel is assured by the inscription Ο CAMΟΥΗΛ ΦΕΡΟΝ [Δαβι]Δ ΠΡ[ὸς] CAΟΥΑ ΒΑC[ιλέα]. In contrast to the silver plate, we deal here, I believe, with the first and not the second appearance of David before Saul, because there is no indication of any dispute going on between the two, and furthermore, there is a little kid in front of Samuel that is explicitly mentioned in verse 20 of chapter 16 as one of the gifts that Jesse had given to David to be presented to Saul. Originally both visits may have existed in a very richly illustrated narrative cycle and may have looked much alike, since we know that illustrators of early biblical copies did not shrink from repetition.³⁶

In the Bible, Samuel is not mentioned in either one of the two episodes. Yet to the carver, as well as to the illustrator of his model, Samuel played an important

role in the whole episode, since he is depicted also in the preceding scene, where he replaces Saul's messenger or Jesse, ordering David the shepherd boy to meet Saul.³⁷ In analogy to these ivories it seems reasonable to assume that the supernumerary figure in the silver plate, the dignified bearded man in long robes, is also none other than Samuel, as Smith already proposed;³⁸ most scholars left him unnamed while Stylianou suggested one of Saul's sons.³⁹ The addition of the prophet, contrary to the text, is unlikely to have been made twice independently and suggests that there ultimately exists a common source for both monuments even though the compositional layouts are totally different. Contrary to the silver plate, the arrangement of figures in the ivory adheres to the principle, normal for narrative illustrations, of having the action move in one direction, which usually is from left to right. Saul sits at the right under a baldachin, being approached by Samuel, who is followed by David; both have just entered, as it were, the palace chamber from the left. By comparison, the composition of the silver plate is static, laid out in a carefully balanced symmetry that stresses its ceremonial character. Clearly the differences cannot be explained by an evolutionary process, but must be understood as a substitution of a layout that the silversmith adapted from a different kind of model, which can be determined.

Dalton,⁴⁰ without going into details, had already recognized the similarity with the missorium of Theodosius I in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid (Figure 12), which was made in A.D. 388, either in Salonika, as Delbrueck believes,⁴¹ or, as I believe to be more likely, in Constantinople. The similarity between the two silver plates lies not only in the general

35. A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jh.*, I (Berlin, 1930) pp. 64 ff. and pl. LXXII, 124 ff.

36. In the Cotton Genesis, for example, the genealogical chapter 5 was illustrated by a whole series of monotonous birth scenes. Weitzmann, "Illustration der Septuaginta," p. 101.

37. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, pl. LXXII, 124e.

38. Smith, *Collection of J. Pierpont Morgan*, p. 45.

39. Stylianou, *Treasures of Lambousa*, p. 27.

40. O. M. Dalton, "A Second Silver Treasure from Cyprus," *Archaeologia* 60 (1907) p. 6 and fig. 2.

41. R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1929) pp. 235 ff., pl. 62.



FIGURE 12
Missorium of Theodosius I. Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid

arrangement of the figures but extends to a great number of details. Saul sits on the cushioned throne, clad in an embroidered tunic and a chlamys with an ornate tablion, which according to the fashion of the day is attached to its upper part rather than further down over the knees as in the chlamys of Theodosius. The diadem with the double row of pearls is reduced to a single row of pearls, which are indicated merely by dots. Like Theodosius, Saul wears a nimbus, but this attribute need not be derived from the silver plate, because in the Vatican Books of Kings Saul has a nimbus throughout, as a sign of dignity rather than of sanctity, as may be seen in the miniature (Figure 13) in which David discards the coat of mail before going into battle against Goliath (1 Kings 17:37-39). David in the Cyprus plate has assumed the place of the official who in the Madrid plate receives the codicilli, whereas the figure of Samuel, having no equivalent in the missorium, has most likely been taken over, as mentioned above, from

FIGURE 13
David discarding Saul's coat of mail. Biblioteca Vaticana, cod. gr. 333, fol. 23 r.



the miniature model and, for reasons of symmetry, made to flank Saul from the other side. In thorough agreement is the placing of the bodyguards at the outer flanks, though they are reduced to two in the David plate. There are modifications in the armor and differences in the way the shields are held, but what is remarkable is the similarity of the youthful heads with curled, bobbed hair. This hair fashion characterizes them as the Germanic bodyguard of the Byzantine emperor.

Most striking is the similarity of the architectural setting, which in the Madrid plate suggests the imperial palace and most likely the tribunal in which the awarding of the codicilli took place. In the David plate this tetrastyle structure has lost its pediment, and the four columns, instead of being placed upon a plinth course, rest on a groundstrip, the one on which the biblical figures had been moving in the miniature. The central intercolumnar space has been broadened, the arch has taken the form of a horseshoe, and the architrave is filled in a decorative manner with a garland. But in spite of these losses of structural conciseness compared with the Theodosius plate, there are nevertheless a few details that point to a very close dependence not necessarily on the Madrid plate directly, but more likely on a silver plate similar to it. Dalton noted that "the lateral architraves are made to project beyond the outside columns in a manner which no

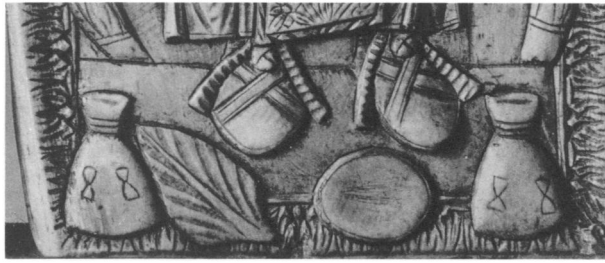


FIGURE 14
Detail of the ivory diptych of Boethius. Museo Civico, Brescia

artist of a good period would have tolerated.”⁴² But precisely these projections, though not as strongly marked, occur also in the Madrid plate, as Delbrueck had observed.⁴³ Furthermore, it will be noticed that the four columns, two of which have the vertical fluting replaced by a spiral one, bear capitals that are constructed according to an identical pattern: a low acanthus at the bottom and double helices above.

These comparisons seem to indicate that the artist of the David plate had used as a model a silver plate like the Madrid missorium, which is the single remainder of what must once have been widely distributed imperial gifts. This, however, does not mean that all the imperial aspects of the David scene were due to the impact of a silver plate. Also in the miniature model Saul was depicted as a crowned emperor, accompanied by bodyguards and seated in front of the palace. But, as the miniature in the Vatican Books of Kings indicates (Figure 13), he was in all probability seated at the right, the bodyguards stood in one solid group behind him, and the architecture in the right half of the composition enclosed only Saul and the soldiers. Therefore, it seems more than likely that all the ingredients of the composition existed in the miniature, but that the silversmith rearranged them according to the tradition of the silver plates like the one in Madrid.

Moreover, there is a section of the silver plate where the artist had to rely on the workshop tradition, namely the exergue, which is here not big enough to be filled with a scene as in the David and Goliath plate. He thus resorted to the rendering of a few scattered objects.

42. Dalton, “Byzantine Plate and Jewellery,” p. 356.

43. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen*, p. 238.

Smith explained the two bags as wineskins and thought that the basket was probably filled with corn, alluding to the gifts of the “bread and a bottle of wine” that Jesse had sent with the kid (see Figure 11) to be delivered by David as gifts to Saul (1 Kings 17:20). It may very well be that the silversmith had in mind this biblical association when he filled the exergue with these objects, but their origin is not to be sought in the miniature model. Such bags are a common feature in the consular diptychs, where they are placed under the feet of the consuls, i.e., in the spot that corresponds to the exergue of a silver plate. In the diptych of the consul Boethius in Brescia (Figure 14)⁴⁴ two such bags are lying on the ground, arranged symmetrically as on the David plate, together with other objects distributed to the victors such as palm leaves, a crown, and a plate. The bags contain the money to be distributed in the ceremony called the *sparsio*.⁴⁵ More often two slave boys are represented pouring the coins from the bags they carry over their shoulders, sometimes spilling them on the ground as in the diptych of Clementius in Liverpool or the diptych of Orestes in London;⁴⁶ or collecting them in barrel-like containers as in the diptych of Justinus in Berlin (Figure 15).⁴⁷ Thus I believe that the

44. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen*, pp. 103 ff. and pl. 7.

45. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen*, pp. 68 ff.

46. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen*, p. 117 and pl. 16, p. 148 and pl. 32.

47. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen*, p. 151 and pl. 34.

FIGURE 15
Detail of the ivory diptych of Justinus. Staatliche Museen, Berlin



vessel between the two bags in the David plate, although its shape is somewhat different, is meant to hold the coins of the *sparsio*—an explanation supported by the content of the vessel, which indeed resembles a mass of coins more than anything else.

The aim of this study has been to gain insight into the working process of a seventh-century Byzantine silversmith. Apparently he was faced with the unusual commission to represent the story of David's early exploits on a series of silver plates. There is no way of knowing whether the nine plates form a complete set or whether there were others now lost. The first step, which would have been taken by artists in other media as well, i.e., by artists working in other metals, marble, or ivory, was to get hold of a model that had an extensive narrative cycle of the desired story, and the obvious place to look for it was a library with illustrated manuscripts. At the present time it must remain an open question whether it was a Books of Kings or a Psalter of the aristocratic group. In either case it must have been a manuscript whose miniatures were clearly separated entities. This principle of illustration could best be adapted in the large plate (Figure 1) since here the exergue and the corresponding segment at the top permitted the artist also to fill these two spaces with scenes, making some adjustments that do not affect the narrative character very much, except that the size of the figures had to be reduced for obvious reasons. The soldier groups of the bottom scenes were moved up to the central scene, which originally had its own soldier groups of a different type. On the other hand, there is the possibility that in the upper strip the personification of the valley of Elah was an addition of the silversmith, borrowed from the exergue of another plate. The close dependence of this plate on miniatures not only explains every detail of its iconography but casts, vice versa, light on the pre-iconoclastic manuscript model,

since the earliest Psalter does not date before the tenth century and the earliest Books of Kings not before the eleventh century.

In the second plate (Figure 10) the silversmith had likewise consulted a miniature, but he was only interested in its content and not in its composition or the outlines of its figures. The atelier in which he worked must have produced plates similar to the Madrid misorium, and he saw a chance to make use of its compositional scheme and its figure types, thereby increasing the stateliness and the imperial connotation of the David scene.

Thus drawing on two sources of fundamentally different character, the artist of the David plates could exercise a considerable amount of artistic freedom by deciding in each individual case how much he wanted to incorporate from one or the other source. The creativeness of the medieval artist is by and large not to be measured by the invention of new subject matters or new compositional principles—which does take place though extremely seldom—but by the manner in which established iconography and established compositional principles are adapted, transformed, or recast. In the present case I have tried to demonstrate that medieval artists are not slavish copyists but operate within a wide framework of possible changes of their models. If they are gifted like the silversmith of the David plates, the result will not be pasticcios, but coherent reinterpretations of a given theme. In most cases the process of reinterpretation can no longer be comprehended because the immediate models are lost. They are also lost in the present cases, but in a rare instance like ours they can, with the help of later miniature copies and an earlier silver plate, be reconstructed to such an extent that the process of transformation can be followed, if not in all details, at least in its essential features, and the personal contribution of the silversmith can be assessed.