

# THE CHRISTIAN ICON OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ART HISTORIAN

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The subject of this work is the study of a group of portable icons from the nineteenth century from the point of view of a Historian of Modern Greek Art. The paper argues that historians of art who do not approach the particular aesthetic properties of the icon as a means of giving an existential form to divinity or sanctity refuse to open a dialogue with theologians. And even though the international discourse around the history of art insists on expressing the 'complaint' that the reading of religious sentiment is now satisfied by the prolific production of objects of veneration without any special artistic merit,<sup>1</sup> perhaps we should ask ourselves whether the *artistic deficiency* in question is because we are overlooking the fact that the relationship between the believer/viewer and the icon is not limited to passive observation. On the contrary, it is something that derives from participation in the experience of worship as a whole. As a result, the icon will not allow us to see it in its fullness if we do not respect its integrity.

## *Introduction*

The subject of this work is the study of a group of portable icons from the nineteenth century from the point of view of a historian of modern Greek art. With this in mind, it might be pertinent to present, very briefly, a number of elements relevant to the content and the periodization of the discipline of the history of art in general and, more particularly, the history of modern Greek art.

If we accept the starting point of this academic field as being the time of the proclamation of Christianity as the official religion by

<sup>1</sup> Martin Warnke in Hans Belting – Wolfgang Kemp et al. *Kunstgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, 45.

Constantine the Great, then it would include art from the Middle Ages until today<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the history of modern Greek art represents a very small contribution to the broad academic field. In particular, both as an academic field and as artistic creation, it constitutes a *sui generis* chapter in Greek culture. The successive conquests of lands of the Byzantine Empire by the Turks, as well as the subjugation of the island domains to Western overlords, contributed to the formation of a distinct and fragmented historical, social, and cultural situation within the Greek realm, which, in turn, shaped an artistic reality that differed according to region.<sup>3</sup> This is why definition of the limits and content of the branch of modern Greek art history by Greek historians has met with a variety of approaches. By and large, the older Greek scholars took as their basic criterion for its genesis the introduction of morphological elements from Western art (the use of oil painting, rendition of perspective). Thereafter, they looked at the widening of subject matter, linking it to contemporary political, spiritual, and social developments, such as the formation of an urban class,<sup>4</sup> the Modern Greek Enlightenment and, in the end, the creation of the Modern Greek State. The *terminus a quo* of this field of knowledge was thus set in the first half of the sixteenth century, an age when Cretan iconography was influenced in a variety of ways by the art of the West. The *terminus ad quem* was placed in the third decade of the nineteenth century with the foundation of the School of Fine Arts (1836) and the near rejection of the Byzantine style.<sup>5</sup> This *terminus a quo* was linked to the 'process of decay

<sup>2</sup> So that the concept of art in reality flows from the heart of the Christian icon. See Hans Belting, 'Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions,' *Material Religion The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, (2012) vol. 12, 236. For the temporal boundaries of the History of Art see more in Heinrich Dilly and Martin Warnke in *Kunstgeschichte, Eine Einführung* ed. Hans Belting, Wolfgang Kemp et al. Berlin 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Iliana Zarra, 'The synthesis of a new iconography under the stimulus of emerging Greek liberation,' *Series Byzantinna X* (2012), 67–68.

<sup>4</sup> Angelos Prokopiou, *Νεοελληνική τέχνη. Βιβλίο πρώτο: Εφτανησιώτικος νατουραλισμός*, Αθήνα 1936, 57–61. Zarra, 'The synthesis of a new iconography under the stimulus of emerging Greek liberation,' 68.

<sup>5</sup> Stelios Lydakis, *Η ιστορία της νεοελληνικής ζωγραφικής (16<sup>ος</sup>-20<sup>ός</sup> αι.)*, Οι Έλληνες Ζωγράφοι, vol. 3, Athens 1976, 14. Manolis Hatzidakis, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1450-1830)*, vol. 1, *Αβέρκιος-Ιωσήφ* (Modern Greek Research Centre/ National Research Institute, Athens 1987), 99. See also Marinos Kalligas, «Ζωγραφική-Γλυπτική-Χαρακτική», in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol. XIII (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1977), 534. Tonis Spiteris, *3 αιώνες νεοελληνικής τέχνης, 1600–1967*, vol. 3 (Papyros Publications, Athens 1979). Chrysanthos Christou, *Η ελληνική ζωγραφική 1832–1922* (National Bank of Greece, Athens 1981), 14; idem, *Η Εθνική Πανακοθήκη. Ελληνική Ζωγραφική 19<sup>ος</sup>-20<sup>ός</sup> αιώνας* (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1992), 12–13; idem, «Προβλήματα περιοδολόγησης στην ιστορία της νεοελληνικής τέχνης»,

of post-Byzantine art' and the adoption of the principles of Renaissance painting in the production of art, though without yet assuming the character of 'artistic' painting in today's sense.<sup>6</sup> It therefore appears that the critical criterion for defining the starting-point and, concomitantly, the object of modern Greek art, can be attributed to its profound Westernization, that is the adoption of stylistic principles such as perspective and chiaroscuro, as well as compositional patterns and techniques from the art of the West.

In turn, this criterion was read in two diametrically opposed ways, depending on the theoretical foundation of the scholars. For the historians of modern Greek art, the absorption, and domination as far as possible, of artistic elements gleaned from Western painting, essentially marked the beginning of a new Greek form of expression in the plastic arts. For the Byzantinists, on the other hand, as post-Byzantine<sup>7</sup> art distanced itself from the Byzantine tradition and aligned itself with Western morphology, or assumed a folk character, it was evaluated respectively as either an art of decline or degenerate art. Hence the prevalence within the Greek milieu of aesthetic systems of value, which assessed artistic production on the basis of the degree to which it applied the 'canon' of European naturalism, founded the conviction that in the realm of traditional art, from the eighteenth century onwards, there was a dearth of works of high artistic quality, whether secular or religious, the result being that they were disparaged by scholars and researchers.<sup>8</sup>

in *Η Ιστορία της Τέχνης στην Ελλάδα*, Evyenyios D. Matthiopoulos and Nikos Hatzinikolaou eds. (University Publications Crete, Irakleio 2003), 21–22. Nikos Hatzinikolaou, *Εθνική τέχνη και πρωτοπορία*, Athens 1982, 32. Waldemar Deluga, 'Between Candia and Venice. The role of European engravings in the iconographic transformations of post-Byzantine painting in Greece', *Series Byzantinna* XII (2014), 75–109.

<sup>6</sup> Miltiadis Papanikolaou, «Ο ευρωπαϊκός κλασικισμός και η νεοελληνική τέχνη (1800–1850)», in «Το μπλε άλογο», *Θέματα ιστορίας και κριτικής της τέχνης* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1994), 13. idem, *Ιστορία της τέχνης στην Ελλάδα, 18<sup>ος</sup> και 19<sup>ος</sup> αιώνας*, vol. 2 (Adam Publications: Athens 2002), 14, 15. Andreas Xydis, «Μερικές σκέψεις γύρω από τη γένεση της νεοελληνικής τέχνης», *1<sup>ο</sup> Συμπόσιο για την Τέχνη*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki-Tellogleio Institute (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1984), 59.

<sup>7</sup> On the definition of the term, see Chatzidakis, entry Post-byzantine art, in *The Dictionary of Art*, [Post-Byzantine art] v. 25 (New York 1996), 336.

<sup>8</sup> For a representative sample, see: Andreas Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιάσμα ιστορίας της θρησκευτικής ζωγραφικής μετά την άλωση* (Library of the Archaeological Society in Athens, no. 40, Athens 1957), 332, 350–352, 353, 356, 359, 363–364. Georgios Sotiriou, *Χριστιανική και Βυζαντινή αρχαιολογία*, vol. I, *Χριστιανικά Κοιμητήρια, Εκκλησιαστική Αρχιτεκτονική* (Athens 1942), 3–4, 16–17, 34. Charles Delvoye, *Arta Bizantina*. Panos A. Zamvakellis, *Εισαγωγή στη βυζαντινή ζωγραφική* (Athens, 1985), 99. Demetrios D. Triantaphyllopoulos, "Byzance après Byzance" Post-Byzantine Art (1453–1830) in the Greek Orthodox World', in *Post-Byzantium: The Greek renaissance, 15th -18th Century Treasures from the Byzantine & Christian Museum*

A more recent view, within the context of which the criterion for the beginning of this period is taken to be socio-political developments, as well as the formation of a national consciousness, sees the starting-point of modern Greek art as being the eighteenth century, placing within its field of study the art of the Venetian-held Ionian islands, as well as folk and late religious painting.<sup>9</sup>

So it is that the religious painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has become attractive to younger researchers only in the last two decades. Again, however, in the estimation of the historians of modern Greek art, what is missing from recent studies is that thoughtful and incisive investigation of the subject in question<sup>10</sup> that would restore the organic link between the outstanding morphological features of the image and the transcendent event that is given concrete form by it.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the prevailing trend in the bibliography of the history of Greek art is characterized by a persistent concentration on the iconographic analysis of the themes depicted and their stylistic realization.<sup>12</sup>

This is due to the fact that historical/artistic discourse about icons does not take into account their dogmatic character and their close connection with the religious practice of the faithful. This is a capacity that distinguishes the icon from a conventional image.<sup>13</sup> As regards the latter, from the point of view of a philosopher, this is defined as the restitution of external reality with which he or she is in a discrete position and at a distance. From the same viewpoint, Adi Efal, inspired by the definition of St John the Damascene concerning the Christian icon, decodes it as

*Athens* (Onassis Cultural Center: Athens 2003), 15. Evyenos D. Matthiopoulos, «Η τέχνη στα όρια του Έθνους», in *Η Ιστορία της Τέχνης στην Ελλάδα*, Evyenos D. Matthiopoulos and Nikos Hatzinikolaou eds. (Heraklion: University Publications Crete, 2003) 450, 466.

<sup>9</sup> Papanikolaou, Πρόλογος, in Belting –Kemp et al. (eds), *Kunstgeschichte, Eine Einführung*, 6. Idem, Πρόλογος, in *Από τη Μεταβυζαντινή τέχνη στη σύγχρονη, 18<sup>ος</sup>-20<sup>ός</sup> αιώνας*, Conference Proceedings, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki (University Studio Press:Θεσσαλονίκη, 1998), 7. Iliana Zarra, *Η θρησκευτική ζωγραφική στην Θεσσαλονίκη κατά τον 19<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα. Ζωγράφοι – Εργαστήρια – Καλλιτεχνικές τάσεις* (Thessaloniki, Kyriakidis Publishing House, 2006), 31–35.

<sup>10</sup> Efthymia Georgiadou-Kountoura, «Η κοσμική τέχνη στην ηπειρωτική Ελλάδα κατά την τουρκοκρατία. Θέματα ορολογίας και μεθόδου», στο *Η Ιστορία της Τέχνης στην Ελλάδα*, Evyenos D. Matthiopoulos and Nikos Hatzinikolaou eds. (Heraklion: University Publications of Crete, 2003), 27.

<sup>11</sup> Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 5, 117.

<sup>12</sup> A similar observation is expressed in Saša Brajović - Jelena Erdeljan, 'Praying with the senses. Examples of icon devotion and the sensory experience in medieval and early modern Balkans', *Zograf* 39 (2015), 57.

<sup>13</sup> Belting, 'Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions', 236.

that type that precedes the type: in other words, the prototype<sup>14</sup>. From the point of view of the historian or theorist of art, the most recent and updated definition of the conventional image comes from Belting, who describes the 'iconic presence' as a picture that involves a representation that creates an impression of presence.<sup>15</sup> In the Christian icon, on the other hand, the participation of both the image depicted and the icon<sup>16</sup> itself in the actions of its prototype allows it, instead of the *impression of a presence*, to contain the divinity<sup>17</sup> or sanctity of the depicted form, making it a locus of theophany and therefore a place of the manifestation of a 'spiritual reality'.<sup>18</sup> Thereafter, since an icon is venerated during a religious service and is a more general expression of the reverence of the faithful,<sup>19</sup> it equally includes an optical and tactile experience: what is depicted does not reconstruct nor duplicate its model, but refers to an event that takes place within the temporal and spatial limits of the work of art.<sup>20</sup>

The lack of attention to these particular qualities of the icon, combined with the largely erroneous understanding of the concept of tradition<sup>21</sup> in the life of the Church resulted in the icon being identified principally with a dogmatically predefined iconography and then being placed, initially by Byzantinists and later by historians of art, in the margins of historical developments. Yet decades earlier, the theologian Léonid Ouspensky, with remarkable clarity, had explained that the icon does not simply express the dogmatic and spiritual life of the

<sup>14</sup> Adi Eyal, "Iconology and Iconicity. Towards an Iconic History of Figures, Between Erwin Panofsky and Jean-Luc Marion", *Naharaim - Zeitschrift für deutsch-jüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte*, (2009) 2(1), 91 [Retrieved 13 Feb. 2020, from doi:10.1515/naha.2008.007]

<sup>15</sup> Belting, "Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions", 235.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding this we might compare the characteristic formulation of Saint John Chrysostom: '«Εγώ και την κηρόχυτον ηγάπησα γραφήν, ευσεβείας ένεκεν πεπληρωμένη», quoted in Saint Theodore the Studite, *Έργα*, 3, *Επιστολαί* (Thessaloniki: Orthodoxos Kyrseli, 1993), 240.

<sup>17</sup> 'Είτα και προσκυνούμεν αυτού την αγίαν εικόνα, ως εν αυτή προσκυνούντες τον εξεικονιζόμενον Χριστόν'. Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> In this sense, an observation by Saint John the Damascan (676-749) to Leo III, who sided with the iconoclasts, becomes clear. Saint John points out that a struggle against the icons is, in essence, a contest against the saints themselves. See Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 4, 20, 29, 99, 100, 106.

<sup>19</sup> 'Ουχ ως θεούς τας εικόνας προσκυνούμεν οι πιστοί, μη γένοιτο, ώσπερ οι Έλληνες. Αλλά την σχέσιν μόνον και τον πόθον της ημών αγάπης προς τον χαρακτήρα του προσώπου της εικόνας εμφανίζοντες.' Athanasios the Great, *Προς Αντίοχον Άρχοντα*, ερωτ. Αθ', ΒΕΠΕΣ 35, 111. 10. Saint Theodore the Studite, op. cit., whence also the older bibliography.

<sup>20</sup> Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 18-20, 29, 53, 70.

<sup>21</sup> Léonide Ouspensky – Vladimir Lossky, *Le sens des icônes* (Paris: Cerf, 42003), 1, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 26, 27.

Church but also reflects the culture that surrounds it.<sup>22</sup> This is therefore an art that is 'bound to this world, to those who shape it', echoing the 'personal life of the artist, the 'life of the people at the time' and 'the environment in which it arises'.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, we shall attempt in this present work to look at the material under examination by applying the methodology of the history of art on the one hand, and, on the other, by taking into consideration the particular ontological composition of the icon, which is due to its long-standing relationship with its original.<sup>24</sup> In the first place, the basic duty of the historian of art is to verify the details of the object being studied. This includes material verification of the work of art, verification of its age, its provenance, and paternity.<sup>25</sup> The procedure in question also entails investigation of any interventions that might have occurred to the work over time, any changes as regards relationships of authority over it, or deliberate anthropogenic actions aimed at restoring the material to its original form.<sup>26</sup> In essence, this involves a complicated investigation aimed at establishing the authenticity of the work.<sup>27</sup> If and when the art historian is able to guarantee the absolute or partial authenticity of a work, they may legitimately proceed to a description, an iconographical analysis, relating the diachrony of the models under investigation to their topicality and values, while also seeking morphological changes in the execution of the subject, as well as its induction into a broader grouping.<sup>28</sup> Only then will a sound interpretive analysis of the content of the work be possible.

As such, the particularities of the material with which we shall be dealing make it an exemplary application of the stages of an art history investigation. On the basis of this, the present study is structured into sub-units that treat of the location of the provenance of the material, the description and iconographical analysis of the themes, their stylistic

<sup>22</sup> Léonide Ouspensky, *L'Icone, Vision du Monde Spirituel*.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness. On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 111.

<sup>25</sup> See Heinrich Dilly, 'Einführung', Ulrich Schliessl, Willibald Sauerländer, in *Kunstgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, Hans Belting – Wolfgang Kemp et al., pubd. by Dietrich Riemer, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Dilly and Schliessl.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Ulrich Schliessl.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, Heinrich Dilly, Einführung.



treatment, the positioning of the themes within their historical context, and the interpretation of them therein.

### *Tracing the Material*

The material under investigation consists of a group of icons of Christ that today are on the iconostasis of the church of the Holy Twelve Apostles in Drama and can be dated to the nineteenth century. Initially these icons were in the Greek church of the same name in Adrianople (Edirne),<sup>29</sup> which was already in existence in 1834 in the suburb of Keris-Hane.<sup>30</sup> The icons came to Drama with the settlement of the refugees after the Asia Minor Disaster (1922) and the consequent evacuation of the greater part of the Greek population in Eastern Thrace.

### *Icons and Painters*

On the basis of their signatures and stylistic characteristics, the painters of the icons are Moskhos Adrianoupolitis, Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, and Ioannis N. For reasons of economy, of all the icons of the feasts of the Lord, those which have been commented on are the ones which, in the first place, were judged to be representative because of the frequent reproduction of their subject matter. Secondly,

<sup>29</sup> This is according to the oral testimony of Fr Manolis, the priest of the church in 2002, to whom I express my gratitude. Many thanks are also due to the archeologist Magdalini Parkharidou-Anagnostou, who was kind enough to draw my attention to the material in question, as well as to His Eminence Dionysios (1923-2005), the then Metropolitan of Drama who gave permission for the first photographs of the material. A brief account of the subject was given within the context of the proceedings of the Fourth Scientific Encounter, held under the aegis of the Municipal Initiative for Socio/Cultural and Tourist Development of Drama on 16-19 May, 2002. See Iliana Zarra, 'Οι εικόνες των Δώδεκα Αποστόλων της Δράμας και ο απόηχος του κοινωνικοπολιτικού κλίματος του 19<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα», in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός, Δ' Επιστημονική Συνάντηση*, Drama, 16-19 May 2002, *Περίληψεις ανακοινώσεων* (Drama: ΔΕΚΠΟΤΑ, 2002), 47-49. The composition of the present work arose after a second visit to the church, in November 2019 and the new photographic documentation of the icons. I would like to express my warm thanks to His Eminence Pavlos, Metropolitan of Drama, who readily agreed to my request to photograph and publish the icons for scientific purposes, as well as to Fr. Anastasios Konstantinidis for his sensitivity in facilitating my task. Finally, thanks are due to the staff of the church, as well as to Mr. Stavros Goles who gave me invaluable assistance in the process of photographing the icons.

<sup>30</sup> Konstantinos Vakalopoulos *Ιστορία του βορείου ελληνισμού. Θράκη* (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis Publishers, 1990), 439, 440. Older historians describe it thus: «Εἰς τὸ προάστειον Κερίς-Χανέ ἡ πλειονότης τῶν κατοίκων ἦσαν Ἕλληνες, με ἐκκλησίαν τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων καὶ δημοτικὸν σχολεῖον, ολίγοι Τούρκοι ἐπίσης καὶ Κοινότης Βουλγαρικὴ με ανεγνωρισμένην ἐκκλησίαν...». See Konstantinos G. Kourtidis, «Η Αδριανούπολις», *Θρακικά* 25 (1956), 166.

the choice was based on their artistic style and the historical data that have been ‘introduced’ onto the surface of the icons. Regarding the first criterion, the artistic realization of the themes makes the icons under examination representative samples of the prevalent aesthetics of the nineteenth century. These were common to the south-eastern Balkan region and display the inter-cultural nature of the Christian icon, as also the manner in which the painters worked on them. Secondly, the icons bear unmistakable signs of human interference, which altered their original dedicatory inscriptions. These interventions were due to the religious and political squabbles between Bulgarians and Greeks because of Bulgarian propaganda aimed at the foundation of an autocephalous Bulgarian Church.<sup>31</sup>

Of the enthroned Saints, we shall begin with *St Spyridon of Trimythous* (fig. 1). The saint is presented as being in an interior space and is depicted in full, seated on a golden, richly decorated baroque throne. He is wearing episcopal vestments, though on his head, instead of a bishop’s miter, he has his characteristic triangular, knitted pastoral bonnet, known as the *spyridan*, to which, possibly, he owes his name.<sup>32</sup> He is seated with his legs slightly to the side, a pose that introduces the feeling of the third dimension into the flat surface of the work. His face is sculpted with intense chiaroscuro, while his severe expression is reinforced by the



Fig. 1 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, *Saint Spyridon*, 1834, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2019. © I. Zarra

<sup>31</sup> See Evangelos Kofos, «Το Ελληνοβουλγαρικό ζήτημα», in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol. 13 (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 2000), 298–305.

<sup>32</sup> Paul van den Ven, *La Légende de S. Spyridon, évêque de Trimithonte* (Institute orientaliste de l' Université de Louvain, Bibliothèque du Musée, vol. 33: Louvain, 1953), 43.



small, tight mouth, expressing a state of inner withdrawal and sobriety. At the same time, the immobility of the figure, in combination with the oblique, vigilant mien, depict the cessation of physical activities and intellectual movement, eliminating the slightest disruptive movement that might disturb the saint's peace of heart.<sup>33</sup> So the morphological construction of the facial features and especially the suggestion of 'spiritual realities' reveal the specific capacities that clearly demonstrate the sanctity of the figure<sup>34</sup>, an indication of the indifference of the saint to the material world surrounding him.

At the four corners of the surface of the icon, and within the patterns defined by the folded gold leaf, there are scenes from the life of the saint that depict his miraculous intervention during the drought in Cyprus (fig. 2), the transformation of the serpent into gold, his participation in the First Ecumenical Synod at Nicaea in Bithynia (325), his confrontation with the heretic Arius, and, finally, his healing of the Emperor Constantine.<sup>35</sup> Low down on the icon, in a baroque scroll, is the signature, which on our first visit in 2002 had been



Fig. 2 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Spyridon, detail of figure 1.

<sup>33</sup> Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 154.

<sup>34</sup> Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 68, 69, 71, 155.

<sup>35</sup> The iconographic cycle of the saint was formed in the seventh century. Ioanna Bitha, «Παρατηρήσεις στον εικονογραφικό κύκλο του αγίου Σπυρίδωνα», ΔΧΑΕ 19 (1996–1997), 251. For a description of the individual events, see Maximos Margounios (Bishop of Cythera) - Pinelli, Antonio (the Elder), *Βίοι αγίων*, ρλγ'. van den Ven, *La Legende de S. Spyridon, évêque de Trimithonte*, 11–14, 27–34. Spyridon Papageorgiou, *Ασματική Ακολουθία και Βίος του εν Αγίοις Ημών Πατρός Σπυρίδωνος* (Εν Αθήναις: Μιχαήλ Ι. Σαλιβέρος, 1901), 20, 53–55, 55–59, 63, 69–71, 72.

erased and the whole area covered with black (fig. 3). On our second, recent visit, the cleaning of the surface had revealed an inscription with Bulgarian letters<sup>36</sup> and the signature of the painter in Greek: EN ETEI 1834 / *χειρ Ν(ι)Κ(ο)Λ(άου)* (fig. 4).

In terms of dating, the icon under examination belongs to a period when the reproduction of the cycle of miracles performed by St Spyridon was very widespread, beginning in the seventeenth century and continuing thereafter.<sup>37</sup> The attachment of the population of Adrianople to the veneration of the saint, as well as the inclusion in the icon of scenes linked to rural life and his miraculous intervention on behalf of those who were deprived of foodstuffs, is testimony to the natural configuration of the Thracian countryside and the fertility of its soil. Favourable geophysical factors of the local hinterland contributed to a total annual production that was enough to sustain the population, while any surplus was exploited for economic gain, with exports to



Fig. 3 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Spyridon, 1834, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2002. © I. Zarra

Smyrna, Constantinople, and the countries of Central Europe. Indeed, from the nineteenth century, Greeks owned huge tracts of farmland around Adrianople, Arkadiople, Kallikrateia, and other parts of Eastern Thrace. According to statistical data from the large associations in Constantinople and furnished to the Council of Berlin in 1878, it appears that one third of the land in the sanjak of Adrianople was owned by Greeks.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The true copy of the inscription is as follows *МОЛЕНИЕ РАБА Б ХАРАДИБОЗа ЧИ ПЕТРОВИЧЪ СТАНОИРАШКО ЕН'ЕТЕИ 1834 χρ ΝΚΛ*.

<sup>37</sup> The saint enjoyed particular popularity in Europe, the Middle East and Russia. Bitha, «Παρατηρήσεις στο εικονογραφικό κύκλο του αγίου Σπυρίδωνα», 256, 283 note 144.

<sup>38</sup> Kyriaki Mamoni, *Θράκη στο Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol 13, (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1977), 369, 374.



Fig. 4 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, *Saint Spyridon*, detail of figure 1.

Of all the military saints who reside on the iconostasis in the church, we will concentrate on the icon of St Theodore (fig. 5) since he is considered to be the first of all the military saints to accomplish the feat of slaying a dragon.<sup>39</sup> The saint is depicted as mounted on a chestnut steed, turning slightly towards the viewer and passing a cross-shaped lance through a green, winged dragon lying below the belly of the horse. The latter's tail ends in a skilfully tied knot, while around its back leg winds the tail of the reptile, which has turned to look at the rider<sup>40</sup>. At this point, obeying the historical and

stylistic processing of the model, we should emphasize that these iconographical details constitute a well-established motif that, from the Late Byzantine period, is repeated systematically not only in the icon of St Theodore, but in those of other dragon-slayers, such as St George.<sup>41</sup> To interpret the widespread popularity of this select group of martyr saints—who are not always and necessarily military personnel—in the form of a sacred knight, we have to see it in the context of the time, of the increased influence of a military aristocracy who held large tracts

<sup>39</sup> An event witnessed in the depiction of the act, just as early, in seals that date to between the years 650–730. Christopher Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', *REB* 57 (1999), 173.

<sup>40</sup> Athanasia Dile, *Η δράση του εργαστηρίου του Θεοδοσίου Κακαβά στην Πελοπόννησο (δεύτερο μισό 16<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα)* (Reprint of a doctoral thesis presented at the University of Ioannina, Philosophical School, Department of History and Archaeology, Ioannina, 2017), 211, 367.

<sup>41</sup> Dile, *Η δράση του εργαστηρίου του Θεοδοσίου Κακαβά στην Πελοπόννησο (δεύτερο μισό 16<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα)*, 211–212, whence the older bibliography.



of land in Asia Minor and had promoted the saints on horseback as their patrons, which, simultaneously, made their own lives a model to be copied.<sup>42</sup>

As regards the incident of the slaying of the dragon, this is introduced for the first time in a text transmitted in manuscript BHG 1464, dated to ca 754,<sup>43</sup> where the narrative tells of a terrible dragon that had appeared in the area around the town of Euchaita, causing the death of many of the inhabitants. St Theodore met the dragon outside its lair and, having made the sign of the cross, slaughtered it and restored order and normality to the region, finally freeing the community of the affliction they had suffered for so long and allowing the inhabitants freedom of movement<sup>44</sup>.

Moreover, in the bottom left and right corners, charming concave and convex curves create symmetrical fields in which the artist can portray significant moments from the saint's life and martyrdom. At the same point, within a central shield shape, on a light blue surface, the dedicatory inscription is written in black capital letters: 'Supplication of the servant of God Theodoros and his parents in the year 1833. Hand of Moskhos'.



Fig. 5 Moschos Velef, Saint Theodoros, 1833, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2019. © I. Zarra

<sup>42</sup> Piotr L. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, trans. Richard Brzezinski (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 111 notes. 178, 122.

<sup>43</sup> Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', 168, 172-173.

<sup>44</sup> Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, Librairie Alphonse Picard et Fils: Paris, 1909), 20. Titos Papamastorakis, «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών», ΔΧΑΕ ΙΚ' (1998) [1999], 219. Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', 164.

The version of the saint in his basic military equipment (without shield, helmet or greaves) is a reference to 'spiritual armour'<sup>45</sup>, the 'armour of God', which Saint Paul urges every Christian to put on as a soldier of the Lord 'in his mighty power': 'with the belt of truth buckled around your waist'; 'with the breastplate of righteousness in place'; with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace'; 'taking up the shield of faith...'; 'taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (*Eph.* 6, 10, 11, 13-17). All this, completely in keeping with the tranquility and spiritual calm exuded by his handsome face, set in a continuous motion of advancement and withdrawal both the historicity of his existence and the transcendent character of his hypostasis.

### *Artists and Styles*

Regarding our knowledge of the painters of the icons, information is exceptionally limited.<sup>46</sup> The most data we have at our disposal is for Moskhos Adrianoupolitis, who was active at the time of the so-called Bulgarian renaissance (end eighteenth– beginning nineteenth centu-

<sup>45</sup> Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, 181–182, 336, 337

<sup>46</sup> The name of Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis and the same way of writing his signature: 'hand of Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis', can be found in icons of the twelve feasts of the Lord in churches in Didymoteikho, which are donations from guilds of the town and date back to the nineteenth century. See Manolis Hatzidakis-Evyenia Drakopoulou, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1453–1830)*, vol. 2 *Καβαλλάρος – Ψαθόπουλος*, (Athens: Centre of Modern Greek Studies E.I.E 62, 1997), 243. Likewise, in the municipality of Orestiada and its communities, icons have been recorded in which the abbreviated inscription of the name of the name 'Nikolaos' is distinctly reminiscent of the shorthand of Nikos Adrianoupolitis. In each of these cases, caution must be exercised, given that the records concerned contain the barest stylistic descriptions and are not supported by photographic material. See Martha Theodorou, *Φορητές εικόνες και έργα μικροτεχνίας του ΙΘ' αιώνα, των Ι. Ναών Ορεστιάδος και των εγγύς κοινοτήτων του νομού Έβρου* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1992), 6, 9, 27, 176.



ries)<sup>47</sup>. He came from the Strantzha region<sup>48</sup>, worked both for Greeks and well as Slavophone clients and was likely settled in Stara Zagora.<sup>49</sup>

Be that as it may, as regards the icons in Drama, despite the fact that they are by different hands, they all conform to an aggregation of morphoplastic principles, constructing a unified stylistic language that was dominant in the nineteenth century and was adopted by active professionals who worked both for Greek and Slavophone Christian populations, given that they operated in the extended region of South-East Europe and the Holy Mountain. The basic features of this form of artistic enunciation are its excellent technical execution and naturalistic treatment of the physical landscape, the attention to detail paid to the luxurious texture of the expensive fabrics (vestments of the saints), ancillary objects (carved wooden furniture), and, in general, the refined stylistic treatment of the compositions<sup>50</sup>. At the same time, the iconographers were cognisant of Western methods of painting. They absorbed these and employed in their narratives a kind of empirical perspective, for the most part. They also made discreet use of chiaroscuro and present the bodily hypostasis of the holy protagonists, while through the plastic modelling of the facial characteristics and the naturalistic rendition of the head and facial hair of the holy figures, they project

<sup>47</sup> Assen Vassiliev, *Bălgarski vāzrozhdenski maystory. Zhivopistsi, rezbari, stroiteli (Bulgarian Renaissance Masters. Painters, Woodcarvers, Builders)*, (Sofia, 1965), 646–648, fig. 416. Newer research also records him as B. Moskho and links him to the Adrianople region, limiting the time of his activity to the period 1840–1858. In our icons, however, the recorded date of 1833 extends his active years. Moreover, it is believed that he lived in the area of Stenimakhos (Asenovgrad). His iconographical production includes portable icons and wall-paintings, while works of his have been found in Haskovo and in villages in the surrounding area, such as Gorski, and Nikolovo, in the villages of Pavelsko and Yugovo in the Smolian region, as well as in the towns of Batskovo, Parvoday, and Asenovgrad. Emmanuel Mutafov – Ivanca Gergova – Alexander Kuzumdjiev – Elena Popova – Elena Genova – Dimitrios Gonis, *Έλληνες αγιογράφοι στην Αλβανία μετά το 1453 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences – Institute of Art Studies, 2008)*, 96–97.

<sup>48</sup> For information on the region, see Vakalopoulos *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 472, 474.

<sup>49</sup> We also know that he had a son, Stefanos Moskhof Velef, who was born in Stara Zagora and followed in his father's footsteps. See Vassiliev, *Bălgarski vāzrozhdenski maystory. Zhivopistsi, rezbari, stroiteli*, 648.

<sup>50</sup> See Iliana Zarra, «Νεότερικά στοιχεία σε αγιογράφους φορητών εικόνων των ναών της Θεσσαλονίκης (19<sup>ος</sup> αι.)», in *Από τη μεταβυζαντινή τέχνη στη σύγχρονη 18<sup>ος</sup>-20<sup>ος</sup> αι.*, Πρακτικά Πανελληνίου Συνεδρίου (Θεσσαλονίκη, 20–21 Νοεμβρίου 1997), (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1998), 45–57. Iliana Zarra, «Δύο ζωγράφοι δεσποτικών εικόνων στο ναό Αγίου Νικολάου Βαθύτοπου και στη μονή Αγίου Δημητρίου Πανοράματος του Νομού Δράμας», in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός*, Γ' Επιστημονική Συνάντηση, Δράμα 21–24 Μαΐου 1998 (Drama: ΔΕΚΠΟΤΑ, 2002), 209, 210.

their historical, human character.<sup>51</sup> The individualized modelling of the typological features of the persons involved, the delving into the spiritual aspect of the saints, as well as the registration of their inner nobility and spiritual and intellectual state, in combination with the fine details of the description of their outward appearance, invest the icons with the aesthetic qualities of a portrait.<sup>52</sup> As to the ancillary objects depicted, these are taken either from ready-made artistic models and notebooks of sketches that were circulating within Europe (for instance the miniature figures of a king or Roman nobleman, seated in a baldachin, or the drawn curtain or a variety of vessels), or they were produced from contemporary material reality (for instance, morphological elements of the local architecture, such as the bay windows, the pitched roofs and the use of red tiles on the houses). The figures taking part in the miraculous episodes are dressed in the fashion of the day, always faithful to the clothing stereotypes defined by their social status (fig. 2). This affection of the artists for obvious exuberance and the stimulation of visual pleasure in the person venerating the icon occasionally transcends stereotypical principles, such as in the bold substitution of the simple and monochrome robe of Christ with a luxurious cloth bearing gold stamped flowers, inspired by the fashion of imported silks (fig. 6). And conversely, the need for exuberance in the expression of the sacred narrative stems precisely from the piety and fervent faith of those who commissioned the icons.<sup>53</sup>

To recapitulate the above, regarding the style of the icons under examination, it appears that the treatment of their themes is defined by a mixing and processing of the inherited methods from local tradition and selective adoption of foreign artistic models. An iconographer who accepted a commission composed the traditional format within

<sup>51</sup> Zarra, «Νεότερικά στοιχεία σε αιογράφους φορητών εικόνων των ναών της Θεσσαλονίκης (19ος αι.)», 45.

<sup>52</sup> Zarra, «Νεότερικά στοιχεία σε αιογράφους φορητών εικόνων των ναών της Θεσσαλονίκης (19ος αι.)», 46. Atanas Boschkov, *La peinture bulgare*, (Western Germany: Reclinghausen, 1974), 295–296.

<sup>53</sup> On this, see the assessment that such elements lend the icons ‘a high degree of artistic quality’ See Iliana Zarra, «Δύο ζωγράφοι δεσποτικών εικόνων στο ναό Αγίου Νικολάου Βαθύτοπου και στη μονή Αγίου Δημητρίου Πανοράματος του Νομού Δράμας», in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός*, Γ’ Επιστημονική Συνάντηση, Δράμα 21–24 Μαΐου 1998 (Drama: DEKPOTA, 2002), 209, 210. Thus, even within the same religious tradition, the sacred depictions were subject to historical change. See Belting, “Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions”, 236.



Fig. 6 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, *Christ Pantocrator*, 1833, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2019. © I. Zarra

contemporary perceptions and the models that were in circulation (etchings, iconographical guides, blueprints, finished works). But with this activity, within the works, both the dominant spiritual tendencies and the material realities that constitute his environment are absorbed.<sup>54</sup> Thereafter in the church, its liturgical space, the icon becomes more than a locus of veneration and a locus where new encounters with visitors/pilgrims are constantly taking place; it is also a format for reading that lies within the ideological and social horizon of reception of the artist's own time.<sup>55</sup> Popular themes and beloved sacred figures, such as Christ's horseman or the patron saint of the farmer, of the cultivator, of the travelling merchant, and, particularly of the enslaved flock, protect, console, and

are models of endurance, unshakeable faith, and psychological support, examples of national awakening and militancy, and they promise the eschatological rectification of the incomprehensible state of affairs that obliged a mosaic of Christian populations to live for centuries enslaved to an infidel conqueror.

### *The Icons and their Context*

Returning to the iconostasis in the church of the Twelve Apostles in the city of Drama, the way in which the images have been arranged

<sup>54</sup> Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 3, 4, 22.

<sup>55</sup> Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 20. See also Anca Vasiliu, "Voir, nommer, regarder une image à la fin de l' Antiquité", in Μίλτος Γαρίδης (1926–1996), *Αφιέρωμα*, Γενική Εποπτεία: Αθανάσιος Παλιούρας – Αγγελική Σταυροπούλου, vol II (Ioannina: University of Ioannina- Department of Archeology, 2003), 814–815.

from a series of icons, as we view them today, prompted us to make an analytical reading of each one separately. At the same time, seen as a whole, the iconostasis acquires a conceptual cohesion, since, because of their number and the dynamic of their content, the dominant position is occupied by military warrior saints on horseback. The soldiers depicted—St Dimitrios, St George, St Theodore, and St Minas—derive their significance, at first sight, from the combination of Christianity and their military capacity, which in the first centuries of Christianity, arose from the spread of the faith through the ranks of the army and, conversely, from the role the latter played in spreading the faith.<sup>56</sup> For precisely this reason, *St Theodore* was examined as a representative case, since he was regarded as one of the most important and oldest military saints. In the popular mind he was identified with the ‘Thracian horseman’<sup>57</sup> and was believed to be the patron saint of the Byzantine army.<sup>58</sup> In the exotic version of him as a dragon-slayer, his triumph over the grim reptile was interpreted as the restoration of order and sound organization<sup>59</sup> with a fair share for all members of a community of people as regards natural resources and public goods, such as water and free access to transit routes. Thereafter, because of the constant succession of military conflicts with people who vied for stretches of the empire,<sup>60</sup> the form of composition, as reproduced over time, functioned

<sup>56</sup> Delehay, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, 2. After the proclamation of Christianity as the official religion in the fourth century, the Church reviewed its earlier reservations concerning the enlistment of Christians in the army. This stemmed from the Christian prohibition on committing murder and led to the conviction that peace was a gift of God. Once pagans were excluded from the ranks, the army became Christianized. See Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)*, 63–64, 121.

<sup>57</sup> See Myrtilos Apostolidis, «Περὶ του Θρακὸς ιππέως ἢ του Κυρίου Ἡρωος», *Αρχαίον του Θρακικοῦ Λαογραφικοῦ και Γλωσσολογικοῦ Θησαυροῦ* (1939–40), 2–16.

<sup>58</sup> Concerning this, an initial reading of the composition cannot but be influenced by the historical context signaled by an unprecedented intensification of the persecutions of Christians in the third and fourth centuries, at the time of the pagan emperors Diocletian (284–305), Maximian (285–310) and Maximinus Daia (306–313), though Christians still multiplied in the ranks of the army. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)*, 57–58. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 21. As regards St Theodore, we should note another of his functions, since, in the central Balkan countries he was considered to be the escort of souls. Konstantinos P. Haralambidis, «Ἡ πρώτη εἰκονογραφία του ἁγίου Θεοδώρου», *Βυζαντινά* 16 (1991), 118.

<sup>59</sup> Walter, ‘Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint’, 164. Papamastorakis, «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινῶν παλληκαριῶν», 219.

<sup>60</sup> In attempting to interpret Byzantine militarism, Christopher Walter explains that its roots must be sought in their awareness of the fact that, after the Israelites, they were the anointed chosen people. Hence their central mission was to expand the borders of their realm. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 10, 41, 291, 292.

as a way of bolstering the faith and resistance of believers against infidel pressures to renounce their faith. It follows that any new processing of such themes forces us to see a closer correlation between the political circumstances of the time and also the place where they were located. In order, then, to answer the question as to what the specific theme of a holy horseman meant to people at that time, we need to delve deeper into the events that took place after the third decade of the nineteenth century in the place where they were produced.

After the Greek Revolution and the appearance of the Pan-Slavism movement,<sup>61</sup> the ethnically varied population of Thrace experienced adverse vicissitudes because of emerging nationalist claims within the Balkan region, since the states there looked to expand their lands within European Turkey. This caused intense rivalry among them.<sup>62</sup> If we review the historical context of the icons in this light, the deeply religious character of the military class is again apparent and is founded on the traditional esteem of the Byzantines and their descendants for the militaristic ideal.<sup>63</sup> The density of warriors on the iconostasis of the church could therefore be related to the important position occupied by a particular body of soldiers in the public life of both the Greek State and of the enslaved Christians. This was engendered in the living conditions peculiar to the mountainous regions inhabited by populations in captivity to the Turks, in combination with the conditions of life as shaped by their enslavement.<sup>64</sup> In particular, the plains had had their natural resources depleted to such an extent (scanty water supply or depletion of water reservoirs, neglect of mills, roads, bridges, and other agricultural infrastructure) that communities could no longer survive there and were forced into mountainous areas to engage in animal husbandry.<sup>65</sup> In Thrace in particular, from as early as the beginning of the Turkish conquest, in the fourteenth century, the native populations of

<sup>61</sup> This was a reaction against European ideas and flourished in Russia between 1830–1869. Its ultimate aim was to strengthen Russia, with the prospect of assisting the Slav peoples under Ottoman rule. Bulgarian nationalism would also hatch under the wings of the Pan-Slavic doctrine. See Kofos, «Τα ελληνοβουλγαρικό ζήτημα», 298–305.

<sup>62</sup> Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού*. *Θράκη*, 223.

<sup>63</sup> Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ioannis Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», in *Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Εθνικισμός στη Νεότερη Ελλάδα*, Εισαγωγή-Επιμέλεια: Θάνος Βερέμης (Athens: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, 2003), 184. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού*. *Θράκη*, 224.

<sup>65</sup> Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 133.



the hinterland were forced to settle in remote mountainous areas and to devote themselves to raising livestock for a living.<sup>66</sup> The perilous conditions of survival that arose from this livestock-based demographic and the state of things in general in the Turkish-held territories, together with outbreaks of violence and robbery, as well as the inadequate measures for the protection of the resources of the mountain region, all combined to make it necessary to form a military grouping, the 'armatoli'.<sup>67</sup>

The attraction exercised by this body of armed men in the nineteenth century (they were known as 'the old military order') was such that historians described them as 'a contingent of irregulars'.<sup>68</sup> Briefly stated, the broad popular acceptance of the irregulars among the enslaved populations of the occupied territories was due to their significant contribution to the liberation movement and national life<sup>69</sup> of the Greek State, an evaluation onto which they also projected their own demand for national reconstruction. It is no coincidence that the term adopted in the historical bibliography to describe this kind of warrior was 'stalwart'.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, these bands of rebels, which were made up of former miscreants, came to be equated in the public consciousness with the national army.<sup>71</sup> Inevitably, this characterization, as generally perceived, implied an identification of 'the nation' and 'the people',<sup>72</sup> a connotation that was embodied, in the end, in the depiction of the hero, the popular fighter, the warrior *who is one of us*: in other words, someone who came from the class of ordinary believers.

<sup>66</sup> Βακαλόπουλος, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 21.

<sup>67</sup> Κολιόπουλος, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 133–134.

<sup>68</sup> Κολιόπουλος, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 134.

<sup>69</sup> Important support for this evaluation is the confession by Pavlos Melas, according to which, in 1904, he went to fight in the Macedonian struggle dressed as a 'robber'. His motive was not simply to be accepted by the body of irregulars but also his profound sense that this was the role for which he had been preparing for the whole of his life. Quoted in Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 185.

<sup>70</sup> Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 185.

<sup>71</sup> It is very much to the point here to repeat that the above statement is reinforced by information that, when the uprising in Thessaly took place in 1867, men from the regular army joined these rebel bodies. Units of similar composition were also placed on standby in 1885–1886, after the annexation of Eastern Romelia by Bulgaria. See Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 159–160.

<sup>72</sup> This is despite the fact that the definition actually referred to the ineffective handling of national claims by men in public life. See Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 185–187.

The way in which such iconographical patterns worked is familiar to us from the corresponding manner in which portrayals of large numbers of new martyrs were accommodated. These new martyrs emerged during the period of Turkish rule in general and, in particular, at times when persecutions of Christians were intensified, culminating in the wave of forced conversions to Islam in the period following the Greek revolution and the liberation of parts of the Greek population. The onerous conditions of life for Christians in Thrace, too, during the Turkish occupation fueled the rebellious sentiments of those enslaved and encouraged the proclamation of contemporary new martyrs, who became models of faith and psychological support in the avoidance of forced conversion to Islam.<sup>73</sup>

The impact of the depictions of the new martyrs on the Christian public was intensified by the shared sentiments <sup>74</sup> between those portrayed and those venerating. We may suppose that the same is true of our mounted warriors, the religious images of whom encourage a concomitant identification on the part of the members of the community with the fighter-models. Besides, the contrast between the Christian soldier and the alien opponent or monster, with the eschatological promise of the triumph of good over evil (which took the form of a dragon and was related to the changing military circumstances in Byzantium) drew its meaning from the current political conditions and historical protagonists, so that the collective conscience was internalized as the contemporary historical threat at any given time. Thus, in the tenth century, the *bizarre native*, the dragon, was seen as the contemporary invaders, the Arabs, who trampled upon land holdings, seized the property of the local farmers and forced them to abandon their homes.<sup>75</sup> By the same token, the various biographical versions of St Theodore relate the presence of a monster that did not allow access to the source of water in the region, terrified the locals, and prevented passage through the place where it lurked. When the saint appeared, however, scorning the danger and armed with the sign of the cross, he routed it.

<sup>73</sup> In the region of Greek Thrace, in 1835, five martyrs from Samothrace were put to death in Makri. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 215–216.

<sup>74</sup> David Morgan, *Visual piety, A history and theory of popular religious images* (Berkeley-Los Angeles –London: University of California Press, 1998), 70–71.

<sup>75</sup> Papamastorakis «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών», 219.

The military class of the irregulars had a similar mission: the defence of arable and herding lands against all forms of arbitrary power, violence, seizure or alienation of land holdings, even at the threat to their lives.<sup>76</sup> Gradually, their aim of guarding the security of the mountainous passes and imposing order on the areas under their control made the irregulars synonymous not only with 'armed presence', but with social stability itself and the exercise of political control.<sup>77</sup> As a return for their contribution, these earthly warriors enjoyed particular admiration from the oppressed population, since they were seen as heroic figures with almost supernatural brawn and special abilities, interwoven with virtues such as self-discipline, generosity, and magnanimity. In the end, the point where the earthly warriors crossed paths with the mounted saints was to be found in the fact that, many years after the establishment of the State, the idea of the nation continued to be understood as an equally religious and cultural entity, including in its ranks both the liberated Greeks and also those Christians who continued to live in lands still held by the Turks.<sup>78</sup> This demonstrates that the importance of the military capacity did not wane with the creation of the Hellenic State, but rather that it was enlisted therein even further, through the formation of a irredentist policy in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> In other words, in the popular conscience, military activity was understood as being the determining mechanism for the promotion of national ideology and policy.<sup>80</sup>

### *Epilogue*

As has been noted, the icons present a particular research interest because, at the time of our first visit we noted a series of human interventions in the signatures of the artists, which, after the cleaning that occurred before the next time they were photographed, in November 2019, had largely disappeared. For example, the initial inscription on the icon of St Minas (fig. 7 a-b) had been erased and

<sup>76</sup> Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 135.

<sup>77</sup> Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 136, 140.

<sup>78</sup> Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 166–167.

<sup>79</sup> Paschalis Kitromilidis, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός. Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες*, (Athens: MIET, 2009), 489, 493–499.

<sup>80</sup> Koliopoulos «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 141, 159, 166.



Fig. 7a Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, *Saint Minas*, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, detail of the 2002 photo shoot. © I. Zarra



Fig. 7b Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, *Saint Minas*, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, detail of the 2002 photo shoot. © I. Zarra

re-written three times in succession, in either Greek or Bulgarian. The dedicatory inscription on the icon of St Spyridon was completely erased.<sup>81</sup> Be that as it may, even when the signatures in their final version

<sup>81</sup> But the—likely—final layer of the Bulgarian inscription on the icon of *St Haralambos* (130X72 cm), a work by the iconographer Moskhos Belev, from 1834, had been overwritten in Greek.

are in Bulgarian, the artists wrote their names and the year of production in Greek.<sup>82</sup> The linguistic ‘hybrid’ in question confirms the fact that the artists worked not only for all the Orthodox populations in the Balkan region<sup>83</sup>, but also that their best clientele must have been Greek-speaking Christians, since, in the majority of icons, the personal details (name, location) are given in Greek.<sup>84</sup> In conjunction with the political turmoil in the area, such behavior within the intended reception area of the works, which is apparent from the erasure and renewed insertion of the inscriptions on their surface, in a different language each time, is a cause of confusion around the initial destination or ‘national’ self-determination of the target clientele.

Although it is impossible today to reconstruct the finer shades of these linguistic ‘transfers’, we can still have recourse, with greater certainty, to historical accounts of the events that defined the political context of the appearance of the works. Relevant research from the third decade of the nineteenth century, to which the oldest icons date, and later, reveals that the incendiary political situation in the Orthodox Balkans is marked by an increasingly intense Bulgarian nationalism, which had been in preparation from as early as the second half of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the linguistic conflict we observe on the surface of the icons brings to the fore one of the three main criteria that contribute to the concept of the nation, that is its language.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> To be precise, of all the despotic icons in Drama, the icon of Sts Constantine and Helen has ... 1834 *χειρ ΝΚΛ αδρπλ*; St Spyridon *ΕΝ ΕΤΕΙ 1834/ χειρ ΝΚΛ*; the Twelve Apostles ... 1833/ *χειρ ΝΚΛ*; the depiction of the Three Hierarchs ... 1834/ *Νκλ αδρπλ*; that of St John the Baptist ... *εν έτει 1833 / Ν.Κ.Α.*; and St Minas 1833 *χ(ειρ) μος(χου)*.

<sup>83</sup> Πιανα Zarra, «Παρατηρήσεις για την έννοια της αφήγησης στην τέχνη με αφορμή μια φορητή θρησκευτική εικόνα του 19ου αιώνα», *Αφιέρωμα στον Χρυσάνθο Χρήστου*, (Θεσσαλονίκη: University Studio Press, 2006), 63. Vassiliev, *Masters of the Bulgarian National Revival*, 646–648.

<sup>84</sup> An exception to this is Moskhos, who signs in Bulgarian only on the icon of St Haralambos. On the basis of word-of-mouth information, the fact that works by him have been located in regions of today’s Bulgaria are testimony that the artist was likely of Bulgarian descent. I owe this information to the researcher Alexandros Papadopoulos who kindly brought it to my attention, and I thank him warmly. To the same researcher I also owe the information that Moskhos signs in Greek in the despotic icons from the church of St George in Stenimakhos (on the icon of St Dimitrios he signs in flourishing Greek letters «Χειρ Μο(σ)χ(ου) 1858 Αδρ(ια)ν(ου)π(ο)λ(ι)τ(ου)» and notes the year (1850). Besides, another despotic icon by the painter on the theme of St George dates from the same year. Here the signature is in Bulgarian, though the name of the artist is in Greek.

<sup>85</sup> Thanos Veremis, «Εισαγωγή», στο *Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Εθνικισμός στη Νεότερη Ελλάδα*, Εισαγωγή-Επιμέλεια: Θάνος Βερέμης (Athens: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, 2003), 12.



Going by the principles of the Enlightenment and European political models, language was promoted as a criterion for clarifying national differences within the broader Balkan society of Christian populations.<sup>86</sup> Another criterion of ‘national identity’ was religion.<sup>87</sup> But these two components—language and religion—are interwoven on the surface of the icon, and, in a strange way, removed what people were hoping to achieve: a specific ‘national identity’ for the icons. Instead, they brought to the fore a kind of ‘internationalization’ of the Christian icon,<sup>88</sup> a situation that, in essence, involved the core element of tradition.<sup>89</sup> Because, although the icon as a visual confession of dogma was stamped in the collective conscience as a kind of unwavering re-production of inherited rules, in fact the preservation of tradition was due to the continuous renewal of the ways in which it was expressed. In the context of this renewal, reference to the iconographical ‘canon’ was defined by its constant transformations, which resulted, in the case of our icons, in a dominant, eclecticist style.<sup>90</sup>

For this reason, on the one hand, the co-existence of Greek and Bulgarian on the surface of the works and, on the other, the structural similarities in the techno-morphological composition of the themes set

<sup>86</sup> This shattered the image of a cohesive Christian society in South-East Europe under Turkish occupation, as did the rejection of the ‘ecumenicity’ of the ‘supranational Orthodox ecclesiastical society’. Paschalis M. Kitromilidis, «‘Νοερές κοινότητες’ και οι απαρχές του εθνικού ζητήματος στα Βαλκάνια», in *Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Εθνικισμός στη Νεότερη Ελλάδα*, Εισαγωγή-Επιμέλεια: Θάνος Βερέμης (Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, Athens 2003), 57, 58, 62, 65, 66, 69, 71, 73, 83.

<sup>87</sup> The third was a common cultural tradition. Veremis, «Εισαγωγή», 12. Although E. J. Hobsbawm explains that criteria such as language per se are vague, inappropriate, and ambiguous, which is why such signposts proved useful for propaganda purposes. See Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, CUP 1992.

<sup>88</sup> This, in essence, was linked to the supranational character of Christianity itself. This is why, in any case, a holy icon is an exceptionally charged locus that creates and preserves the sense of belonging together in a society of like-minded people and, as a concomitant, introduces a link between national consciousness and religion. And, vice versa, it is difficult for an icon to serve as an effective symbol of a ‘protonation’ because of the universal nature of Christianity, which merges any national, linguistic, or other differences. See Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*. At this time, the Ecumenical Patriarchate convened a Great Synod in 1872 that denounced the Bulgarians as schismatics and condemned the introduction of ‘phyletism’ and ‘national feuds’ into the bosom of the Church. Kofos, «Το ελληνοβουλγαρικό ζήτημα», 304.

<sup>89</sup> In the sense that civilization arises through a process of creation and recreation and interdependence between material objects, images, and agencies, which are linked to commerce and to financial transactions in general. See Monica Juneja, ‘Circulation and Beyond—The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia’, in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner (editors), *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2017), 61, 63.

<sup>90</sup> Tsakiridou *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 1.

the bipolar difference (national) and affinity (cultural) into a continuous back and forth motion that makes it impossible to attribute the works to one or the other national pole. In other words, it is precisely the common aesthetics of the icon that informs ecclesiastical art in the Orthodox Balkans and thus allows claims of 'national' provenance on the part of the two national collectivities that, though they were at odds, nevertheless shared the same faith. Because the treatment in question of the themes, as has been shown, owes its articulation to the constant circulation<sup>91</sup> of the artists concerned, their material creations and the practices and ideas that shaped their technical and morphological principles. As a result, this movement of people and *objets d'art* gave rise to various encounters and creative 'cross-pollination' that in reality transcended the boundaries of locality.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, the fact that it was not a one-way movement,<sup>93</sup> that is, a simple transplantation of imported motifs or methods from an advanced artistic environment into a provincial one, but was, at the same time, a return of the loans, is confirmed by the eclecticist style of the icons, which shows the process of reshaping the context into which the new visual rules were being incorporated. Evidence for this is the similar way in which the adopted technomorphic methods and figural motifs are processed in the conception and realization of the icons by painters active professionally in the South-East Balkans as a whole, whether they were Greek or Bulgarian.<sup>94</sup> A basic feature of the common morphoplastic manner

<sup>91</sup> On the content of the term, see Juneja, 'Circulation and Beyond—The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia', 60 and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner, 'Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner (editors), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (Ashgate: USA, 2017), 2.

<sup>92</sup> Since 'there is no pure tradition unaffected by the artistic forms of other cultures.' See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Reflections on World Art History', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner (editors), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2017), 37.

<sup>93</sup> A movement that could be repeated ad infinitum. See Juneja, 'Circulation and Beyond—The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia', 60.

<sup>94</sup> Within the framework of the approach attempted by the present work, special weight is given to the term 'Balkan', which should be understood as referring to the region within the former Byzantine empire and, thereafter the Ottoman (Johan August Zeune, 1808). It was understood by indigenous geographers, national geographers, and historians as a 'locus' of 'intense borrowings' from which stemmed common features, in particular as regards popular culture. According to this particular view, the Balkans were understood as a realm that had come about from the 'intersection' or 'integumentum' of more than one 'loci', which were formed from the common natural environmental conditions and the common cultural repository. In the end, this resulted in the formation of a similar way of life and recognizable outlooks on the part of the people living there, particularly because of their common subjection to Ottoman rule. See

in question is the non-stylistic absorption of imported elements that co-exist with the traditional types in a discreet way.<sup>95</sup> So the registration of the inscription and 'remedial' action of re-inscription in another, different language, Greek or Bulgarian, on the surface of the despotic icons, is not sufficient to determine the 'national identity' of the works.

Moreover, the development of the art of iconography in the Orthodox Balkan region as a whole, with common predominant means of expression, cannot be seen independently from the historico-political context of their reference point. In interpreting the meaning of the icons of military saints, we mentioned above the particular military class of warriors. The formation of this class was a common development throughout the enslaved populations of the Balkan peninsula, since it appeared after the disappearance of the former military castes of the Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians, and Vlachs (Romanian), as well as the Dalmatian spahis (kadimi sipahiler). The irregular gendarmes [*kleftes* and *armatoli*]<sup>96</sup> and the Bulgarian hajduks, as a special military 'class', arose from the need of the sultans to control the inaccessible mountain communities and to impose order.<sup>97</sup> It seems, then, that the common past and conditions of life experienced by the competing national groups, the similarities in their political ambitions, and the structural symbolism of the iconographic model of a mounted warrior, as this was perceived on the basis of a common religious faith, allowed in turn for a common manner of viewing the military saints and a quest for such icons by these groups. This reading of the icons and the perception of their meaning by the communion of the faithful would have been impossible, however, if the stance, the garb, and the way in which these warriors of the Christian faith, these soldiers of yore, in their later

Roumen Dontchev Daskalov, 'The Balkans: Region and Beyond', in Roumen Dontchev Daskalov, Diana Mishkova, Tchavdar Marinov and Alexander Vezhenkov, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans - Volume Four: Concepts, Approaches, and (Self-)Representations*, *Balkan Studies Library* volume: 18, eds Roumen Dontchev Daskalov - Tchavdar Marinov (Brill: 2017), 1, 2.

<sup>95</sup> DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Pruner, 'Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History', 2.

<sup>96</sup> In particular, with reference to the term 'armatolos', it is first encountered in the texts of Turkish historians of the fifteenth century. Apostolos E. Vacolopoulos, 'Traits communs du développement économique et social des peuples Balkaniques et du Sud-Est Européen à l'époque ottomane', *Balkan Studies* 16 (1975), 159, 160, 161.

<sup>97</sup> Indeed, from the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, a period marked by frequent military conflicts between the empire and Europe, the institution of the 'armatoli' was revived. Vacolopoulos, 'Traits communs du développement économique et social des peuples Balkaniques et du Sud-Est Européen à l'époque ottomane', 159, 160, 161, 166.

guise, did not transcend the mere reproduction of a stereotyped model and did not reveal the essence of their existence: the invincible combativeness and supremacy of the holy mounted warriors over all forms of adversary. In aesthetic terms, this is shown through the application of compositional principles, such as the non-organic relationship between the Christian horseman and the background scenery. Instead of being incorporated into the landscape, he rides above it, bringing a surrealist reality which endures throughout the centuries, irrespective of any topical necessities and tribulations, or geographical co-ordinates.

This conventional existence of the depictions, which was called *iconicity*,<sup>98</sup> led to a common interpretative view and a familiarized understanding of the content on the part of the faithful as a whole. In other words, the formal external features resonated with the visual apperceptions of the faithful in the nineteenth century, in every era, in every combat, and the mounted saints always emerge victorious, no matter who the opponent is: a pagan Roman in the time of the persecution of Christians; the Arabs in the tenth century; the retrogressive conqueror of the more modern historical period;<sup>99</sup> or the unhistorical and exotic beast that forces the peaceful inhabitants of a region to flee their homeland. There is no room for the ideological springboards or political agendas of the competing sides, which, as the later ‘corrections’ of the original inscriptions testify, both sides sought to make their own. And, vice versa, precisely because the content of the model warrior depicted was reinforced by the historical context of every previous version, which contained much of its contemporaneity, it managed to be identified not only with the framework of the political narrative of both ethnic groups, but also with the transcendental experiences of the faithful on both sides.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 36, 156, 162, 185.

<sup>99</sup> On the interpretational correlation between the motif and the serpent and issue of liberation, see Iliana Zarra, «Η πάλη ανάμεσα σε αετό και φίδι: Το εικονογραφικό μοτίβο σε δύο παραδείγματα του 18<sup>ου</sup> και 19<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα και οι πολιτικές του προεκτάσεις», in *Θεσσαλονίκη*, (Θεσσαλονίκη: Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Ιστορίας του Δήμου Θεσσαλονίκης, 2013), 91–106, esp. 102, 103–104, whence the older bibliography. Papastorakis 213–219. Paschalis Kitromilidis, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός. Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες*, (Αθήνα: ΜΙΕΤ, 2009), 45.

<sup>100</sup> As has been so beautifully put by Cornelia Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 20, 162.

Consequently, the particular dynamic that the saints and warriors of the Christian faith draw upon is actually due to the fact that they always stand at that point when fleeting reality is lost in the hereafter,<sup>101</sup> precisely because this encounter of theirs with the faithful is, every time, an event that is experienced.<sup>102</sup> In this case, the completeness with which believers communicate with the warrior saint and liberator does not involve only the respectful attitude of the church-going public but also its multi-sensory participation in the action of the scene. Believers, or rather the community of believers, experience the animation of the sacred depiction with all their senses (motion, hearing, sight, smell, and taste).<sup>103</sup> Such transcendental events are not unknown in the history of the Byzantine icons. The authors of the well-known *Εκφράσεις* ('Expressions') and other iconographical sources of the period describe occasions when the forms of the saints depicted behave as living creatures: they intervene in human affairs and perform miraculous acts. This type of relationship between the faithful and the icon surpasses historical time and any social coordinates and is 'immune' to formulae that determine their expression stylistically.<sup>104</sup>

Notable evidence of one such experience is preserved in the accounts of residents of Adrianople, which were recorded, decades later, by the soldier and politician Stylianos Gonatas (1876–1966), during a walking tour in Thrace.<sup>105</sup> According to these accounts, in the last phase of Turkish rule Christians suffered inordinately from the repeated demands of the Muslims that they be given halva or rice to eat, particularly during the period of Ramadhan. At some stage this bizarre tax exhausted the funds of the church and therefore the faithful were perforce obliged to contribute directly to these doles. Then the priests, parish council members and leading figures among the parishioners

<sup>101</sup> Zarra, «Η πάλη ανάμεσα σε αετό και φίδι: Το εικονογραφικό μοτίβο σε δύο παραδείγματα του 18<sup>ου</sup> και 19<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα και οι πολιτικές του προεκτάσεις», 96.

<sup>102</sup> Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 20.

<sup>103</sup> Dimitra Kotoula, 'Experiencing the Miracle. Animated Images and the Senses in the Burial Chapel of the Byzantine Saint', in *The Multi-Sensory Image from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, edited by Heather Hunter-Crawley and Erica O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2019), 86–88, 97.

<sup>104</sup> Kotoula, "Experiencing the Miracle. Animated Images and the Senses in the Burial Chapel of the Byzantine Saint", 88, 89.

<sup>105</sup> The people in question were a Christian community who had settled on the western edge of the town, near the Mikhal-kioprou bridge. Their church was dedicated to the warrior St George. Turks lived in the same area, quite a number of whom were janissaries. Stylianos Gonatas, «Αναμνήσεις εκ της Θράκης», *Θρακικά* 25 (1956), 236–237.



‘locked themselves in one night and, in tears, implored Saint George to liberate them from this taxation’.<sup>106</sup> The next day, when the janissaries had gathered at the coffee-shop:

suddenly the road lit up, as if illumined by lightning and Saint George appeared on horseback, passing the coffee-shop a number of times and threatening the Janissaries with his lance.

The latter were overcome with such terror that they not only ceased from demanding halva from the church but even sent measures of wax candles and oil for the candelabras and oil-lamps of the Saint.<sup>107</sup>

In conclusion, the observation persists that historians of art who do not approach the particular aesthetic properties of the icon as a means of giving an existential form to divinity or sanctity refuse to open a dialogue with theologians. And even though the international discourse around the history of art insists on expressing the ‘complaint’ that the reading of religious sentiment is now satisfied by the prolific production of objects of veneration without any special artistic merit,<sup>108</sup> perhaps we should ask ourselves whether the *artistic deficiency* in question is because we are overlooking the fact that the relationship between the believer/viewer and the icon is not limited to passive observation. On the contrary, it is something that derives from participation in the experience of worship as a whole. As a result, the icon will not allow us to see it in its fullness if we do not respect its integrity.

<sup>106</sup> Gonatas, «Αναμνήσεις εκ της Θράκης», 237.

<sup>107</sup> Gonatas, «Αναμνήσεις εκ της Θράκης», 237.

<sup>108</sup> Martin Warnke in Hans Belting – Wolfgang Kemp et al. *Kunstgeschichte: Eine Einführung*,