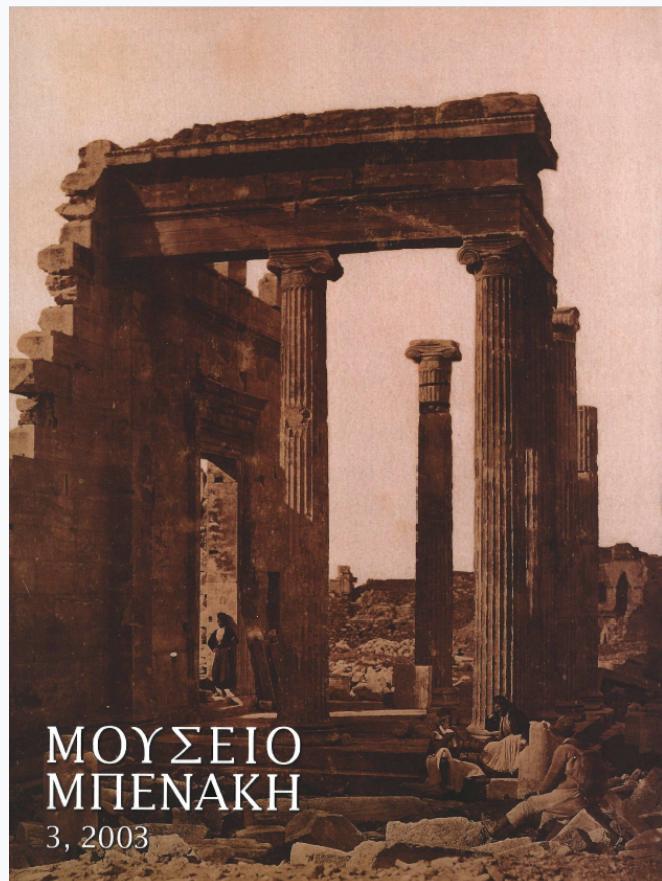


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Some thoughts on unusual secular examples of Cretan woodcarving and the stylistic aspects of 'folk art'

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Some thoughts on unusual secular examples of Cretan woodcarving and the stylistic aspects of 'folk art'

I HAVE ALWAYS TAKEN every available opportunity to reiterate in the strongest terms possible my firm belief that the mere anonymity of an artistic creation is not a valid reason for ascribing it to the nebulous world of so-called 'folk art'. This I have done in full consciousness of the fact that the task of assembling a group of works stamped with the distinctive stylistic features which are unique to personal artistic statements can be hopelessly obstructed by an inadequate viewing of the material –as I know from my own experience on several occasions in the past.¹

This was also the case with my encounter with a carved wooden panel in a private collection. The hole in the upper part of the decorative surface and the iron locking mechanism on the back left no doubt that it was originally the front panel of a chest (fig. 1),² and as with the majority of chests, at any rate those of Greek origin, the need for ornamentation is satisfied here, on its main rectangular surface.³ But in the present case the representation appears incomplete, as if it had been sawn off at both ends, and one cannot exclude the possibility that it originally continued on the two side panels to which the jagged ends were once attached, even though this is inconsistent with conventional typology.⁴ The same may be said about the unusual flat relief of the carving, unknown elsewhere in Greek wooden artefacts of the post-Byzantine era, and its expressive quality which far transcends the narrative content.

The reading and interpretation of the representation are hampered by difficulties in photographing the low-relief carving, in spite of repeated efforts to improve the result, if only in part. For this reason the drawing of the

object made by Katerina Mavragani has proved invaluable –indeed indispensable– as it shows every detail of the dense execution (fig. 2).⁵ The composition is divided into two sections by a vertical axis of parallel lines which may be intended to depict a tree trunk in view of the branches and foliage growing out of the right side, and the exceptionally lush verdure which fills the spaces between the individual motifs, suggestive of an impenetrable forest. Continuity between the two sections is ensured in the lower part by the coils of a winged dragon and at the top by the front legs of a wild goat which gallops off to the right. The image is that of a fantastic hunt involving two horsemen, one in each section. The first, occupied with his fight with the monster, holds a spear in his raised right hand, poised to strike, while in his left is a small shield. The figure seated pillion and holding the horse's reins is presumably the youth from Mytilene, St George's regular companion, as we may infer from the clearly visible flask in his right hand.⁶ Despite the absence of any specific adversary, the second horseman should presumably be identified as another military saint, perhaps St Demetrios, or one of the St Theodores.⁷

The composition starts on the left with an archer, behind whom can be seen the front part of a bird, a hare and the front of an unidentifiable animal, probably a dog. Below are a lion and a small quadruped with a long tail, while beneath St George's horse a small dog is attacking the injured dragon, and a larger one a wild goat which has already been struck by two arrows. In the right section, behind the second horseman, the hunting atmosphere continues with a bird, another large lion, a



Fig. 1. Front panel of carved wooden chest, l.: 1.37 m. Private collection (photo: K. Manolis).

Fig. 2. Drawing of the low-relief carving (drawing: K. Mavragani).

hare and a dog. The pictorial narrative ends with, beneath the front legs of the horse, a second dog chasing a hare, the rear of a goat, and above them a majestic bird, apparently the rider's intended quarry, with outspread wings and a tufted crest.

If we take into account the clearly secular character of the hunting theme and its allusions to models from chivalry and myth, also widely celebrated in folk song,⁸ it is hard to know whether the presence of St George adds a cryptic religious dimension, and whether the fantastic substratum of the narrative content contains allusions to secular and sacred beliefs in the creation of a unified world.⁹ The saint's apotropaic, protective message and his recurrence on objects connected with marriage would on their own justify the dynamic of his role in a representation carved on an item of furniture which has a specifically nuptial context.¹⁰ But the interpretation of 'folk art' is a highly complex matter, and I would prefer to pass on to

the somewhat more tangible area of stylistic evaluation.

As already mentioned, the panel displays a striking use of low-relief carving (fig. 1), which can be read only with the assistance of the drawing (fig. 2). Equally unusual is the presence of a continuous network of dots, which fills the spaces between the contours of the motifs and highlights the narrative elements of the work. Exactly the same technique is found in the much higher relief of the carved features –alternating cypresses, flower vases, birds, buildings and the occasional two-headed eagle– on a distinctive group of carved wooden chests found mainly in the Greek islands, whose place of manufacture has not yet been identified.¹¹ Even more original in a Greek context is the composition's structure, which displays a provocative disobedience to the traditional iconographic canons of symmetrical antithesis, and bears a narrative weight which is intensified by the overall flow of the figures towards the right, and barely counter-balanced by the re-

verse movement of the dragon.¹² In this context I would also mention the irregular distribution of the thematic units, the remarkable density of the natural environment with its multiple variations on a single basic motif, and the dramatic power of the various components which articulate the continuity of the visual language. As the provenance of this spectacular work in Crete is beyond question, it is remarkable that no similar objects have been found there, as far as can be judged from the published corpus of Cretan woodcarving.¹³

Yet the stylistic individuality and the idiom of the sculptural technique immediate call to mind another wooden carving from the treasure-stores of folk art, this time in the Benaki Museum. This is a representation of the Crucifixion, again in low relief, which some years ago I described in the following terms: "*the simple, almost abstract representation of the subject, the austere symmetry of the composition, the dramatic tension in the movements of the soldiers armed with spears as they surround the helpless, motionless figure of the crucified Christ, the stylised trees filling in the spaces and providing the barest indication of a landscape, are all elements that invest this apparently simple work with a deeply poetic atmosphere*" (fig. 3).¹⁴ I decided to include this fascinating, indeed enigmatic work in the Museum's newly arranged Greek galleries, and placed it among a small group of exhibits which aimed at illustrating the cultural landscape of post-Byzantine Crete. At the time there was no firm evidence to support such a provenance, but its attribution to the cultural output of the Great Island is now fully vindicated by the incontrovertibly Cretan origin of the panel which inspired this investigation (figs 1-2), and which can plausibly be accredited to the same anonymous craftsman.

In another somewhat unconsidered, indeed intuitive, note I once described the Benaki Crucifixion as "*an extremely rare example of early 18th-century Cretan woodcarving, probably from the decoration of an iconostasis (sanctuary screen)*".¹⁵ Even more unsubstantiated was my suggestion that the Roman soldiers were portrayed as Turkish warriors, an idea which gains no support from the repertoire of Ottoman dress found in the accounts of European travellers.¹⁶ Indeed it must be admitted that all the observations in that note, which betray my – perhaps excusable – lack of knowledge at the time, now need to be reconsidered.

The idea that the object came from a sanctuary screen



Fig. 3. Carved wooden frame with representation of the Crucifixion. Athens, Benaki Museum 8798 (photo: K. Manolis).

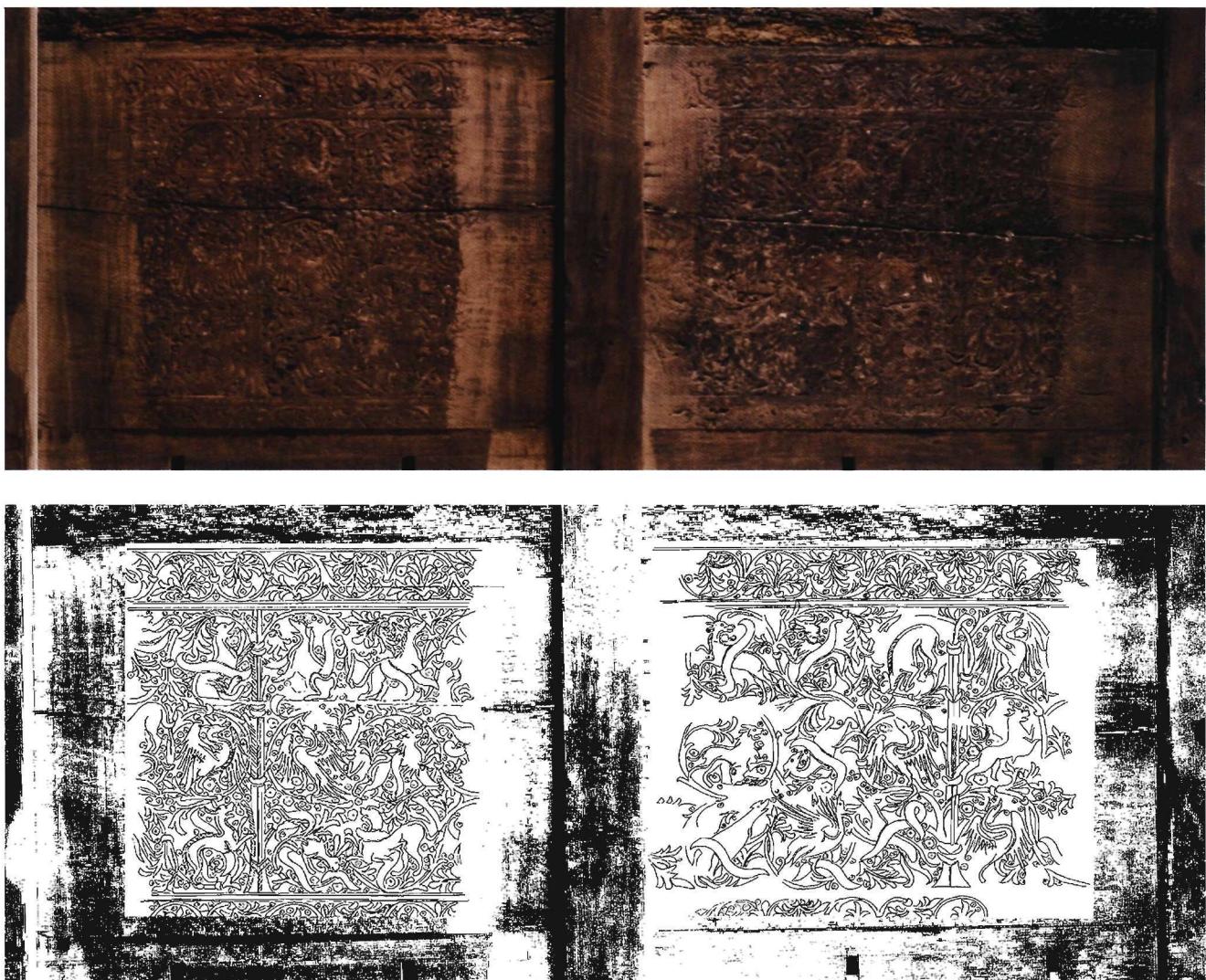
was suggested by the combination of the religious content and the arched shape of the edge (fig. 3). A more dispassionate evaluation excludes such a possibility: it could not have originated in a Dodecaorton tier and formed the upper frame of an icon of the Crucifixion, because wooden and marble frames of this type never reproduce the subject depicted below.¹⁷ It may rather have belonged to an icon-stand or to the upper frame of an icon niche, such as was to be found in every Greek home.¹⁸ On the other hand, the indisputably 'Venetian' treatment of the soldiers who flank the central subject in a naturalistic manner far from common in works of 'folk art', suggests a dating to the period of Venetian occupation, around the time of the fall of Candia in 1669. But a more direct link, supported by the typology of the figures who are rendered with the same striking clarity in the nearest example, the 'hunting' panel (figs 1-2), requires us to take a journey back in time, following the clues provided by the most securely dated examples.

Our efforts to establish the chronology of the two works cannot take us back as far as the 14th century, however, despite the attraction of linking the first object (figs 1-2) with a now lost wall-painting in the church of the Virgin at Monochoro Kainouriou in Messara, and the plausibility of ascribing the hunting theme to the atmosphere of this cultural tradition.¹⁹ The costume features are generally to be found between the mid-15th and the early 16th centuries: for example, in the portrait of Michalis Mochiots in the wall-paintings of the church of Archangel Michael at Mesa Lakkonia, Mirabello (1432)²⁰ and in the frescoes of St George's church at Voila, Siteia (1518).²¹ Throughout this period clothes appear to have been influenced by



Fig. 4. Icon of the Last Judgement. Chania.

Fig. 5. Icon of the Last Judgement, rear view. Chania



Figs 6-7. Front chest panel used in the icon of the Last Judgement and drawing of the carving.

western fashions, particularly among the upper classes,²² as we may observe in several figures from the icons of Angelos Akotantos and of Michael Damaskinos.²³ This seems to confirm my inner conviction that the two works could not have been executed after the mid-16th century – an intuition supported by further, albeit indirect, clues.

Much has been written about the vital role played by Crete in the development mainly of ecclesiastical woodcarving from the 15th century onwards,²⁴ but we also have evidence of its workshops being involved in secular carving; we know, for example, that “*cypress wood chests were exported from Crete to Italy from the 16th century*”.²⁵ In the 17th century the main centre of woodcarving was Candia,

but this does not exclude the possibility that similar workshops flourished in other cities – e.g. in Chania –²⁶ where the unexpected publication by Michalis Andrianakis of two icons by the hieromonach Ambrosios Emporos has brought to light comparable examples of secular carving.²⁷ Among the strips of wood which he used in his icons of the Dormition of the Virgin and of the Last Judgement (fig. 4) are two front chest panels, similar in technique and style to those under discussion here, as is apparent from the photographs and drawings which with his customary generosity the author has made available to me.

According to Andrianakis the reverse side of the wooden panel in the icon of the Dormition “*has painted*

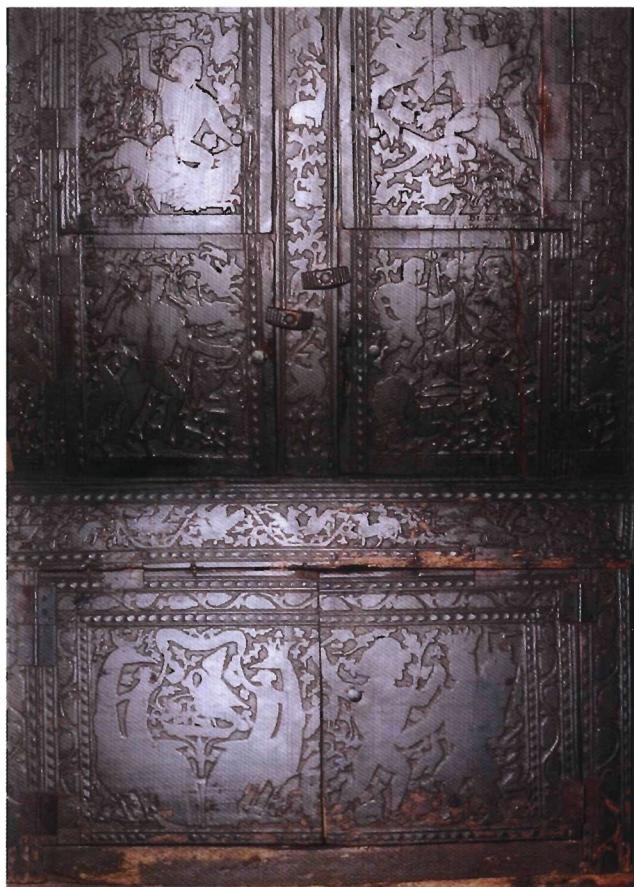


Fig. 8. Front panel of carved wooden cupboard, detail.
Chania, Historical Archive.

relief ornamentation, probably originating from a carved wooden chest in second use. The dense decoration consists of representations of rarely-depicted animals surrounded by stylised vegetal motifs, a feature of western art”. The panel in the Last Judgement icon is better preserved (fig. 5), though in spite of its having been isolated with the aid of electronic technology (fig. 6), a ‘reading’ of the decorative motifs is at present possible only with the aid of a drawing (fig. 7).²⁸ Andrianakis’ dating of the two icons to around 1625 certainly defines the *terminus ante quem* of the carving, but it cannot provide any precise confirmation of their position in the chronology of post-Byzantine secular Cretan woodcarving; similarly there can be no guarantee of their origin in Chania, because the item of furniture from which they derive could equally well have been sent there from Candia. My own opinion is that it would have taken at least a generation before the

object was put to second use, at a time when the original purpose had become outmoded and contemporary fashions had changed.

The theory that both the Benaki Museum Crucifixion (fig. 3) and the panel with the hunting scene (figs 1-2) should be dated around the mid-16th century receives further corroboration from other related data. I should like to draw attention first to the similar low-level relief on a cupboard from the Historical Archive of Crete in Chania (fig. 8), whose ornamentation was linked by Andrianakis with the carved panels of the two icons (figs 6-7).²⁹ The singularity of the execution and the narrative character of the hunting motifs –to the extent that they can be ‘read’, because this important work remains unpublished and unrestored– are closest to the ‘hunting’ panel (figs 1-2); it is accordingly quite conceivable that they are roughly contemporary with each other, and that the cupboard originally formed part of the furnishings in the mansion of some eminent Venetian, since the use of such an object is totally out of keeping with Greek household practices.³⁰ This adds further weight to the possibility of an Italian provenance, since there, as in the rest of Europe, such furniture was extremely common.³¹

I would myself venture to argue that the cupboard from Chania (fig. 8) must have been made in Crete, presumably by Cretan craftsmen following designs brought from Italy, though I am not aware that any comparable works have been found there. The same can be said about a distinctive group of chests executed in the same technique which, though attributed vaguely to an unidentified centre in Northern Italy, have been found in the Greek islands. The most impressive example, which is recorded as coming from Folegandros, is housed in the Benaki Museum (fig. 9).³² The interior of the lid contains a two-tiered representation of a naval battle, the lower part of which is executed in tempera, by contrast with the overpainted low relief of the upper section, where the gaps in the background are filled with ‘dotted’ latticework rather as in the two examples of Cretan woodcarving which launched this study (figs 1-3). The representation continues on the front on the main panel of the chest; this has three main sections depicting sailing ships in flat relief with traces of overpainting, alternating with smaller horizontal areas containing male figures in 16th-century western European aristocratic dress. The central motif seems to be inspired by the defeat of the Ottoman fleet



Fig. 9. Chest from Folegandros. Athens, Benaki Museum 8270 (photo: K. K. Manolis).

at the celebrated naval battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571,³³ a date which represents a *terminus post quem*; we may therefore assume that the work was executed at some point between the last quarter of the 16th and the first quarter of the 17th century, the period during which the battle might have been expected to maintain its dramatic impact on both western and eastern art.³⁴ The same comment applies to the typology of the ships depicted therein; Chrysa Maltezou kindly arranged for these to be examined by Alvise Chiggiato, member of the Italian Institute of Archeology and Naval Ethnology in Venice, to whom I am most grateful. Though he interpreted the content differently, he came to a similar conclusion as to the dating of the work and its origin in the East.³⁵

In support of my present argument that the chest from Folegandros (fig. 9) represents a stylistic development of the tradition of woodcarving exemplified by the Benaki Crucifixion (fig. 3) and the 'hunting' panel (figs 1-2), I would again adduce the lack of comparable examples in Northern Italy.³⁶ The only item I have been able to trace is a casket (cassetina) from Friuli which displays a similar

technique and dates from the second half of the 16th century. The relevant publication erroneously interprets Christ's monogram IHS as an abbreviation of the Greek,³⁷ though, as a celebrated icon by Andreas Ritzos indicates, the letters are actually an acronym of J(esus) H(ominum) S(alvator).³⁸ This does not reduce the probability of the work's Greek origin, as a large number of Cretan artists are known to have been employed in satisfying the demands of the Italian market as well.³⁹ It is my belief that the Benaki Museum chest must have reached Folegandros, where other similar examples are found,⁴⁰ about the time of the fall of Candia, in the company of one of the many inhabitants of Crete who resettled in the Aegean islands.⁴¹ This would account for the striking resemblance of the design of the garlands to the vegetal motifs on the surrounding bands of the two chest panels found in the icons in Chania (figs 6-7) and on the representation of the naval battle on the Benaki chest (fig. 10). It reveals to us the seamless momentum of the evolutionary process, despite the problems caused by the poverty of the available material and by our own lamentable indifference to identifying, preserving and



Fig. 10. Garland with vegetal motifs. Detail from the chest fig. 9.

Fig. 11. Angels with musical instruments. Detail from the chest fig. 9.

Fig. 12. Chest from Folegandros, side panel. Athens, Benaki Museum 8270 (photo: K. Manolis).

exhibiting the relics of our most recent cultural history.

Further investigation may be able to provide firmer guidance to the researcher whose attentions are currently poised between Italy and Crete. I am myself not able to say if the presence of another object in Friuli –a small box with a cylindrical lid (fig. 13)⁴² can be similarly explained as a product of the exporting activity of some Cretan workshop. Low-level relief is not the technique used here, but rather ‘pokerwork’ (decorazione pirografia



Fig. 13. Box from Friuli (after: *Semenzato, Casa d'aste*, Auction Catalogue, Florence, December 2001 no 72).

fata), as it is described in the relevant publication, though without seeing the object for myself I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the label. In any event, the execution undoubtedly resembles that of certain motifs on the Benaki chest –the arcades with angels playing musical instruments (fig. 11) and the latticework with floral motifs on the side panels (fig. 12)– though there, as the Museum’s Conservation Department confirms, brush and ink were used. The box’s apparent origin at the end of the 16th century corroborates the dating already proposed for the Benaki chest, but in considering its provenance we face the same issues as with the other items examined here.

The coherent and consistent logic of these fragmentary arguments is confirmed by the object which provides the final link in the chain and removes the disparate clues from the world of vague hypothetical association to plant them firmly in Greek soil. This is another, unquestionably later carved chest in the Benaki Museum which, again instinctively, I had included in the Cretan section without knowing that it represented a development of the same technique of flat relief, though it is patently inferior in both design and in elegance of carving (figs 14-15).⁴³ The exterior of the lid (fig. 14) contains a peripheral decorative band with four shells in the corner and trailing vegetal scrolls which reproduce the earlier versions in simplified form; in the centre is a representation of a disc with rays (*doxa*) enclosing a chalice and a cross, on the left a cock with its head turned backwards to face the chalice and on the right a church with a tall bell tower next to a stylised hill with houses.⁴⁴ The more strik-



Figs 14-15. Lid and front panel of chest. Athens, Benaki Museum 8718 (photos: K. Manolis).

ing front panel shows a hill with several ridges and with trees and a village at its summit, then two columns with an architrave and in the window-like space between them the head and shoulders of a woman with an impressive head-dress. The stylised hill continues with the village and another house, followed by a large flower vase, more village buildings and finally a monumental watermill.

Beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt we have here one of the most stunning creations of so-called 'folk art', and many pages could be devoted to breaking its narrative code. Suffice it here to say that the message concealed within the web of symbolic allusions, the unprecedented blend of natural and architectural features, the complex-

ity of the sacred and secular references, the revival of the antique motif of 'the woman in the window', the near three-quarter pose of the figure and the unexpected naturalism of the execution in my view vindicates the dating of the work to the late 17th or 18th century⁴⁵ – the dating I had once proposed on more intuitive grounds, in blissful ignorance of the paths which can lead us to the missing chapters in the barely-known history of neo-Hellenic cultural artefacts.

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NOTES

* My work on this subject has benefited from the contributions of many colleagues and friends, but I should especially like to thank Stella Ghika who assisted me throughout the preparation of the article and the footnotes.

1. See recently, A. Delivorrias, Παραστάσεις χορού στην ελληνική λαϊκή τέχνη, in: *Kανίσκιον Φιλίας, τιμητικός τόμος για τον Guy-Michel Saunier* (Athens 2002) esp. 133-35 nn. 2, 5, with references to previous works.

2. Dimensions: 0.412 (left), 0.432 (right) x 1.37 x 0.02 m. It consists of two pieces of wood of differing height, fastened together with five iron nails which have been driven into the wood from five evenly spaced vertical incisions (0.07 x 0.01 x 0.005 m.) in the upper section. The decorative motifs display a few faint traces of red and green pigment. I am most grateful to Anthi and Alekos Eustathiades for giving their permission to publish this item, and to Kostas Manolis for undertaking the far from simple task of photographing it.

3. See generally, A. Hatzimichali, *L'art populaire grec* (Athens 1937) 33-34, 136-38 figs 3-4, 6; *ead.*, *La sculpture sur bois* (Athens 1950) 51-52; K. A. Makris, Woodcarving, in: St. A. Papadopoulos (ed.), *Greek Handicraft* (Athens 1969) 63-64 figs 29-31; Ch. Binos, Ευλόγλυπτες λεσβιακές κασέλες, *Zygos* 2 (1965) 46-56; K. Kefalas, Κασέλες, μπαούλα και σεντούκια στο Βορειοελλαδικό χώρο, in: *Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium of the Folklore of Northern Greece, Alexandroupolis 14-18 October 1976* (Thessaloniki 1979) 325-33; G. Neroladakis, J. Pervolarakis, Κασέλες, in: Ch. Vallianos, G. Neroladakis, J. Pervolarakis, (ed.), *Ta Κρητικά Έπιπλα. Μορφολογική Μελέτη εντέχνων προτύπων (Voroi 7*, Athens 1986) 108-34; P. Zora, *Ελληνική τέχνη. Λαϊκή τέχνη* (Athens 1994) 19, 218 no. 57; A. Delivorrias, Carved wooden chests from the Peloponnese: questions of stylistic and the-

matic singularity, *Mouseio Benaki* 1 (2001) 111-26.

4. As has already been noted: Hatzimichali 1937 (*op. cit.*) 51; Makris (*op. cit.*) 63; Kefalas (*op. cit.*) 329; Neroladakis, Pervolarakis (*op. cit.*) 108. Among the few exceptions is an example from Epirus, A. Delivorrias, *Guide to the Benaki Museum* (Athens 1980) 178 fig. 151, and another, possibly intended for ecclesiastical use, A. Delivorrias, *A Guide to the Benaki Museum* (Athens 2000) 108 fig. The side panels are more often decorated on painted chests, though these objects have received sadly little scholarly interest.

5. The same drawing is also reproduced, again without comment, in: A. Delivorrias, Decoration of houses, in: D. Filippidis (ed.), *Aegean Islands. Architecture* (Athens 2003) 52 n. 31 fig. 51.

6. On the iconographic tradition of this theme, see R. Cormack, St. Mihalarias, A Crusader painting of St. George: "maniera greca" or "lingua franca"? *The Burlington Magazine* 126, no 972 (1984) 132-41, esp. 137-38 and nn. 20, 22, 25, 26, together with earlier bibliography. I was unable to obtain access to T. Mark-Weiner, *Narrative Cycles of the Life of Saint George in Byzantine Art* (New York 1977).

7. See T. Papamastorakis, Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών, *DChAE* 20 (1998) 213-28.

8. See St. A. Alexiou (ed.), *Κρητική ανθολογία, IE'-IZ' αιώνας* (Herakleion 1969²) 66 no. 13 and on Cretan popular songs of the Venetian occupation, *ibid.* 237-38 no. III; *id.* (ed.), *Βιντζέντζος Κορνάρος. Ερωτόκριτος* (Athens 1990²) 14, l. 107-14, and 15, l. 135-37. The Cretans' love of hunting on horseback is also mentioned in E. K. Frangaki, *Η λαϊκή τέχνη της Κρήτης, 1: Η ανδρική φορεσιά* (Athens 1960) 90 n. 5.

9. For similar material on carved wooden chests from Mani,

see Delivorrias (n. 3) 116, 119 figs 5, 7-8, 11-12.

10. See Delivorrias (n. 3) 116 n. 32 with bibliography. On popular beliefs concerning dragon-slaying heroes, N. Vernikos, Περί δρακόντων, in: *Proceedings of the second Symposium of Northern Greece, Komotini 19-22 March 1975* (Thessaloniki 1976) 29-44; M. Al. Alexiades, *Οι Ελληνικές παραλλαγές για του δρακοντοκτόνου ήρωα. Παραμυθολογική μελέτη* (Ioannina 1982).

11. The date of their manufacture is also unknown: cf. Delivorrias (n. 5) 58 n. 34 fig. 59, with references to other examples. I hope that at some point a monograph will be devoted to the corpus of collected material. A 'dotted' background is also found on chests from Mani: D. Fotopoulos, A. Delivorrias, *Greece at the Benaki Museum* (Athens 1997) 418 fig. 716; Delivorrias (n. 3) figs 5, 9, 13.

12. On this fascinating topic: Delivorrias (n. 3) 115 nos. 18, 116, 119; Delivorrias (n. 1) 155 n. 49.

13. This can be seen, for example, by leafing through the material which is collected in Vallianos, Pervolarakis, Neroladakis (n. 3).

14. Inv. no. 8798 (dimensions 0.265 x 0.62 x 0.025 m): Delivorrias, *Guide* (n. 4) 180 fig. 152. The new photograph was taken by Kostas Manolis.

15. Delivorrias, *A Guide* (n. 4) 88; Delivorrias (n. 5) 52 n. 32.

16. Cf. L. Chalcondyle, *Histoire Générale des Turcs contenant l'histoire de Chalcondyle* II (Paris 1662) pl. 10; J. M. Lean (ed.), *The military costume of Turkey* (London 1818); D'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire Othoman* III (Paris 1820) pls 184-227.

17. Cf. Hadzimichali, *La sculpture* (n. 3) 37-40; *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst* III (1973) 326-50 s.v. Ikonostas (M. Chatzidakis); Ch. M. Koutelakis, *Ξυλόγλυπτα τέμπλα της Δωδεκανήσου μέχρι το 1700* (Athens-Ioannina 1986); A. Goulaki-Voutira, G. Karadedos, G. Lavvas, *Η εκκλησιαστική μαρμαρούχλυπτική στις Κυκλαδες από τον 16ο ως τον 20ο αιώνα* (Athens 1996) 66-72 pls 11-12.

18. E.g. an example from Skyros in the Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8730: A. Hatzimihali, *Ελληνική λαϊκή τέχνη. Σκύρος* (Athens 1925) 171 fig. 211; Hatzimihali, *L'art populaire* (n. 3) 136 fig. 2; Delivorrias, *A Guide* (n. 4) 96; cf. for stone-carving, A. P. Stefanou, *Δείγματα νεοελληνικής τέχνης. Γλυπτά Α'* (Chios 1972) 42-46 pls 21 a-b.

19. G. Gerola, *Monumenti Veneti nell'isola di Creta* II (Venezia 1908) 339 no. 52 pl. 17,1; Frangaki (n. 8) 90 n. 4; 91 n. 5. For my 'initiation' into the mysteries of costume evaluation I must express my gratitude to Yanna Bitha.

20. Gerola (*op. cit.*) 338 no. 48 pl. 16,2; Frangaki (n. 8) 75 fig. 50.

21. Gerola (*op. cit.*) 339 no. 54 pl. 17,2 Frangaki (n. 8) 71 n. 3.

22. See E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Encyclopédie medieval: Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français de l'époque Carolingienne à la Renaissance* (1858-1875, 1978²): on boots 492 fig. 16; 554-55 fig. 4; on costume 492 fig. 17; on headgear 481 fig. 14.

23. See M. Vasilaki, Εικόνα του ζωγράφου Άγγελου με τον Άγ. Γεώργιο Καβαλάρη Δρακοντοκτόνο: Ένα νέο απόκτημα του Μουσείου Μπενάκη, in: *Proceedings of the Sixth International Cretological Symposium*, 2 (Chania 1991) 41-49; M. Borboudakis (ed.), *Εικόνες της Κρητικής τέχνης* (Herakleion 1993) 451-53 no. 97 (M. Konstantoudaki-Kitromilidou). See also M. Konstantoudaki-Kitromillides, Ο Θεοφάνης, ο Marcantonio Raimondi, Θέματα all'antica και grottesche, in: *Ενφρόσνυν, Αφιέρωμα στον Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη Α'* (Athens 1991) 271-82.

24. Chatzidakis (n. 17) 350; M. Kazanaki, Εκκλησιαστική ξυλογλυπτική στο Χανδακά τον 17ο αι., *Θοσανρίσματα* 11 (1974) 251-83; E. Tsaparlis, *Ξυλόγλυπτα τέμπλα Ηπείρου 17ον αι. - πρώσεως 18ον αι.* (Athens 1980) 18-22, 25; Ch. M. Koutelakis, *Η ανάπτυξη της ξυλογλυπτικής στο Αιγαίο και ιδιαίτερα στα Δωδεκάνησα* (Athens 1985) 1-20, esp. 1-4, 6.

25. Kazanaki (*op. cit.*) 256 n. 25.

26. Kazanaki (n. 24) 252.

27. The case is not unique, see E. Ghini-Tsopopoulou, Εικόνα του Εμμ. Ασπιτάρδου στα Κύθηρα, *DChAE* 20 (1998) 365 n. 10. Maria Vasilaki drew my attention to this discovery and Michalis Andrianakis kindly allowed me to make use of it for this article, as well as supplying the photographs and the drawings: M. G. Andrianakis, Εικόνες από το ναό των Αγίων Αναργύρων Χανίων, in: *Επίστα Έκδοση Δήμου Χανίων* (Chania 1986) 65-75; *id.*, *Η παλιά πόλη των Χανίων* (Athens 1997) 24-25. On Ambrosios Emboros, see also M. Chatzidakis, *Ελληνικές ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1450-1830)* 1 (Athens 1987) 285.

28. The large dimensions of the icon (1.58 x 2.46 m) made it possible for Dora Pikiioni to make an approximate reconstruction of the original appearance of the panel.

29. Andrianakis, *Η παλιά πόλη* (n. 27) 66: "The relief and the ornamentation are reminiscent of an unpublished carved wooden cupboard from the Historical Archive in Crete". The author will be dealing with the subject of wood-carving during the Venetian occupation in a separate study. For the photograph of the chest by Thanasis Roumelis of the 13th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities I am grateful to Zacharenia Semanteraki, director of the Archive.

30. My views on the only comparable example with painted decoration known to me from Paros now need revision: A. Delivorrias, Traditional Art on the Aegean, in: *The Aegean. The Epicenter of Greek Civilization* (Athens 1997²) 304 fig. 125; Delivorrias (n. 5) 58 n.55.

31. See generally and for the bibliography: *The Dictionary of Art* 2 (1996) 811-13 s.v. Austria VI,1. Furniture (R. Wönsch-Langenfelder); *The Dictionary of Art* 8 (1996) 270-71 s.v. Cupboard (J. W. Taylor); *The Dictionary of Art* 12 (1996)

419-28 s.v. Germany VI,1. Furniture (H. Zinnkann).

32. Inv. no. 8720 (dimensions 0.67 m. [with open lid: 1.24] x 1.62 x 0.61 m): A. Delivorrias (ed.), *Greece and the Sea* (exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, De Nieuwe Kerk, Athens 1987) 302-03 no. 202 (M. Kazanaki-Lappas); Ch. A. Maltezou, E. Andreadi (eds), *H Βενετία των Ελλήνων. Η Ελλάδα των Βενετών. Σημάδια στο Χώρο και στο Χρόνο* (exhibition catalogue, Megaron Mousikis, Athens 1999) 139-40 no. 30 (K. Synodinou); Delivorrias (n. 5) 52 n. 30 fig. 56.

33. On the significance of the battle, A. E. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία των νέων Ελληνισμού. Τουρκοκρατία 1453-1669. Οι αγώνες για την πίστη και την Ελευθερία III* (Thessaloniki 1968) 252-73; I. Chasiotis, in: *Ιστορία των Ελληνικού Έθνους* 10 (Athens 1975) 315-20: many studies on the subject are collected in G. Benzoni, L. S. Olschki (eds), *Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del '500 alla luce di Lepanto* (Firenze 1974); L. Vanensi (ed.), *Venezia e i Turchi* (Milano 1985).

34. M. Vassilakes, Εικόνα του Γεωργίου Κλόντζα στο Εθνικό Ιστορικό Μουσείο της Αθήνας; Η Ναυμαχία της Ναυπάκτου, *Αρχαιολογία* 15 (1985) 100 with earlier bibliography; Delivorrias (n. 32) 294-95 no. 194 (M. Vassilakes-Mavrakakes).

35. In a written communication dated 19 February 2003, which is published as an appendix to this article.

36. As I established from contacts with officials of various museums. Chrysa Maltezou confirmed the same after doing me the personal favour of examining all the chests in the Ca'd'Oro. The wood conservators in the Venetian Archaeological Service, on whose experience she also drew, told her that the work probably had a provenance in the East. Kostas Staikos informed me of an example from Friuli with inferior 17th century pokerwork: Semenzato, *Casa d'aste, Auction Catalogue*, Firenze, Febbraio 2003 no. 157. On Italian chests generally: R. De Fusco, *Storia dell'arredamento* (Torino 1985) 46-54; *The Dictionary of Art* 6 (1996) 1-6 s.v. Cassone (E. Callmann) and on carved examples, *ibid.*, 6-7 s.v. (J. W. Taylor) with extensive bibliography.

37. Semenzato, *Casa d'aste, Auction Catalogue*, Firenze, Dicembre 2001 no. 81. Kostas Staikos kindly notified me of this series of catalogues.

38. M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, Δύο εικόνες του Άγγελου και του Ανδρέα Πέτζου στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο, *DChAE* 15 (1989-1990) 110-17. I would like to thank Dimitris Arvanitakis for bringing this to my attention.

39. On the export of chests, see Kazanaki (n. 24) n. 25.

40. I owe to Markos Venios the photograph of a poorly-preserved chest which is not illustrated or even mentioned in A. Vavilopoulou-Charitonidou, *The Pholegandros Folklore Museum* (Athens 1989). He also drew my attention to a similar chest in the house of Stelis Danasis and another with pokerwork ornamentation in the house of Demetrios Lydes. Stergios Stasinopoulos has informed me of a comparable front panel, now in the Folklore Museum in Rhodes; sections of at least two others, apparently acquired in Athens, were incorporated in modern items of furniture belonging to Irene Kalliga.

41. See generally A. Harilaou, *H νήσος Φολέγανδρος* (Athens 1888) 61-62; V. Sfyroeras, Οι Κορνάροι της Μυκόνου, *Eos* 76-85 (1964) 462-64; K. D. Mertzios, Οκτώ διαθήκαι Ελλήνων Βενετίας (1535-1549), *Mnemosyne* 1 (1967) 174 (I owe both titles to Simos Symeonidis). See, apart from the Ionian islands and Italy, Vakalopoulos (n. 33) 532-38, on Karpathos, Kythnos, Naxos, Ikaria, Samos and Chios; Koutelakis (n. 24) 2-3, 6, on Paros, Ios, Folegandros, Chios and Skopelos. V. Sphyroeras has made a detailed study of the subject in: *Proceedings of the Second International Cretological Symposium* 4 (Athens 1969) 457-66, as has D. Demetropoulos in his forthcoming monograph, *Ο πληθυσμός των νησιών των Αιγαίου κατά την περίοδο της Οδωμανικής κυριαρχίας*.

42. Semenzato, *Casa d'aste, Auction Catalogue*, Firenze Dicembre 2001 no. 72: "COFANETTO in legno di cedro. Corpo rettangolare con coperchio arcuato. La decorazione pirografata riveste l'intera superficie. La parte superiore presenta un rosone a circoscrivere una stella a più punte su un reticolo floreale. Il fronte ed il retro sono scanditi da quattro archi entro cui siedono figure alate e musicanti. Sui fianchi sono disegnati due leoni. Lungo le cornici si prolungano perlinate e gli spazi rimanenti sono occupati da motivi vegetali. Friuli, fine del XVI secolo, 20.5x33x16 cm".

43. Inv. no. 8718 (dimensions: 0.33 x 1.02 x 0.41m, walnut): Makris (n. 3) 64 fig. 32; Fotopoulos, Delivorrias (n. 11) 418 figs 715, 719; Delivorrias, *A Guide* (n. 4) 83-84; Delivorrias (n. 5) 52 n. 33 fig. 52.

44. The exterior of the lid is seldom decorated on Greek chests; this is a subject which merits more detailed research. Cf. the chest with a hunting scene from Epiros, Delivorrias, *Guide* (n. 4).

45. Delivorrias, *A Guide* (n. 4) 83.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΔΕΛΗΒΟΡΡΙΑΣ

Γύρω από κάποιες σπάνιες κοσμικές δημιουργίες της κρητικής ξυλογλυπτικής
και τα τεχνοτροπικά φαινόμενα της λεγόμενης λαϊκής τέχνης

Με αφετηρία τον επιπεδόγλυφο διάκοσμο μιας ξύλινης κασέλας από την Κρήτη σε ιδιωτική συλλογή (εικ. 1-2), στην παρούσα μελέτη επανεξετάζεται η επίσης επιπεδόγλυφη παράσταση της Σταύρωσης του Μουσείου Μπενάκη (εικ. 3), η οποία και αποδίδεται με σιγουριά πλέον στο ίδιο κρητικό εργαστήριο, αν όχι στον ίδιο καλλιτέχνη του 16ου αι. Τα δύο αυτά τεχνικά και τεχνοτροπικά συγγενή έργα κατευθύνουν την ανέλιξη της ερευνητικής διαδικασίας προς μια άλλη ομάδα από ξυλόγλυπτα βορειοϊταλικής υποτίθεται καταγωγής, μεταξύ των οποίων

ξεχωρίζει η μνημειακή κασέλα της Φολέγανδρου και πάλι στο Μουσείο Μπενάκη (εικ. 9-12). Από την προσπάθεια να ιχνηλατηθεί μια ενότητα ξυλογλύπτων με αντίστοιχα χαρακτηριστικά και να εξακριβωθεί η μεταξύ τους χρονολογική σχέση εντοπίστηκαν και άλλες ομόλογου ύφους δημιουργίες τόσο στην Κρήτη (εικ. 5-8) όσο και στην Ιταλία (εικ. 13). Ταυτόχρονα προέκυψαν και ορισμένες επιπλέον ενδείξεις για την πιθανή επιβίωση της ίδιας καλλιτεχνικής παράδοσης κατά τον όψιμο 17ο και τον 18ο αιώνα (εικ. 14-15).

APPENDIX: ALVISE CHIGGIATO Insieme della cassa

Sembra opera di due mani: a) quella della fascia/tavola centrale coperchio a fondo blu e b) quella della fascia alta del coperchio e del fronte della cassa, entrambe scolpite a bassorilievo, contornando il disegno, con fondo *pointillée*.

Ovvero è forse un rimaneggiamento/modifica di una versione iniziale (a fondo blu) che si è tentato di cambiare, con effetto di orizzonte su cui navigano altre navi, lasciando poi il lavoro così. Notare che il colore marrone scuro appare solo sulle due navi centrali della fascia a fondo blu e su una minore della fascia superiore, anch'essa nave a vele quadre. In un passaggio di questo ipotetico procedere, i colori sono stati apparentemente ripassati, usando in prevalenza l'ocra rossastra per il rosso e il giallo limone per l'oro.

(Rosso amaranto e oro erano i colori tradizionali delle bandiere veneziane, ma il disegno delle bandiere era completamente diverso). La qualità del disegno è molto migliore dove si usa il marrone scuro che dove si usa l'ocra. Sospetto che sotto l'ocra si possa trovare un colore iniziale diverso.

Tavola a fondo blu

La rappresentazione delle navi centrali a batteria e vele

quadre è molto corretta. Si tratta di due prospettive di uno stesso galeone databile -nel Mediterraneo orientale- fra il 1580 e il 1620, più verso il 1620 (il tipo di nave è diffuso fra Spagna atlantica e Inghilterra, successivamente in Mediterraneo, in quell periodo).

Il castello di poppa alto e stretto della nave di sinistra (vista da dietro) è esatta in tutti i particolari, inclusi i due portelloni per i due cannoni di fuga. Le decorazioni scolpite e dorate di poppa sono quelle di quell periodo.

Il fumo delle cannonate è rappresentazione di maniera: nelle battaglie vere, i colpi di incrocio (una nave navigante in un verso e l'altra nella direzione opposta) erano piuttosto rari: di solito si cercava di procedere per rotte parallele e i tiri duravano a lungo, terminando con l'abbordaggio finale. La ricarica dei cannoni richiedeva infatti qualche minuto e, incrociandosi, le navi potevano contare solo su una salva di cannonate). Qui sembra piuttosto l'occasione di rappresentare la nave da prospettive opposte.

La bandiera a 5 fasce orizzontali (tre rosse, fra cui le esterne, e le due interne gialle), -che io sappia- assomiglia a una delle bandiere della Hansa del Baltico (che però è a fasce rosse e bianche), molto improbabile in ambiente mediterraneo. La bandiera che più ci assomiglia in Medi-

terraneo è quella di Tunisi, che però ha una fascia (bianca) in più, in alto. Non so quindi cosa dirne. Le bandiere rosse in testa d'albero delle galere sono quelle di tutti gli Stati ottomani.

Poiché i colori rosso-ocra e giallo della fiamma del galeone di destra (con 'fiamma' chiamo la bandiera a due code triangolari molto lunghe) è uguale a quelle delle galere di destra, si può pensare che si tratti di una colorazione di maniera, tendente a rappresentare un gruppo di navi appartenenti tutte –galere e navi– ad una stessa flotta ottomana. Ovvero che tutte le bandiere rappresentate siano state ridipinte in un secondo momento a colori uniformi. La scena non rappresenta quindi uno scontro reale, ma piuttosto una parata di navi con tiri a salve.

Le quattro galere della fascia a fondo blu

Sono rappresentate in una scala di grandezza diversa e minore rispetto alle navi. L'ipotesi che allora si tratti di fuste di minori dimensioni reali è da scartare, dato il loro armamento di alberi e vele e dalla quantità di remi che –in proporzione agli scafi– si sono voluti rappresentare.

Il profilo è quello tipico –largamente documentato – delle galere greco-ottomane. Tipico –e di maniera– è il profilo del castello di poppa, molto più marcatamente risalente verso l'alto che non nell'iconografia delle corrispondenti galere occidentali. (Conosco qualcosa di simile solo nell'iconografia della Galleria delle Carte geografiche in Vaticano, considerata una licenza artistica dell'esecutore).

Il modello di scafo è però di parecchi decenni anteriore a quello dei galeoni.

Infatti la poppa e il timone curvi (relitto tradizionale del tempo in cui si usavano i due timoni laterali di tipo romano) è stato abbandonato quasi del tutto dopo Lepanto. In quella battaglia, in cui si sono riunite –e reciprocamente osservate– tutte le flotte a remi del Mediterraneo, sono apparsi evidenti i vantaggi del timone ad asta rettilinea, inizialmente introdotti dalle galere ponentine. Esse sono quindi di un modello antiquato e quasi del tutto abbandonato all'epoca dei galeoni disegnati al centro.

La loro rappresentazione è sommaria e più scadente di quella dei galeoni. La colorazione è più povera: non è usato il marrone scuro ma quasi solamente l'ocra rossa e il giallo limone; i remi hanno una rappresentazione annebbiata.

Nell'insieme la loro rappresentazione –senza prospettiva se non una parziale sovrapposizione delle due galere di destra –è decisamente più di maniera, con riferimento deciso agli standards dell'ambiente greco-ottomano, quasi costanti, ai confini della libertà artistica. La stessa cosa si può dire per le galere della fascia superiore *pointillée*.

All'estrema destra del coperchio, in alto, e sopra le due galere di sinistra della fascia a fondo blu, sono rappresentati de 'galeoncini' (non confonda il nome simile: erano completamente diversi dai galeoni), con vele quadre all'albero maestro e vele latine al trinchetto e alla mezzana. Il loro disegno è tecnicamente corretto, ma si tratta di barche che ebbero il massimo impiego intorno agli inizi del 1500, cioè anch'esse vari decenni precedenti ai due galeoni centrali.

Il Fronte della cassa

Mostra quel che sembrano delle residue tracce di colorazione, che forse erano inizialmente simili a quella della parte alta dell'interno del coperchio. La presenza *silhouettes* di angioletti accanto al foro della chiave, denuncia una committenza cristiana. I costumi dei quattro personaggi maggiori sembrano della stessa epoca dei galeoni, piuttosto che di quella delle galere (in particolare i fiocchi ai nastri che sostengono le calze del primo a sinistra). Le *silhouettes* dei tre riquadri di soggetto navale, per quel che si vede, sembrano riprodurre scene con elementi di disegno che forse sono gli stessi della fascia a fondo blu.

Conclusioni possibili

La cassa è databile nel quarantennio che va dal 1580 al 1620 ed è di committenza cristiana in ambiente greco-ottomano. La rappresentazione del galeone centrale, visto nelle due posizioni di poppa e di prua, è realistica, mentre tutte le altre sono di maniera e riferite a barche di epoca precedente. Non posso definire l'appartenenza delle bandiere se non per somiglianza. Quasi di sicuro è stata ritoccata con i colori ocra e giallo limone la colorazione, alterando qua e là (galeone di destra) anche particolari del disegno.

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