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**Epigraphy, piety, and social history: snapshots of personal histories in thirteenth-century Naxos**

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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ  
ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ  
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ



# ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΑ ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ

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## BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA

ΤΟΜΟΣ 34 VOLUME

THEODORA KONSTANTELLOU

ΕPIGRAPHY, PIETY, AND SOCIAL HISTORY:  
SNAPSHOTS OF PERSONAL HISTORIES IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY NAXOS

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THEODORA KONSTANTELLOU

EPIGRAPHY, PIETY, AND SOCIAL HISTORY: SNAPSHOT OF PERSONAL  
HISTORIES IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY NAXOS

Recent research has successfully demonstrated that, even when the written sources are silent, many facets of the lives and identities of the people who lived in late medieval/ Byzantine rural areas can be reconstructed through an interdisciplinary analysis of the extant archaeological, visual, and epigraphic material<sup>1</sup>. Dedicatory inscriptions are of great importance in this study because of the identity markers they contain, i.e. the donors' names, professions, places of origin and other references that reveal their family and social status, political allegiances, devotional preferences and financial resources<sup>2</sup>. In this paper I will examine two supplicatory inscriptions found

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1. The monograph of S. GERSTEL, *Rural lives and landscapes in late Byzantium: art, archaeology, and ethnography*, Cambridge 2015, and the monograph and articles of S. Kalopissi-Verti cited in the footnotes below remain seminal to this approach.

2. On these identity markers and their historical exploration see primarily S. KALOPISSI-

in a small rural church on the island of Naxos<sup>3</sup>. In this case the inscriptions

VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*, Wien 1992; V. FOSKOLOU, "In the Reign of the Emperor of Rome...": Donor Inscriptions and Political Ideology in the Time of Michael VIII Paleologos, *ΔΧΑΕ* 27 (2006), 455-462; I. ΒΙΤΗ, Σχόλια στην απητορική επιγραφή του ναού του Αγίου Γεωργίου Παχυμαχιώτη στη Λίνδο της Ρόδου (1394/5), *ΔΧΑΕ* 48 (2009), 159-168; V. FOSKOLOU, What are the Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople doing in Aegina? A Historical Interpretation of the Donor Inscription in the Omorphe Ekklesia (1289), in: *Ἐν Σοφίᾳ μαθητεύσαντες. Essays in Byzantine Material Culture and Society in Honour of Sophia Kalopissi-Verti*, ed. C. DIAMANTI – A. VASSILIOU, Oxford 2019, 376-387; S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Donors in the Palaiologan Churches of the Mani in the Southern Peloponnese: Individualities, Collectivity and Social Identities, in: *Art of the Byzantine World: Individuality in Artistic Creativity. A Collection of Essays in Honour of Olga Popova*, ed. A. ZAKHAROVA – O. ORCHAROVA – I. ORETSKAIA, Moscow 2021, 1160-1189; EADEM, Language, Identity, and Otherness in Medieval Greece. The Epigraphic Evidence in Studies, *Studies in Byzantine Epigraphy* 1 (2022), 113-150; C. STAVRAKOS, The church of Sts. Theodoroi (formerly St Kournatos) in Myrtia, Laconia, and its inscriptions, in: *Inscribing Texts in Byzantium. Continuities and Transformations. Papers from the Forty-Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. M. D. LAUXTERMANN – I. TOTH, London 2020, 347-364.

3. On the 13th- and 14th-c. dedicatory inscriptions and portraits preserved on the island see G. DIMITROKALLIS, Χρονολογημένες βυζαντινές ἐπιγραφές τοῦ ΙΙ' καὶ ΙΔ' αιώνα ἀπὸ τὴν Νάξο, *Ἐπιθεώρηση Τέχνης* 90/6 (1962), 706-711; G. MASTOROPOULOS, Ἀγνωστες χρονολογημένες βυζαντινές ἐπιγραφές 13ου καὶ 14ου αιώνα ἀπὸ τὴν Νάξο καὶ τὴν Σίκινο, *AAA* 16/1-2 (1983), 121-132; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 86-91 and passim, 109; A. MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες από τον 6ο μέχρι τον 14ο αι. Η μαρτυρία των επιγραφών, *ΕΕΒΣ* 52 (2004-2006), 406-416, 422-430; CH. PENNAS, Βυζαντινή παράδοση και τοπική κοινωνία στην έδρα του Δουκάτου της Νάξου. Η μαρτυρία των μνημείων, in: *Το Δουκάτο του Αιγαίου. Πρακτικά Επιστημονικής Συνάντησης Νάξος-Αθήνα 2007*, ed. N. G. MOSCHONAS, M. G. L. STYLIANOUDI, Athens 2009, 149-185; E. KOUNTOURA-GALAKE, Decoding Byzantine Churches on Naxos in the Early Palaiologan Period: Motivations and Inevitable Necessities', in: *Pour une poétique de Byzance. Hommage à Vassilis Katsaros*, ed. S. EFTHYMIADIS et al. [Dossiers byzantins 16] Paris 2015, 141-163; N. ZARRAS, Identity and Patronage in Byzantium: Epigraphic Evidence and Donor Portraits of Naxos, in: *Inscriptions in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art*, ed. CHR. STAVRAKOS, Wiesbaden 2016, 64-75; E. KOUNTOURA-GALAKE, Women Living on Palaiologan Naxos: the Epigraphic Evidence, in: *Women and Monasticism in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean: Decoding a Cultural Map*, ed. E. KOUNTOURA-GALAKE – E. MITSIOU [Section of Byzantine Research, International Symposium 23] Athens 2019, 163-186; A. KOSTARELLI, *Η μνημειακή ξωγραφική το 14ο αιώνα στη Νάξο: τα ακριβώς χρονολογημένα μνημεία*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ioannina 2013, 57-68, 260-267 and passim; T. KONSTANTELLOU,

are short, and they only include the first and second names of the individuals who participated in this particular commission. Thus, they seem of little value as documentary evidence. However, exploring them in their original spatial and visual context reveals their true “eloquence”<sup>4</sup>. These inscriptions introduce us to three named individuals who lived in the island’s hinterland during the thirteenth century, when Naxos was the seat of the Duchy of the Aegean, and most importantly to some significant points in their personal histories, which are invisible in the written sources.

*The church of the Panagia stes Yiallous (Παναγία «στῆς Γιαλλούς»): community, space, and devotion*

The church of the Panagia stes Yiallous is situated on a hilltop in the southwest part of the island, a relatively remote location close to the present-day village of Agiassos (Fig. 1)<sup>5</sup>. To my knowledge, no field research has previously been conducted in this area<sup>6</sup>. In the same area there is only one other Byzantine church, not far from the Panagia, the small church of Agios

Ένα «εργαστήριο» ζωγραφικής στην ύπαιθρο της Νάξου (τέλη 13ου-αρχές 14ου αιώνα): κοινωνικός χώρος και εικαστική δημιουργία, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Athens 2019, 297-304 and passim; EADEM, The Funerary Representation of a Lady in the Church of Agioi Anargyroi outside Kato Sagri on Naxos (First Half of the 13th Century?), in: *Art and Archaeology in Byzantium and beyond. Essays in honor of Professors Sophia Kalopissi-Verti and Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou*, ed. D. MOURELATOS, Oxford 2021, 43-54.

4. The assumption that the context matters when reading the inscriptions is, of course, not a new one and is present in too many studies on Byzantine epigraphy to list here.

5. On the architecture and frescoes of the church see primarily N. B. DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Νάξου «Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς» (1288/9), EEBΣ 53 (1964), 258-269; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς, in: *Νάξος*, gen. ed. M. CHATZIDAKIS, Athens 1989, 100-104; T. KONSTANTELLOU, Ένα «εργαστήριο» ζωγραφικής, 225-261. See also GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 66, 115.

6. According to Drandakis, the name of the site (Yiallo) derives from the name of the demonic creature Gello /Yialou (local spelling) (DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 258; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς, 100). It’s hard to define how far back in time this appellation goes. However, it is tempting to propose that among the reasons the church was built in this place was the desire to sanctify the space and protect the community of peasants who lived in this area. On the belief in the same demonic creature persisting in the villagers of the island in modern times see C. STEWART, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture*, Princeton 1991, 100-101.

Sozon<sup>7</sup>. Close to the church that will be examined here is a small threshing floor. Although the exact date of its construction remains unknown, its existence suggests a history of agricultural activity in the vicinity of this church.

The church was initially built as a small domed structure with a square plan (4.33x3.28 m.) (Fig. 2)<sup>8</sup>. It was probably constructed shortly before the interior was painted with frescoes, most probably by the local priest and painter Michael in 1288/9, according to the inscription next to the archangel Michael that mentions only the date<sup>9</sup>. The same painter wrote the other inscriptions that appear in the painted decoration of the church. The western, barrel-vaulted part of the church is a later addition, built at an unknown date. The original church was then transformed into a bema and two low slabs were added to create a rudimentary sanctuary barrier. In the first phase, there was no screen between the apse and the nave. Thus, the imagery of the apse was visible to the faithful standing in the church.

Recent research has shown that this small church served the devotional needs of a small rural community, functioning mainly as a place of prayer, and most likely as a burial place<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, the dedicatory/supplementary inscriptions contain the names of nine individuals who must have lived in

7. It is a small, single-aisle church. A few frescoes are preserved, dated by inscription to 1313/4. For details about the church and its frescoes, see KOSTARELLI, *Monumental painting in the 14th century in Naxos*, 51-2, 64, 73-4, 91 and *passim*.

8. On small domed churches with square plan, their possible funerary use and date in the late medieval period see G. DIMITROKALLIS, *Bυζαντινή Ναοδομία στην Νάξο*, Athens 2000, 43-44; K. ASLANIDIS, *Βυζαντινή ναοδομία στη Νάξο. Η μετεξέλιξη από την παλαιοχριστιανική στη μεσοβυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική* [Byzantine Monuments 17], Thessaloniki 2017, 447-448.

9. On the attribution of the church's frescoes to the work of the priest and painter Michael, known from the supplementary inscription of the church of the Panagia at Archatos (1285), see M. PANAYOTIDI, Οι τοιχογραφίες του Αγίου Γεωργίου Λαθρήνου στη Νάξο, ΔΧΑΕ 16 (1991-1992), 150-151; T. KONSTANTELLOU, Ένα «εργαστήριο» ζωγραφικής, 260-261.

10. On the function of the church see S. E. J. GERSTEL – S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium, in: *Female founders in Byzantium and beyond*, ed. L. THEIS – M. MULLETT – M. GRÜNBART, Wien 2014, 208; Gerstel, *Rural lives*, 66. According to Charalambos Pennas, burials have been found outside the church of the Panagia (GERSTEL – KALOPISSI-VERTI, Female Church Founders, 208, n. 67). It is not clear, however, whether these burials were identified during excavations.

the vicinity of the church. None of them is given a title or profession that could inform us about their social status. The surrounding landscape, the small size of the church, and its imagery all show that these individuals were probably local peasants. However, it is hard to define their legal status more precisely, i.e. whether they were free or dependent peasants.

The painted programme seems to have been adapted to this function. A Deisis with the Virgin Mary and Christ accompanied by the epithet *Gorgoepikoos* (ΓΩΡΓΟΕΠΙΚΩΟΣ, i.e. swift to listen)<sup>11</sup> in the centre and the archangel Michael and St. John the Baptist interceding occupies the apse (Fig. 3). A vertical red band divides the semicircular wall into two sections, in each of which saints of various categories or importance were depicted (Fig. 4). Thus, to the north are represented a frontal St. Mamas, the well-known protector of livestock and a saint highly venerated by villagers in agricultural settings<sup>12</sup>, together with the otherwise unknown St. Michael of Miletus and St. Leontios the Younger, to both of whom I will return below. Their inclusion in a place that is traditionally occupied by figures of frontal bishops, depicted from the twelfth century onwards in three-quarter pose, testifies to the importance attached to these saints by the patrons and the local community<sup>13</sup>. Only two bishops from the early years of the Christian

11. The epithet appears as early as the 11th c. [V. LAURENT, Une fondation monastique de Nicéphore Choumnos. La Néa Moni de la Théotokos Gorgoépikoos, *REB* 12 (1954), 32-44]. From the 13th c. onwards, when the practice of inscribing epithets next to saints became more widespread, it is rarely found on the depictions of the Virgin Mary. For examples see I. VITALIOTIS, L'icône de la Vierge Gorgoépikoos au Vieux-Caire et l'archéologie de l'Athènes byzantine, in: *Byzantine Athens. Proceedings of a Conference, May 21-23, 2016, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens*, ed. H. SARADI, in collaboration with A. DELLAPORTA, Athens 2021, 361-375 and more specifically 369-371. It should be noted that the use of epithets to emphasise certain aspects of the identity of the saints is also found in other churches painted by the workshop in which the painter and cleric Michael was trained (KONSTANTELLOU, *Ἐνα «εργαστήριο» ξωγραφικής*, 321 and *passim*).

12. On this capacity and his depictions see primarily GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 111-116, with earlier bibliography. As Gerstel notes, his depiction at Yiallous includes the rare depiction of the bell around the lamb's neck, a detail that recalls several "actual herding practices". These were studied in the countryside of Naxos by the anthropologist Panayotis Panopoulos [P. PANOPPOULOS, Animal Bells as Symbols: Sound and Hearing in a Greek Island Village, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (2003), 639-656].

13. On the decoration of the lower register of the apse with portraits of bishops in

Church, Sts. Polycarpus and Eleftherios, are depicted separately in the south section. Their representation in a rural setting would take on further symbolic significance for the small community, since their names allude to abundant harvests and freedom respectively<sup>14</sup>.

In the north tympanum, there is a second depiction of the Virgin and Child, accompanied here by the epithet *Pausolype* (ΠΑΥΣΩΛΙΠΕΙ, i.e. she who stops pain)<sup>15</sup> and flanked by four standing saints (Fig. 5). To the east Sts. Paraskeve and Kyriake, often portrayed side by side, allude to the Passion, Death and Resurrection through the literal understanding of their names (Good Friday and Easter Sunday)<sup>16</sup>. To the west, the popular military

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frontal and three-quarter poses and the significance of the insertion of other categories of saints, see S. GERSTEL, *Beholding the sacred mysteries: programs of the Byzantine sanctuary*, Seattle 1999, 12-13, 15-36; A. MANTAS, *Το εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα του νερού βήματος των μεσοβυζαντινών ναών της Ελλάδος (843-1204)*, Athens 2001, 135-59, 166-169.

14. GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 66-68.

15. This epithet is known from the Middle Byzantine period. From the life of Saint Lazaros of Mt. Galesion (c. 1046) we learn of the foundation of the Monastery of Panagia Pausolype on Mount Galesion by Maria Skleraina during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) [É. MALAMUT, *A propos de Bessai d'Éphèse*, *REB* 43 (1985), 243-251; R. GREENFIELD, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint*, Washington, D.C. 2000, 31-35]. The epithet appears rarely in late-Byzantine depictions of the Virgin. For examples see *Faith and Power* (1261-1557), ed. H. C. EVANS, New York - New Haven 2004, 167-169 (A. WEYL-CARR). It is also important to note that this epithet is not strictly related to the Pediasimos family, as noted in the study of Nektarios Zarras, since its supplicatory inscription is written on either side of the Virgin *Gorgoepikoos* in the apse (ZARRAS, *Identity and Patronage*, 67). See also below p. 302. There are two equally rare epithets similar to Pausolype: Ponolytria and Lysiponos. For examples see J. NESBITT - N. OIKONOMIDES (eds.), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and at the Fogg Museum of Art, vol. 1: Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea*, Washington, D.C. 1991, 113 (no. 43. 6); I. DRPIC, *The Serres Icon of Saints Theodores*, *BZ* 105/2 (2012), 691; J. COTSONIS, *The Virgin Lysiponos (The Deliverer from Pain) on a Byzantine lead seal and the transformation of a Marian epithet*, *Byzantion* 87 (2017), 159-179.

16. GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 66-68. Given the scarcity of churches dedicated to St. Kyriake in the major cities of the empire and the lack of corresponding encomia and epigrams, Gerstel believes that St. Kyriake should primarily be regarded as a saint associated with medieval rural areas (GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 45). It is worth noting that the saint's presence in this small church could be connected to the function of the adjacent threshing floor, since her feast day too aligns with the harvest season. On this see S. GERMANIDOU, Αλώνια, in: *Μανιάτικοι οικισμοί*, ed. P. KALAMARA - N. ROUMELIOTIS, Athens 2004, 100-102; GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 120-121.

saint Demetrios and an anonymous saint are represented. The depiction of St. Demetrios may also be linked with the rural customs and practices of the small community, since his celebration (on 26 October) marked the onset of autumn and preparations for the agricultural season of autumn/winter<sup>17</sup>.

Another Deisis can be found on the south tympanum. It shows Christ *Soter* (CΩTHP, i.e. the Saviour)<sup>18</sup> and St. John the Theologian praying to him (Fig. 6). St. John the Theologian, the disciple closest to Christ, was considered an effective intercessor and an ideal religious figure for the Deisis composition<sup>19</sup>. Besides, in this church the great intercessors, the Virgin Mary and John the Forerunner, have already been represented. Yet his presence could also reflect a local cult, as evidenced by the significant number of churches dedicated to him (nine) and the number of times he is portrayed (again nine) on the island. This tendency is most likely related to the renown of the Patmos Monastery in the Aegean world, as well as the probable activity of Patmos monks on Naxos during that period<sup>20</sup>.

17. GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 110-111, 118.

18. This epithet, already known from early Byzantine representations of Christ, often accompanies his image in later times. For examples see E. CONSTANTINIDES, *The Wall Paintings of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson in Northern Thessaly*, Athens 1992, 241; M. KAZAMIA-TSERNOU, *Ιστορώντας τη «Δέηση» στις βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Ελλάδος*, Thessaloniki 2003, 232-233; K. P. DIAMANTI, Η παράσταση του δωρητή στο ναό του Σωτήρα στη Γαρδενίτσα της Μέσα Μάνης, in: *Ανταπόδοση. Μελέτες βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης προς τιμήν της καθηγήτριας Ελένης Δεληγιάννη-Δωρή*, ed. S. I. ARVANITI et al., Athens 2010, 133, n. 17.

19. B. V. PENTCHEVA, Imagined Images: Visions of Salvation and Intercession in a Double-Sided Icon from Poganovo, *DOP* 54 (2000), 146-151; M. KAZAMIA-TSERNOU, *Ιστορώντας τη «Δέηση» στις βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Ελλάδος*, Thessaloniki 2003, 226-227, 230-231. Since John, like the Virgin Mary, went directly to heaven on his Metastasis, he often appears in funerary programmes, and his image functions as a visual promise to the faithful of their eternal salvation (M. EMMANUEL, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του Αγίου Δημητρίου στο Μακρυχώρι και της Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου στον Οξύλιθο της Εύβοιας* [Εταιρεία Ευβοικών Σπουδών, Παραδρημα του ΚΗ' τόμου], Athens 1991, 179-182). As Bissara Pentcheva has long noted, a thorough study of the depictions of John the Theologian and the emphasis on his cult in the late Byzantine period is still lacking (PENTCHEVA, Imagined Images, 148 and n. 49). On the illustrated cycles of the vita of St. John in Crete see I. SPATHARAKIS - E. KLINKENBERG, The Pictorial Cycle of the Life of St. John the Evangelist in Crete, *BZ* 89.2 (1996) 420-440.

20. M. GEROLYMATOU, Η Νάξος καὶ ἡ Μονὴ Ἀγίου Ιωάννου Θεολόγου Πάτμου (13ος-

As is evident from the above, the emphasis is on the depiction of carefully selected holy figures, all of whom seem to relate to the daily concerns and personal devotional desires of the members of the small local community, and could act as their intercessors<sup>21</sup>. Thus, the holy figures are shown in Deisis compositions praying to the Virgin Mary and Christ, or depicted frontally, at the level of the faithful. Their depictions could serve as a focus for the prayers of the members of this community. The epithets applied to the Virgin Mary and Christ, which evoke some of their specific qualities, i.e. being quick to help, relieving pain and offering salvation, underlined this need for intercession on behalf of its members in this life and the next, and added a tone of intimacy, enhanced here by the small size of the church<sup>22</sup>. The character of the imagery and the chapel's small size likely explain the absence of Christological and Marian scenes, as well as representations related to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, such as the Melismos and the depictions of the hierarchs in three-quarter pose with open scrolls in the lower part of the apse<sup>23</sup>. The representation of the two bishops in the south section of the apse do relate to the liturgy, but the emphasis here was clearly on intercession and remembrance of the saintly figures depicted, and not on the celebration of the Eucharist.

16ος αι.), in: *Πρακτικά του ΣΤ' Πανελλήνιου Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου «Η Νάξος διά μέσου των αιώνων»* (Δαμαριώνας Νάξου, 30 Αυγούστου-2 Σεπτεμβρίου 2018), ed. V. FRAGOULOPoulos, Naxos 2021, 501-506. Angeliki Katsioti also relates the multiple dedications of churches to St. John and his many representations in the Dodecanese to the fame of the Patmos Monastery [A. KATSIOTI, Παρατηρήσεις στην τοπική λατρεία αγίων στα Δωδεκάνησα, *Δωδεκανησιακά Χρονικά* 25 (2012), 664-665].

21. On the special role played by images of saints in rural churches, and their involvement in a private system of prayer based on invocation, vision, and performance, which ultimately ensured eternal remembrance and salvation, see GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 65-69.

22. These epithets, specifically on late Byzantine icons, have been studied in depth by Ivan Drpić in his monograph (I. DRPIĆ, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium*, Cambridge 2016, 351-373).

23. The figures of the hierarchs in three-quarter pose on either side of the altar were depicted by the painter of the Panagia stes Yiallous, the priest Michael, in the church of Panaghia at Archatos (1285) (KONSTANTELLOU, *Ένα «εργαστήριο» ζωγραφικής*, 146, 166-169). Thus their absence in this case was intentional and cannot be seen as the result of ignorance or adherence to older formulas ('archaicism').

The painted decoration is the result of collective sponsorship, but instead of a lengthy dedicatory inscription that might list the names of all the donors involved, six separate short inscriptions were inscribed here in various places within the mural decoration<sup>24</sup>. These inscriptions, as mentioned above, begin with the word *Deisis* (Δέησις, i.e. Invocation), and contain the first and sometimes the second names of the supplicants. Such invocations functioned as signs of patronage and identity, but at the same time evoked the desire of the individuals to approach and be associated with specific holy figures. Most of the inscriptions are in the apse, the most privileged locus for inscribing entreaties<sup>25</sup> and on the north tympanum, on either side of the depiction of the “titular saint” of the church, the Virgin Mary. No traces of this type of inscription (supplicatory) have been found in the section of the semicircular wall, where Sts. Polycarp and Eleftherios are depicted or on the south tympanum which has the depiction of Christ with St. John interceding.

As Kalopissi-Verti has proposed, the position of the inscriptions most likely indicates the painting that each individual has paid for<sup>26</sup>. Thus, the prayer of a man called Michael (Μιχαήλ) is placed next to his saintly namesake, the archangel Michael, depicted praying to the Virgin in the apse<sup>27</sup>. Michael was presumably a single and childless man since there is no

24. The inscriptions from this church are published. See KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89-90; MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426-427; KONSTANTELLOU, Ένα «εργαστήριο» ζωγραφικής, 226-230.

25. This location ensured the donors' inclusion in the priests' prayers and consequently their eternal salvation and the preservation of their memory (GERSTEL, *Beholding the sacred mysteries*, 13). On the central importance of commemoration in Byzantine religiosity with the aim of ensuring future salvation, see primarily V. MARINIS, Piety, Barbarism, and the Senses in Byzantium, in: *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. S. M. PROMEY, New Haven 2014, 330-333; IDEM, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium. The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art*, New York 2017, 83-130.

26. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Collective Patterns of Patronage, 133. Two inscriptions, placed between the holy figures of a Deisis in the apse of the church of Panaghia Drosiani near the village of Moni (second layer, 11th c.) support this hypothesis. According to the first, the painter George has paid for the depiction of the Virgin Mary. The second mentions that the depictions of the other two figures, Christ and St John the Baptist, were paid for by a couple. On these inscriptions see MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 416-417.

27. The inscription reads: Δε(ησις) | Μιχαήλ: [Δέησις Μιχαήλ = Invocation of Michael].

reference to his wife or children. The inscription relating to a nuclear family, that of George Pediasimos (Γεώργιος Πεδιάσημος) and his spouse Maria (Μαρία) together with their children, written on either side of the Virgin *Gorgoepikoos* in the apse, occupies a central position. Maria, George's wife, has the same name as the Virgin<sup>28</sup>. The inscription associated with Michael Riaketas (Μιχαήλ Ριακήτας) and his spouse Leonto (Λεοντώ), which I will examine below, is written in the section that includes the depiction of St. Mamas, and the couple's namesake saints, St. Michael of Miletus and St. Leontios the Younger.

The inscription of a widow named Anna Koutene (Άννα Κουτηνού) and her son, Epiphanios (Επιφάνιος) is placed in the lower zone of the north blind arch, between the representation of the Virgin *Pausolype* and the two female saints, Sts. Paraskeve and Kyriake, who are connected to death

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DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 261; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦ, 100; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89; MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426.

28. + Δε(ησις) του δού(λου) του Θ(εο)υ	Γεώργιου: του Πεδιάσημο[υ]
καὶ τῆς συμβίου αὐτού	Μαρίας (καὶ) των τε
	κνων αὐτων:

[Δέησις τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ Γεωργίου τοῦ Πεδιασίμου καὶ τῆς συμβίου αὐτοῦ Μαρίας καὶ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῶν = Invocation of the servant of God Georgios Pediasimos and his wife Maria and their children]. DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 262; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦ, 100; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89; MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426. The central position of the inscription relating to the nuclear family might reveal its standing in the community. This position, the surname Pediasimos, known from the middle Byzantine period and associated with eminent figures of the Palaiologan period (John Pothos, Theodore, Nicetas and Nikephoros Pediasimos), and the presence of the epithet *Pausolype* have led recent researchers to identify George Pediasimos as one of the opponents of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos who left Constantinople and took refuge on the island (KOUNTOURA-GALAKI, Decoding Byzantine Churches on Naxos, 141-161; EADEM, Women Living on Palaiologan Naxos, 163-185; ZARRAS, Identity and Patronage in Byzantium, 53-78). The validity of this theory cannot be fully explored in the limited space of a footnote. I will only note that it is hard to imagine a learned Constantinopolitan settling in southern Naxos, in an isolated part of the island, and being a patron of this small, rural church. On the presence of aristocratic names and surnames among peasants recorded in the Acts of Athos, see V. KRAVARI, Le prénom des paysans en Macédoine Orientale (X-XIV siècle), in: *Les Villages dans l'Empire byzantin, IVe-XVe siècle*, ed. J. LEFORT, Paris 2005, 304). For the incorrect association of the epithet *Pausolype* with the Pediasimos family see above n. 15.

and resurrection, as noted above<sup>29</sup>. The prayer of a childless couple, that of George Kalapodes (Γεώργιος Καλαπόδης) and his wife Maria (Μαρία), is placed between the Virgin *Pausolype* and two male saints, Demetrios and an as yet unidentified one. Maria has the same name as the Virgin<sup>30</sup>.

Based on the above, it could be argued that homonymy, personal devotional preferences, gender and probably family status determined the location of the individuals' inscriptions in this painted decoration. But since the above inscriptions have already been discussed in recent literature<sup>31</sup>, in this paper I would like to examine two inscriptions which have not previously attracted the interest of scholars.

### *Kale tes Chionou: an unmarried woman defined by a metronymic*

This first inscription is located outside the space in which the sacred figures and dedicatory prayers of the other individuals occur, as it is placed in the narrow band that separates the semidome from the semicircular wall of the apse. Beginning with a small cross and written in white capital letters, smaller in size than those of the other inscriptions, the inscription reads: +Δε(ησις) Καλῆς τῆς Χηώνοῦ[ς] [+ Δέησις Καλῆς τῆς Χιωνοῦς=Invocation of Kale, daughter of Chione]<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 3, 7).

The name Kale (Καλή) was popular in Byzantium and was also common on the island of Naxos at this time, as can be inferred from three more

29. The inscription reads: Δε(ησις) | Ἀννας | τ(ης) Κουτηνοῦ· (καὶ) τέκνου. αὐτῆς | Ἐπιφανιου: [Δέησις Ἀννας τῆς Κουτηνοῦ καὶ τέκνου αὐτῆς Ἐπιφανίου = Invocation of Anna Koutene and her child Epiphanios]. DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 263; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς, 100; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89; MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426. On the patronage and dynamic presence of widows in rural societies see S. E. J. GERSTEL – S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium, in: *Female founders in Byzantium and beyond*, ed. L. THEIS – M. MULLETT – M. GRÜNBART, Wien 2014, 195-211; GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 100-101.

30. The inscription reads: Δέ(ησις) | Γεώργιου· του Καλαπόδη[η]: καὶ τῆς σ(ειν)βιου αὐτοῦ. Μαρια(ζ)η | [Δέησις Γεωργίου του Καλαπόδη καὶ τῆς συμβίου αὐτοῦ Μαρίας = Invocation of Georgios Kalapodes and his wife Maria]. DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 262; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς, 100; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89; MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426.

31. See the bibliography in note 24.

32. DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 258; IDEM, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς, 100; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89; MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426.

inscriptions<sup>33</sup>. The fact that this female figure is mentioned alone, without a husband and children, indicates that she was likely an unmarried woman or a childless widow. What is more interesting, however, is that Kale is called here not by a family or father's name, but by her mother's first name Chione (Χιόνη, Χιονώ) in the genitive form Chionou (Χιωνοῦ) rather than the more correct Chionous (Χιωνοῦς)<sup>34</sup>. This should probably incline us to assume that she is an unmarried woman.

However brief, and perhaps at first sight insignificant, it may seem, this inscription brings to the fore an unexpected case in the realm of religious patronage, that of a single woman who is identified by a metronymic. Based on evidence published to date, we know that women were involved in the patronage of rural churches in clearly defined (and socially accepted) roles, namely as wives –who were regularly cited but not always named–, widows and nuns<sup>35</sup>. Unmarried women appear more rarely in inscriptions written next to the saints whose depiction they have probably commissioned<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, I have been unable to find another case like that of Kale of Naxos, namely another single woman identified by her mother's name who wanted to contribute to the founding or painting of a rural church.

33. The name Kale appears in an inscription in Agios Stephanos at Tsikalario (end of the 13th c., MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 427) and those of the supplicant Kale Philotitissa in the church of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Apeiranthos (1309) (MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 428) and in the church of Agios Nikolaos at Monoitsia/ Rachi (1736) [K. KALOKYRIS, Τερεννατι χριστιανικων μνημειων εις τας νησους Ναξον, Αμοργον και Λεσβον, ΕΕΘΣΠΑ 14 (1958-60), 495].

34. G. DIMITROKALLIS, Το όνομα “Χιόνη” εις την Βυζαντινή Νάξον, Έπετηροίς Εταιρείας Κυκλαδικων Μελετῶν 6 (1967), 1-8, with examples.

35. On the activities of widows in the countryside see the bibliography in note 29. On the patronage of nuns see S. GERSTEL – A.-M. TALBOT, Nuns of the Byzantine Countryside, ΔΧΑΕ 27 (2006), 481-490; and GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 147-149.

36. CH. AGGELIDI, Δωρεές γυναικών κατά την πρώιμη βυζαντινή εποχή, in: *Η γυναικά στο Βυζάντιο. Λατρεία και τέχνη*, ed. M. PANAYOTIDI-KESSISOGLOU, Athens 2012, 223; S. KALOPISSI-VERTI, Δωρεές γυναικών στην υστεροβυζαντινή περίοδο, in *ibid*, 255. A study on the patronage of single women and men in rural contexts is still lacking. I am also not aware of any study on the place of single people in Byzantine society, apart from that of S. EFTHYMIADIS, Single Life in Early Byzantine Literature, in: *The Single Life in the Roman and Later Roman World*, ed. S. R. HUEBNER – C. LAES, Cambridge 2019, 309-319.

However, adding the maternal line in the strings of names that identify an individual was not such a rare phenomenon. Apparently less frequent than patronymics, metronymics appear throughout history and in diverse contexts. From the Bible to Greek papyri from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, from texts and inscriptions in Classical and Hellenistic Greece to magical texts of late Antiquity, metronymics were used to indicate children born out of wedlock, children whose mothers had significant status or descended from a more distinguished family than that of their husbands, and the children of widows, especially when their husband had been dead for a long time, or sometimes when he had died before the birth of the child<sup>37</sup>.

This form of self-representation was not unknown in Byzantium. It appears in a small number of funerary inscriptions from the early Byzantine

37. On the use of metronymics through time see primarily A. CHRISTOPHILOPOULOS, Αἱ μητρωνυμίαι παρὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις Ἑλλησιν, in: *Δίκαιον και Ἰστορία (Μικρά μελετήματα)*, Athens 1973, 130-139; A. KOUMPARIDOU, Ιστορικοινωνικά στοιχεῖα τῶν κάτω ἐνοριῶν Λευκωσίας. Γυναικεῖα προσωνύμια-μητρωνύμια, *Κυπριακὰ Σπουδαὶ* 42 (1978), 153-158; T. ILAN, Man Born of Woman... (Job 14:1) the Phenomenon of Men Bearing Metronymes at the Time of Jesus, *Novum Testamentum* 34 (Jan. 1992), 23-45; A. B. TATAKI, Prosopography of Ancient Macedonia: The Metronymics, in: *Ancient Macedonia Fifth International Symposium*, vol. 3, Thessaloniki 1993, 1453-1471; J. B. CURBERA, Maternal Lineage in Greek Magical Texts, in: *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers From the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4-8 May 1997*, ed. D. R. JORDAN - H. MONTGOMERY - E. THOMASSEN [*Papers From the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4*] Bergen, 1997, 195-203; B. VERNIER, Quelques remarques méthodologiques sur l'étude comparative des systèmes de parenté, in: *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge modern*, ed. A. BRESSON - M.-P. MASSON - S. PERENTIDIS - J. WILGAUX, Paris 2006, 27-44; A. CHANIOTIS, Some Cretan Bastards, *Cretan Studies* 7 (2002), 51-57; M. DEPAUW, Do Mothers Matter? The Emergence of Metronymics in Early Roman Egypt, in: *Buried Linguistic Treasure: The Potential of Papyri*, ed. T. EVANS - D. OBBINK, Oxford 2010, 120-139; A. GINESTÍ ROSELL, *Epigrafia funerària d'estrangers a Atenes (segles vi-iv a.C.)*, Tarragona 2012, 130-131; M. VRACHIONIDOU - G. KATSOURA, Η μητρωνυμία στα νεοελληνικά ιδιώματα και διαλέκτους, in: *Selected Papers of the 11th International Conference on Greek Linguistics*, ed. G. KOTZOGLOU et al., Rhodes 2014, 727-737; S. KILIÇ ASLAN, *Lycian Families in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. A Regional Study of Inscriptions: towards a Social and Legal Framework*, Leiden 2023, 193-217. One case of a metronymic (Ν(ε)ίκη, κόρη της Ερασμίας) is recorded in the inscription on a funerary stele dated to the Roman Imperial period from the Archaeological Museum of Naxos [A. S. SFYROERA, Ναξίων ονομαστικόν (από την αρχαϊκή έως και την αυτοκρατορική εποχή), *Ονόματα. Revue Onomastique* 24 (2023), 303].

period<sup>38</sup>. Related evidence can mainly be found in Byzantine written sources, and more specifically in monastic documents. Since a systematic survey of such instances is still lacking, it is hard to estimate how often and why they have been used, and what in the end it meant for an individual to be identified in this way. The Acts of Athos and of other monastic institutions (e.g. Patmos) provide numerous examples<sup>39</sup>, showing that a metronymic was often used to define males, who were the sons of widows<sup>40</sup>.

Moreover, a case which appears in Athonite documents is worth commenting on, since it shows that at least some of these women were not socially vulnerable or even marginalised. Here, another Kale (Καλή), the daughter of Xanto (Ξαντώ), who was living with her married sister, her brother-in-law and two nephews, owned property and functioned as head of the household<sup>41</sup>. Like widows' sons, and probably in accordance with a law that stipulated that after their death widows' dowries belonged to their children, the widows' daughters would have owned some property, i.e. their mothers' dowry, as well as their own<sup>42</sup>. However, it is interesting

38. K. MENTZOU-MEIMARI, Ἡ παρούσια τῆς γυναικας στὶς ἐλληνικές ἐπιγραφὲς ἀπὸ τὸν Δ' μέχοι τὸν Γ' μ.Χ. αἰώνα, *JÖB* 32/2 (1982), 433-443, with examples; C. ASDRACHA, Inscriptions chrétiennes et protobyzantines de la Thrace orientale et de l'île d'Imbros (IIIe-VIIe siècles). Présentation et commentaire historique, *ΑΔ* 53 (1998), Meletes 470-471.

39. Metronymics appear regularly in the *Acts of Athos*. Examples include: Ίωάννης ὁ τῆς Βλαχοῦς, A. Ivir., III, 79.217 (1320). Δημήτρο(ιος) τῆς Βασιλοῦς, A. Vat., III, 189.13 (1404). Δημήτριος τῆς Χρυσῆς, A. Vat., III, 200.9 (1409). Δημήτριος τῆς Άναστασί(ας), A. Vat., III, 211.19 (1418). Πατᾶδ(ες) τ(ῆς) [Λ]εοντ(ώς), ὁ τε Νικόλ(αος) καὶ ὁ Μιχα(ὴλ), NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Patmos, II, 62. 9 (1221 or 1236). Μιχα(ὴλ) τ(ῆς) Ἐλαίνης, NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Patmos, II, 66. 13 (1261). Μιχα(ὴλ) [ό νι]λός τ(ῆς) Κοσμ(οῦς). NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Patmos, II, 66. 10 (1261). I must admit that my research in this field has not been extensive. See also, A. KIOUSOPOULOU, *Ο θεομός της οικογένειας στην Ἡπειρο κατά τον 13ο αιώνα*, Athens 1990, 153; Z. GETIMI, Γυναίκες στην αγροτική κοινωνία του 14ου αιώνα. Η μαρτυρία των αγιορείτικων εγγράφων, *Bυζαντιακά* 33 (2016) 319-332.

40. E.g. Κω(νσταντῖνος) ὁ νιὸς χ(ήρας) τῆς Λάτζαινας, A. Vat., III, 227.55 (1442). Κυρι(ακός), ὁ νιὸς Θεοφανοῦς χ(ήρας), NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Patmos, II, 50. 142 (1073).

41. A. Ivir., III, 75.252 (1318), 79. 223 (1320); A. LAIOU-THOMADAKIS, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Social and Demographic Study*, Princeton 1977, 94.

42. A. E. LAIOU, Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in thirteenth-century Byzantium, in: *La transmission du patrimoine. Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne*, ed. J. BEAUCAMP - G. DAGRON, Paris 1998, 129-160; K. NIKOLAOU, The Contribution of Women to Byzantine Family Properties Hagiographical, Epigraphical and Legal Evidence, in: *The*

to note that unmarried women appear in the documents either as part of nuclear families or as heads of households with other younger members (e.g. a brother) and never alone<sup>43</sup>. Moreover it is very important to note Angeliki Laiou's observation that, under the social and economic pressures of the premodern society, an unmarried woman could not remain in this position for long, and that it was actually a transitory status, occurring between the time she was orphaned and when she got married<sup>44</sup>. This observation might explain the rare appearances of this group of women in the Acts (when acting as heads of households) and in the field of patronage.

Therefore, our inscription captures a rather uncommon moment in the life of a medieval woman: an unmarried woman, daughter of a widow, who was most likely living alone in the countryside of the island but was able (and eager) to offer money for the construction and decoration of her community's church. However, our male painter wrote Kale's inscription in smaller letters than the other inscriptions in the strip that divides the painted surfaces bearing the sacred iconography and the inscriptions of the other members of the community. Although there was space available, our male painter chose this spot. But what does this position and the smaller letters really mean? Do they indicate her lower social standing and the sentiments of the community towards her? They might simply reflect her poor financial means and her inability to finance the painting of an image of a saint, like other members of the community<sup>45</sup>. Thus, Kale's inscription was ultimately placed in the apse, directly under the protection of the Virgin and Child (another visual

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*Material Sides of Marriage Women and Domestic Economies in Antiquity*, ed. R. BERG, Roma 2016, 153-158.

43. On the difficulties faced by childless widows in the countryside, see GERSTEL, *Rural lives*, 101.

44. LAIOU-THOMADAKIS, *Peasant Society*, 94.

45. Dedicatory inscriptions appear in the bands that separates the scenes. Two cases are known from Naxos [Agios Nikolaos at Sagri (1269/70) and Panagia at Archatos (1285)] where the inscriptions also appear in the band between the semidome and the semicircular wall of the apse (MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 422-423; KONSTANTELLOU, Ένα «εργαστήριο» ζωγραφικής, 152-153). The cases mentioned above show that this location cannot be seen as a reflection of a marginal position in real life. Moreover, as Weyl Carr aptly argues in her study of the portraits of donors on the frames of icons, “to belong to the frame is not necessarily to dwell on the margin” [A. WEYL CARR, *Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art*, *Gesta* 45/2 (2006), 189-198, and more specifically p. 195].

metronymic), depicted directly above in the centre of the apse. Although unmarried and childless, Kale found in this small rural church a privileged place to inscribe her invocation and to perpetuate her memory.

*The couple Michael and Leonto Riaketas, two unknown saints and a story of migration*

The second inscription is found in the lower part of the apse and more specifically in the part which includes the representations of St. Mamas, St. Michael of Miletus and St. Leontios the Younger (Fig. 8-11). The inscription starts to the right of St. Mamas and continues in the spaces between the depictions of the other two saints. It reads as follows:

Δε(ησις) Μιχα(ὴλ)

του Ριακήτα<sup>46</sup> (καὶ) της συμ βίου α[ύτοῦ]

[Δέησις Μιχαὴλ τοῦ Ριακήτα καὶ τῆς συμβίου αύτοῦ = Invocation of Michael Riaketas and his wife].

Nikolaos Drandakis and Georgios Demetrokallis read the name of the wife, Leonto (Λεοντώ), which was inscribed to the right of St. Leontios (according to Drandakis) or on his left (according to Demetrokallis), an area now covered by the later altar-table.

According to this inscription, this group of painted saints was an offering made by the couple Michael and Leonto Riaketas (Μιχαὴλ καὶ Λεοντούς Ριακήτα). The prominent position occupied by St. Mamas has already been commented on and needs no explanation in a rural context. What is more interesting here, however, is the presence of the other two saints, who bear the names of the donors, St. Michael of Miletus and St. Leontios the Younger. Based on the evidence we have to date from the publications of artworks and texts, each is known only from their images

46. Drandakis initially read the surname as Ρ(;)ιακήτα [R(?)iaketa] (DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 62. See also *PLP* 2460). In his next publication on the church he gave the surname: Τ[;]ΙΑΚΗΤΑ [T(?)iaketa] (DRANDAKIS, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦς, 100); S. Kalopissi-Verti (KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 89) and Mitsani (MITSANI, Η χορηγία στις Κυκλαδες, 426 propose Τρ(;)ιακήτα [Tr(?)iaketa]). T is based on the presence of a white line that extends the vertical line of the rho (P) upwards. Careful observation in the field shows that this white line is probably a later addition. Corresponding white lines also occur before the word Deisis and the 'tou' (του). A similar line extends the vertical line of the tau (T) downwards in the word tou (του).

in this church. St. Michael of Miletus (Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΜΙΧΑΗΛ Ο ΜΙΛΗΤΟΥ) is depicted as a young, beardless man, wearing the attire of a bishop, a monochrome phelonion and an omophorion decorated with crosses (Fig. 12). He blesses with his right hand and holds a gospel in his left. These details allow us to identify the figure with a holy bishop of Miletus, who bore the name Michael. The Naxian representation is the only known depiction of this bishop that I have been able to locate on Naxos or elsewhere. Moreover, the saint was never included in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, nor in the *Menologion of Basil II* or the other known menologia, while there is no corresponding entry in the index of the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*<sup>47</sup>.

Of the bishops of Miletus known to date, only one bears the name Michael<sup>48</sup>. His name is recorded in a dedicatory inscription on a marble pulpit, dated by the form of the letters to the second half of the eleventh or the twelfth century<sup>49</sup> and certainly before the reign of Manuel Komnenos (1143-1180), when the city of Miletus was promoted to a metropolis<sup>50</sup>. The inscription reads as follows: +Υπ(ερ) εὐχῆς Μιχ(αὴλ) τοῦ ἐλαχ(ίστου)

47. On the saints of Byzantine Anatolia see A.-M. TALBOT, Saints and Sainthood in Byzantine Anatolia, in: *Bizans Dönemi'nde Anatolu/ Anatolia in the Byzantine Period*, ed. E. AKYÜREK – K. DURAK, Istanbul 2021, 148-155; S. EFTHYMIADIS, The Hagiography of Byzantine Anatolia (4th-14th Centuries), in *ibid*, 218-225.

48. Drandakis mentions the case of Michael, bishop of Miletus, who signed the acts of the Second Ecumenical Council (787) (DRANDAKIS, Αἱ τοιχογραφίαι τοῦ ναοῦ, 266). However, the proceedings of the Second Ecumenical Council are signed by Bishop Epiphanius of Miletus (*Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collection*, ed. J. D. MANSI, Florence 1758-1798, XIII, 139, 368, 385. On the known bishops and metropolitans of Miletus see V. LAURENT, Μίλιτος, *ΘΗΕ* 8 (1966), 1157-1158; I. POLEMIS, An Unknown Metropolitan of Miletus, *REB* 29 (1971), 309-312; V. RUGGIERI, A Historical addendum to the episcopal lists of Caria, *REB* 54 (1996), 233-234.

49. O. FELD, Christliche Denkmäler aus Milet und seiner Umgebung. *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 25 (1975), 204-5, Abb. 1, Taf. 36, 2-3; U. Peschlow, Der mittelbyzantinische Ambo aus archäologischer Sicht, *Θυμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασικαρίνας Μπούρα*, Athens 1994, 258, 148.1; V. RUGGIERI, A Historical addendum to the episcopal lists of Caria, *REB* 54 (1996), 233-234; P. HERRMANN, *Inschriften von Milet* [Milet 6, 2], Berlin 1998, 138-139, n. 965, Taf. 52, 319; P. NIEWÖHNER, Neue spät- und nachantike Monamente von Milet und der mittelbyzantinische Zerfall des anatolischen Städtes, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (2013/2), 115.

50. E. RAGIA, *Η κοιλάδα του κάτω Μαιάνδρου ca 600-1300. Γεωγραφία και Ιστορία*, Thessaloniki 2009, 181-183, with earlier bibliography.

ἀρχιεπισκόπου Μιλήτου = As a vow of Michael, the least of men, archbishop of Miletus] (Fig. 13). According to this text, the pulpit was donated by Archbishop Michael, probably to another church, perhaps the episcopal one. The above mentioned middle-Byzantine inscription, and the thirteenth-century depiction in the Naxiot church constitute to my knowledge the only evidence we have for this saintly bishop (if we accept that he is the same person)<sup>51</sup>. Most likely an important figure for the local population, and probably a eunuch, since he is represented beardless, he was active as a patron in his city. It is not easy to tell when and under what circumstances bishop Michael was considered to be a saint. The data that we have at our disposal does not allow us to estimate the spread of his cult, although it is probably best to think of him as a local saint.

His depiction recalls the tenth-century bishop of Miletus, St. Nikephoros, a eunuch himself, who later in his life became a monk in the Stylos monastery, and finally the founder of a monastic community on Mt. Mykale<sup>52</sup>. Known only from his learned vita, probably written by Ioannes Sikeliotes for his monastic community<sup>53</sup>, his cult does not seem to have spread very far. Like our Michael, his name was never included in the Synaxarion of Constantinople. Moreover, I have also been unable to locate a depiction of this saint on any published icon, in manuscripts, or monumental painting.

It is not easy to identify the saint depicted next to him, the namesake of his wife Leonto. The saint is depicted as a young monk, beardless or with a very short beard<sup>54</sup>, and named as Leontios the Younger (Ο ΑΓΙΟC

51. On bishop saints see, S. EFTHYMIADIS, The Place of Holy and Unholy Bishops in Byzantine Hagiographic Narrative (Eighth-Twelfth Centuries), in: *Saintly Bishops and Bishops' Saints*, ed. J. S. OTT - T. VEDRIŠ, Zagreb 2012, 169-182.

52. On the vita of the saint see S. PAPAIOANNOU, Sicily, Constantinople, Miletos: The Life of a Eunuch and the History of Byzantine Humanism, in: *Myriobiblos: Essays on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, ed. T. ANTONOPOULOU - S. KOTZABASSI - M. LOUKAKI [Byzantinisches Archiv, Bd 29], Boston - Berlin - Munich 2015, 261-284; S. EFTHYMIADIS, The Hagiography of Byzantine Anatolia (4th-14th Centuries), in: *Bizans Dönemi'nde Anadolu/ Anatolia in the Byzantine Period*, ed. E. AKYÜREK - K. DURAK, İstanbul 2021, 222; EFTHYMIADIS, Bishops, 177-178.

53. PAPAIOANNOU, Sicily, Constantinople, Miletos, 261-284.

54. Monks are usually depicted with long beards in Byzantine art. On portraits of monastic saints in monumental painting see S. TOMEKOVIĆ, Les saints ermites et moines

ΛΕΩΝΤΙΟC Ο ΝΕΟC) (Fig. 14). Of the eight saints with the same name recorded in the index of the *Bibliothecae Hagiographicae Graecae*, only St. Leontios Palaiologos Mamonas or Monemvasiotis (1377-1452) was a monk. However, the period of this saint's activity, the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, rules out any identification with the saint depicted in the Naxian church<sup>55</sup>.

Our saint was identified by Georgios Demetrokallis with the monk, then abbot of Patmos Monastery and finally patriarch of Jerusalem, Leontios<sup>56</sup>. However, his proposal was never accepted by Nikolaos Drandakis<sup>57</sup> nor by Doula Mouriki, who studied in depth the canonisation and the cult of Leontios and noted that, in the very few known depictions of him, he is always represented as a hierarch, with the features of St. John Chrysostom or James the brother of Christ<sup>58</sup>. Angeliki Mitsani, however, seems to have accepted the identification with Leontios of Patmos and proposed a possible link between these donors and the Monastery of Patmos<sup>59</sup>.

The identification of our saint with Leontios of Patmos cannot easily be ruled out. The type proper to the saint in the other known depictions of him cannot have been particularly widespread, judging by the small number of those depictions. Thus, ignorance of its very existence may have led our painter to portray Leontios as a monk, a look that might have been more familiar to the donors of the image. We cannot exclude the possibility that

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dans la peinture murale byzantine [Byzantina Sorbonensia 26], Paris 2011, *passim*. Major monasteries and holy mountains were out of bounds to beardless youths under the age of twenty (A.-M. TALBOT, The Adolescent Monastic in Middle and Late Byzantium, in: *Coming of Age in Byzantium. Adolescence and Society*, ed. D. ARIANTZI [Millennium studies 69], Berlin – Boston 2019, 83-97).

55. On this saint see, *BHG* II, 55-56; *BHG* III, 44; A. PAPADOPOULOS, Ο Ἅγιος Λεόντιος. *Παλαιολόγος Μαμωνάς*, Thessaloniki 1940.

56. G. DIMITROKALLIS, Περὶ τὴν τοιχογραφίαν τοῦ Λεοντίου τοῦ Νέου, 132-135. For the vita of St. Leontios see D. TSOURAKIS, *The Life of Leontios Patriarch of Jerusalem. Text, translation, commentary*, Leiden – New York – Köln 1993.

57. DRANDAKIS, Παναγία στῆς Γιαλλοῦ, 102-103.

58. N. MOURIKI, Οι τοιχογραφίες τοῦ παρεκκλησίου τῆς Μονῆς τοῦ Ἅγιου Ιωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου στὴν Πάτμο, *ΔΧΑΕ* 14 (1987-1988), 252-255; KATSIOTI, Παρατηρήσεις, 665-666.

59. A. MITSANI, Η μνημειακή ζωγραφική στις Κυκλαδες κατά το 13ο αιώνα, *ΔΧΑΕ* 21 (2000), 97, n. 40.

St. Leontios was a monk who originated from one of the large monastic communities that existed in Asia Minor, especially those near Miletus, such as Latros, since he is depicted next to Michael of Miletus. For instance, the sixteenth abbot of the Stylos monastery was named Leontios. His period of office has been dated to the beginning of the 12th century, which coincides with the time when Bishop Michael was probably active, as noted above. But since we know almost nothing of this monk, his identification cannot be firmly established<sup>60</sup>.

If we accept that the depiction of the first saint, St. Michael of Miletus, was the personal choice of Michael Riaaketa, how should we explain the latter's knowledge of a little-known saint, who was a bishop in Miletus during the eleventh or the early twelfth century? I would argue that his knowledge of this little-known saint likely indicates that Michael was not originally from Naxos, but came instead from Miletus (Byzantine Palatia)<sup>61</sup>. Moreover, in this respect it is very interesting that the monastery of Patmos owned land and metochia in that region, and sometimes loaned books to the latter as well as to some rich local families<sup>62</sup>. Given this cultural influence, it would not be

60. On Leontios, see H. OMONT, Note sur un manuscrit grec copié en 1050 au mont Latros (Anatolie), *REG* 1 (1888), 337; E. RAGIA, Λάτρος. Ένα άγνωστο μοναστικό κέντρο στη δυτική Μικρά Ασία, Θεσσαλονίκη 2008, 128.

61. The suggestion made by E. Kountoura-Galake (KOUNTOURA-GALAKE, Women Living on Palaiologan Naxos, 178) that we should investigate the origin of the couple through the relationship of their surname to the surnames Triadites and Triodites or to the Slavic name of Sardike, Triaditsa, is flawed, given that it is based on the first part of their surname being read as Tria[kites]. The surname refers rather to the second part of the adjective Βαθυριακίτης («Vathyriakites») which identifies rulers of the East in the epic Digenes Akritas, associated with Vathi Ryaka, a place name from northern Cappadocia, west of Sebasteia. F. HILD, M., RESTLE, *Kappadokien (Kappadokia, Charsianon, Sebasteia und Lykandos)* [TIB 2], Wien 1981, 157-158.

62. On Metochia and the possessions of the monastery of Patmos in Asia Minor, including the wider area of Palatia see *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, 1, Αύτοκρατορικά, ed. E. VRANOUI, Athens 1980, 86-87, 94-96; On the type of books the monastery loaned to its metochia and rich local families of Mileutus see VRANOUI, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, 88-89; C. ASTRUC, Les listes de prêts figurant au verso de l'inventaire du trésor et de la bibliothèque de Patmos dressé en septembre 1200, *TM* 12 (1994), 495-499; R. BENOIT-MEGGENIS, *L'empereur et le moine: les relations du pouvoir impérial avec les monastères à Byzance (IXe-XIIIe)* [Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, 73], Lyon 2017, 22-23.

impossible for the inhabitants of the region to have known the founders of the monastery of Patmos, including Leontios, if the portrait of the monk in the church under examination is of him<sup>63</sup>.

The circumstances under which Michael Riaketas, probably together with his wife Leonto, came to Naxos necessarily elude us. The move might have been triggered by contemporary circumstances. It is well known that Miletus and the surrounding area passed into Ottoman hands towards the end of the thirteenth century<sup>64</sup>. This might have caused the population to flee to the Aegean islands, including Naxos. If this suggestion is correct, then Michael Riaketas responded to the experience of displacement in a way that is very common in the history of migration, by bringing rituals and devotional objects from his place of origin to his new home<sup>65</sup>. By depicting a local Miletan religious leader and a local saint (Michael of Miletus), and probably another such saint (Leontios the Younger), the couple created a bridge to their place of origin, a link to their past, and kept elements of their identity alive in their new setting<sup>66</sup>.

63. Vranousi records the oral testimony of a Turk, Piri Re'Is (VRANOUSI, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, 58, n. 2) according to which the residents of Palatia had stolen the body of St. Christodoulos from Patmos and brought it to Palatia before the city fell into the hands of the Turks. However, the relic mysteriously disappeared and returned to Patmos. The effect of this miracle was such that the pirates, both Christian and Muslim, never again attacked the monastery's ships.

64. P. WITTEK, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche. Studie zur Geschichte Westkleinasiens im 13.-15. Jh.* [Istanbuler Mitteilungen 2], Istanbul 1934, 26; VRANOUSI, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, 105-8 n. 13.20-22. It is interesting to note that the connection between Miletus and the Cyclades was established by the early Byzantine period, according to graffiti from Syros (5th-mid 7th century). On these see G. KIORTZIAN, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades*, Paris 2000, 141, 165-166, 188-189 and more recently P. NOWAKOWSKI, Pilgrims and Seafarers: A Survey of Travellers' Graffiti from the Aegean Islands, in: *Cultic Graffiti in the Late Antique Mediterranean and Beyond*, ed. A. E. FELLE – B. WARD-PERKINS, Turnhout 2021, 119.

65. The literature on the material culture of migrants and the role of religion is vast. See indicatively A. VASQUEZ, Historicizing and materializing the study of religion: the contribution of migration studies, in: *Immigrant faiths: Transforming religious life in America*, ed. K. I. LEONARD – A. STEPICK – M. VASQUEZ – J. HOLDAWAY, Lanham 2005, 219-242; S. TRABER, Understanding the significance of migrants' material culture, *Journal of Social Archaeology* 20/1 (2019), 95-115.

66. Another couple with the surname Strofiliates, mentioned in the dedicatory

### *Concluding remarks*

In recent years, the historical study of rural societies has taken an important turn with the systematic examination of the material, epigraphic and visual evidence that comes from the countryside, including that provided by rural painted churches. This material acts as a starting point for a discourse parallel to the historical narrative based on written sources.

The epigraphic evidence preserved in the painted churches, written by members of the same communities (local painters), turns out to be the most direct –and probably unbiased– textual testimony to different aspects of their daily life. In this article, I have examined two short dedicatory inscriptions that have proved instructive when studied in the context of their original setting. The first has brought to the fore a voice that is rarely heard in the field of patronage and the history of pre-modern societies, that of an apparently unmarried woman, probably the daughter of a widow, living (possibly alone?) in the countryside of an island and able to contribute to the construction and painting of the small church of her rural community. It is difficult to determine at this stage whether the tiny number of unmarried women who appear in the dedicatory inscriptions in painted programmes is due to the fact that they represent a small proportion of the population, given that –according to the social norms of the time– women were supposed to get married and have a family, or whether these women simply did not often have the means to express their devotion. In our case, although Kale's desire to express her piety and for remembrance was realised through an inscription written in small letters in the zone separating the sacred scenes,

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inscription in the church of Agios Georgios at Distomo (1286/7), may have had a similar story, according to Giorgos Mastoropoulos, i.e. that of a family that fled Strovolos when it was conquered by the Turks in 1267 (G. MASTOROPOULOS, Ἀγνωστες χρονολογημένες ἐπιγραφές, 123–125; IDEM, Οι ἐκκλησίες τῆς περιοχῆς Φιλωτίου, in: *Φιλώτι*, vol. A', Athens 1986, 99; KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 88-89). A refugee from Asia Minor may have been the patron of the church of Fountoukli on the island of Rhodes (S. GERSTEL, Facing Architecture: Views on Ceramic Revetments and Paving Tiles in Byzantium, Anatolia, and the Medieval West, in: *From Minor to Major. The Minor Arts in Medieval Art History*, ed. C. HOURIHANE, Philadelphia 2012, 60-63, 64); Kyr Georios Pateles, the main donor of the church of the Archangel Michael at Polemitas in Mesa Mani (1278), was originally from Prusa according to the dedicatory inscription in the church (KALOPISSI-VERTI, *Dedicatory Inscriptions*, 34, 71-74, 100).

her name and her prayer were placed in the apse and under the main figures in the church, the Virgin and Child.

The study of the second inscription revealed the migratory history of a couple who probably came to Naxos from Miletus in the thirteenth century. Michael and Leonto Riaketas did not simply choose to depict two saints whose names they shared, but chose at least one who seems to have been little known and who, as I have argued here, may have been a bishop of the Middle Byzantine period from Michael's place of origin. By depicting this local saint, he was able to keep the memory of this place alive, and he himself could continue to pray to his beloved local saint in his new home.

The study of these two inscriptions has provided the sort of knowledge that is not recorded in written sources, allowed a bottom-up approach to exploring the island society, and brought out a series of "stories" that widen the traditional historical narrative by highlighting social and cultural elements of rural reality. Systematic examination of the related material will help to compose a much more comprehensive picture of the island's late medieval society, and provide new insights into the ongoing discussion about the social circumstances of the Greeks under Latin rule, and the representation of identities within specific historical and cultural contexts.



Fig. 1: Naxos, church of Panagia stes Yiallous, view from northwest (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture - Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)

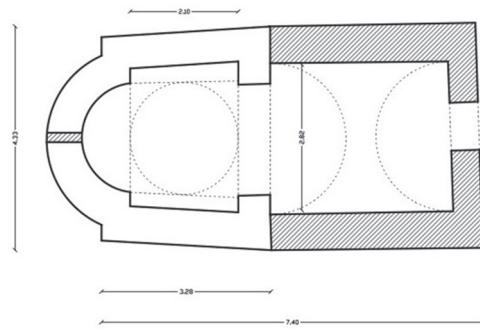


Fig. 2: Naxos, church of Panagia stes Yiallous, plan (©Klimis Aslanidis)



Fig. 3: Naxos, church of Panagia stes Yiallous, the fresco decoration of the apse, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 4: Naxos, church of Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, St. Mamas, St. Michael of Miletus, St. Leontios the Younger, St. Polycarpus, St. Eleftherios, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 5: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, north tympanum, Virgin Pausolype and Child flanked by Sts. Paraskeve and Kyriake, St. Demetrios and an anonymous saint, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 6: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, south tympanum, Christ *Soter* and St. John the Theologian praying to him, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)

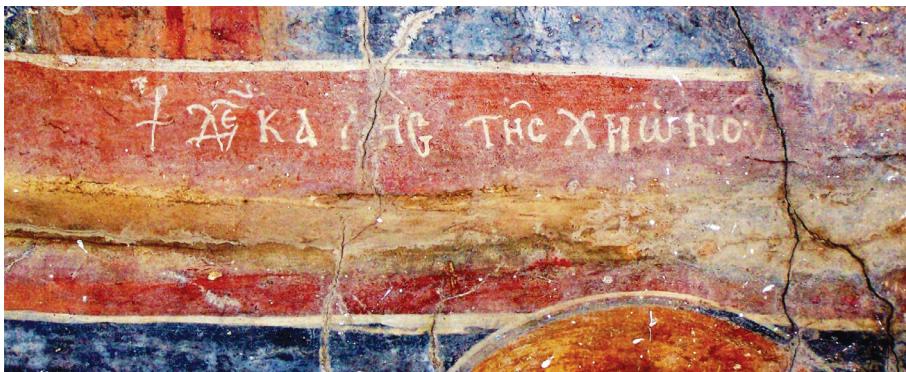


Fig. 7: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the dedicatory/supplicatory inscription of Kale tes Chionou in the narrow band that separates the semi-dome from the semicircular wall of the apse, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 8: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, the dedicatory/ supplicatory inscription of Michael and Leonto Riaketa between the depictions of St. Mamas, St. Michael of Miletus, and St. Leontios the Younger, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 9: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, the first part of the dedicatory/ supplicatory inscription of Michael and Leonto Riketa, Δε(ησις) Μιχα(ηλ) του Ριακήτα (και) (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 10: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, part of the dedicatory/ supplicatory inscription of Michael and Leonto Riketa between the depiction of St. Mamas and St. Michal of Miletus, της συμ (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)

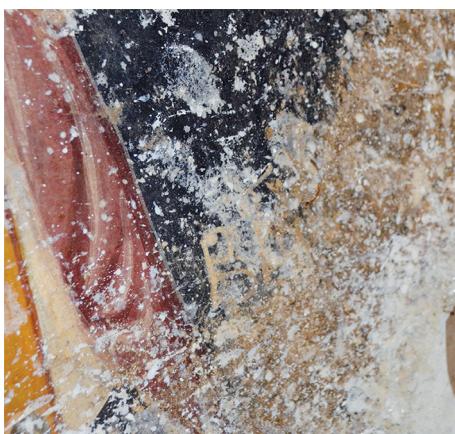


Fig. 11: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, part of the dedicatory/ supplicatory inscription of Michael and Leonto Riketa between the depictions of St. Michael of Miletus and St. Leontios the Younger, βίον αὐτοῦ (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)

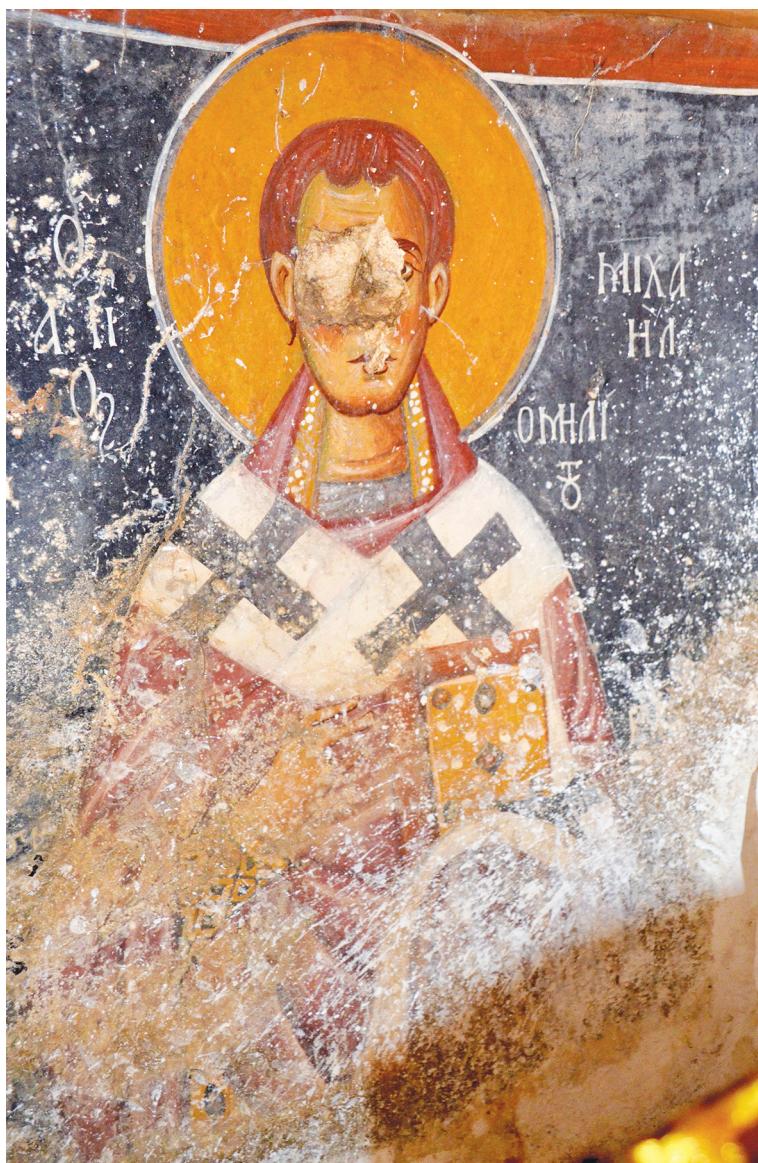


Fig. 12: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, St. Michael of Miletus, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture - Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)



Fig. 13: Miletus, the dedicatory inscription on a marble pulpit with the reference on the archbishop Michael of Miletus, second half of the 11th c. – first half of the 12th c. (©Philipp Niewöhner)



Fig. 14: Naxos, Panagia stes Yiallous, the semicircular wall of the apse, St. Leontios the Younger, 1288/9 (photo: Theodora Konstantellou, ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades)

ΑΦΙΕΡΩΤΙΚΕΣ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΕΣ, ΤΙΜΗ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ.  
ΣΥΝΤΟΜΕΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΙΚΕΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΕΣ ΑΦΙΕΡΩΤΩΝ ΣΤΗ ΝΑΞΟ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟΝ 13Ο ΑΙΩΝΑ

Η ανάλυση δύο σύντομων γραπτών αφιερωτικών επιγραφών από τον ναό της Παναγίας «στης Γιαλλούς» (1288/9) στη νοτιοδυτική Νάξο και ειδικότερα της θέσης τους στο εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα και της σχέσης τους με συγκεκριμένες απεικονίσεις αγίων, αναδεικνύει σημαντικές στιγμές της προσωπικής ιστορίας τριών ατόμων που ζούσαν στην ύπαιθρο του νησιού τον 13ο αιώνα. Η πρώτη, φέρνει στην επιφάνεια μια μάλλον σπάνια περίπτωση στη μεσαιωνική θρησκευτική δωρεά, την προσφορά που έγινε από μια πιθανότατα ανύπαντρη γυναίκα της υπαίθρου (Καλή), η οποία προσδιορίζεται εδώ ως κόρη της μητέρας της (μητρωνυμία). Η δεύτερη, αφηγείται την ιστορία του ζευγαριού Μιχαήλ και Λεοντούς Ριακήτα, που πιθανότατα κατέφυγε στη Νάξο μετά την κατάκτηση της Μιλήτου από τους Τούρκους στα τέλη του 13ου αιώνα. Και οι δύο επιγραφές παρέχουν πληροφορίες που δεν καταγράφονται στις σύγχρονες γραπτές ιστορικές πηγές και έτσι αναδύεται μια διαφορετική εικόνα της πολύπλοκης κοινωνικής πραγματικότητας της υπαίθρου σε ένα νησί του Αιγαίου κατά την ύστερη βυζαντινή/μεσαιωνική εποχή.

