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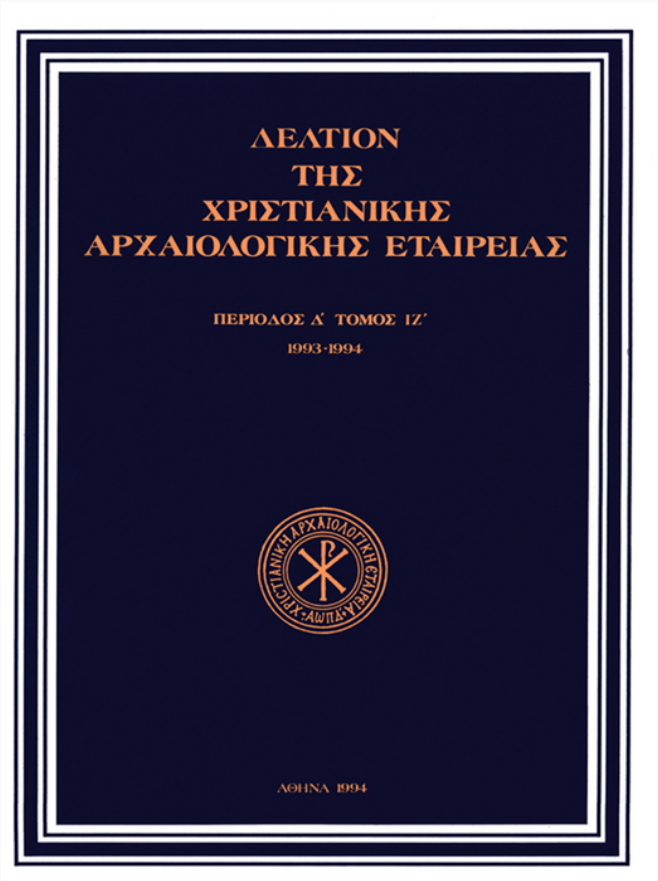

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Thalia Gouma-Peterson

AN 18th CENTURY DEESIS ICON AND ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT*

A lively and original example of the survival of the Byzantine tradition in eighteenth-century religious painting is an icon of the Enthroned Virgin and Child flanked by St. John the Baptist and St. Charalambis (Figs 1-5). With its multifigured iconography, its bright and contrasting color combinations, and its profusion of gold, this rather small icon attests to the existence of private patronage and to the inventiveness of Greek painters under Turkish occupation[1]. The icon is not dated, but it is clearly an eighteenth-century work: stylistically it combines the academic Cretan tradition of the seventeenth century (which includes some Western elements) with a folk-art style, characterised by an abundance of decorative motifs, a planarity of spatial treatment, and a love of narrative detail. The iconographic scheme is also distinctively eighteenth-century both in the iconographic type of the Virgin and Christ Child and in the choice of saints, especially of St. Charalambis.

Depicted in the upper section of the icon are the Enthroned Virgin and Christ flanked by St. John the Prodromos (the Baptist) and St. Charalambis both turning inward, their left hands extended in supplication. The Virgin and Child are identified by the usual abbreviated form of initials as Meter Theou (Mother of God) and Jesus Christ and the two Saints are identified by inscriptions of their names. In a secondary and much smaller space below the main figures, divided into three panels, are images of three military saints: St. George (left) and St. Demetrios (right) on horseback, and between them a third standing saint. The identifying inscription of the standing figure is illegible, but the narrow space alloted for it to the right of the figure suggests a rather short name such as Artemios or Niketas, both of whom were among the elite of military saints, regularly included in eighteenth-century icons[2]. We have then in this lively and original icon an unusual variant of the triadic Deesis composition, combined with three figures of popular military martyr saints[3].

The enthroned or standing Christ of the traditional Deesis has been replaced by the Virgin enthroned as Queen holding her royal Son. The regal identity of both figures is made explicit by their large crowns; Christ also holds a scepter with his left hand and the globe in his right. Both figures are richly dressed: Christ in a dark green tunic highlighted in gold and a crimson mantle edged and striated in gold; the Virgin in a blue robe with a gold and bejeweled central strip and belt, and a violet mantle edged in gold and decorated with golden floral motifs[4]. The high-backed gilded throne with a large gold cushion on which the Virgin and Child are seated is framed with an elaborate gold acanthus carving and supported by gilded acanthus-shaped legs. The Virgin's

* This article is dedicated to the memory of Doula Charalambous Mouriki, for many years a colleague and friend.

I thank Dr. Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou, Director of the Byzantine Museum of Athens and Dr. Angelos Delivorrias, Director of the Benaki Museum, for permission to use photographs of works in their respective collections. Professor Kurt Weitzmann († 1993) of Princeton University I thank for making available to me his photographic collection of icons from Mount Sinai. To Dr. Chrysanthi Baltoyanni and Dr. Olga Gratziou, curators of the Byzantine Museum of Athens, I am indebted for their friendly and helpful collegiality. Professor Carl A. Peterson, of Oberlin College, I thank for his editorial counsel.

1. The icon, which has been in a private collection in the United States for thirty years, measures 12 1/8" x 9" and is painted on a single plank of wood 6/8" thick. The wood grain runs vertically, and it is probable that the plank was radially cut. The icon has an integral frame which rises above the thickness of the painted panel. There is no cloth backing. The panel is carved out of hard wood, most probably oak. On the back of the panel is inscribed twice the name "Georgios Bourlotos" in a sloppy cursive script. The two inscriptions run parallel to the long sides of the icon, close to the edges and are written in lead point. In the left inscription "Georgios" is also incised; under this word are remnants of incised letters with spaces in between: a capital *delta* (Δ), an *eta* (η), and another *delta* (δ). Possibly they are the remains of the words "Deesis doulou" a declaration common in eighteenth-century icons. The poor quality of the cursive script suggests that the inscriptions were an afterthought, added by one of the subsequent owners of the icon. The name "Georgios", which relates well to the inclusion of St. George among the saints in the icon, could simply be a happy coincidence or could indicate that it was a name common in the family from the eighteenth century on.

2. On the contrary Theodoros, which would identify the saint as either Theodore Stratilates or Theodore Tyron, the two most popular military saints after George and Demetrios, would have been too long to fit, especially since the surname would, most likely, also be included.

3. On the Deesis see most recently A. Cutler, Under the Sign of the Deesis: On the Question of Representativeness in Medieval Art and Literature, DOP 41 (1987), p. 145-155 and idem entry in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, 1, New York and Oxford 1991, p. 599. See also C. Walter, Two Notes on the Deesis, REB 26 (1968), p. 311-336. Cutler points out that the term Deesis was used in Byzantine texts and inscriptions to refer to a variety of compositions involving Christ, the Virgin, angels, and apostles. Still, the largest number of examples, especially from the Middle Byzantine period on, show the Virgin and the Baptist interceding to Christ on behalf of humanity.

4. Because of the density of the matter used in the green pigment of Christ's robe, the green has turned into a brownish black, as have other smaller sections in areas that are primarily gold, as for example the Virgin's belt and parts of the throne.

Fig. 1. Deesis with the Virgin and Child, St. John the Baptist, St. Charalambis, and three military saints, ca 1750. Private Collection, U.S.A. (photo: John Seyfried).

crimson-shod feet rest on a large violet podium and in her right hand she holds a long stemmed lily blossoming into four red flowers. The two central figures shimmer like jewels floating in a reflection of color and golden light.

Iconographically, the Virgin and Child in this Deesis icon are similar to the type of the Enthroned Virgin frequently found in the apses of Byzantine churches and current in Cretan icons from the late fifteenth century on[5]. In most of these icons, as for example that by Emmanuel Tzanes of 1664 in the Byzantine Museum in Athens (Fig. 6), the Child is seated in the center of the Virgin's lap. In the Deesis icon, however, the Virgin supports the seated Christ on her left arm, a detail derived from a bust-length type of Virgin and Child known as the Hodegetria, from its famous prototype (purported to have been painted by St. Luke) housed in the Hodegon Monastery at Constantinople[6]. Though not a common type, precedents for the Enthroned Hodegetria do exist in both frescoes and icons, especially in the Palaiologan period and later, as for example in the apse of the parecclesion of St. Euthymios in Thessalonike, whose frescoes are dated 1302-1303, and in an icon in the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai (Fig. 7), which shows the Virgin and Child enthroned between two angels and which, on stylistic grounds, can be dated to *ca* 1300[7].

But the Enthroned Hodegetria of the Deesis icon is also related — because of the crown and royal garments, the flower she holds, and the representation of the Christ Child as king — to an iconographic type known as *To Rothon to Amaranton* (the Rose that Does not Wither), created around 1700 and very popular during the eighteenth century in portable icons and triptychs (Figs 8-9)[8]. In this type the bust-length Virgin is represented as rising out of an open rose or garland of roses, and supporting the standing Christ Child with her right hand. Both figures are crowned and dressed in royal garments richly decorated with floral ornaments and much gold, the Christ Child holding the scepter and globe and the Virgin a blossoming flower, most often a rose, or a bouquet of flowers. The Virgin also occasionally holds a leafy branch in the hand with which she supports Christ, as for example in the icon in the Byzantine Museum in Athens (Fig. 8), dated 1738. On the basis of iconography and recorded liturgical uses, D. I. Pallas has convincingly argued that this type of image, which in its representation of the Virgin and Child combines eastern and western elements (especially the flowers), is an illustra-

5. For other examples see T. Gouma-Peterson, The Icon as Cultural Presence after 1453, in: Icon: Four Essays, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 48-63, reprinted in: The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople (ed. John J. Yiannias), Charlottesville and London 1991, p. 151-180 (hereafter: The Icon). See also N. Chatzidakis, Icons of the Cretan School, Athens 1983, pls 17-18 (hereafter Icons), and M. Chadzidakis, Icons of Patmos, Athens 1985, pls 12, 52, 54, 59.

6. See R. Cormack, Icons in the Life of Byzantium, in: Icon: Four Essays, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 33 (hereafter: Icons); Holy Image, Holy Space: Icons and Frescoes from Greece (ed. M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 82, 90, 91, 94, 102; and Gouma-Peterson, The Icon, p. 49 and eadem, Crete, Venice, the "Madonneri" and a Creto-Venetian Icon in the Allen Art Museum, Allen Art Museum Bulletin (Winter 1968), p. 53-86.

7. For the parecclesion of St. Euthymios see T. Gouma-Peterson, The Frescoes of the Parecclesion of St. Euthymios in Thessaloniki, in: The Twilight of Byzantium (eds. S. Čurčić and D. Mouriki), Princeton 1991, p. 111-129, pl. 5. For the Sinai icon see G. and M. Sotiriou, Icones du Mont Sinai, 1, Athens 1956, pl. 191; 2, Athens 1958, p. 173-174.

8. See D. I. Pallas, Ἡ Θεοτόκος Ρόδον τό Ἀμάραντον. Εἰκονογραφική ἀνάλυση καί καταγωγή τοῦ τύπου, ΑΔ 26 (1971), Meletai, p. 224-238 (hereafter: Ἡ Θεοτόκος). The type was rarely used in frescoes.

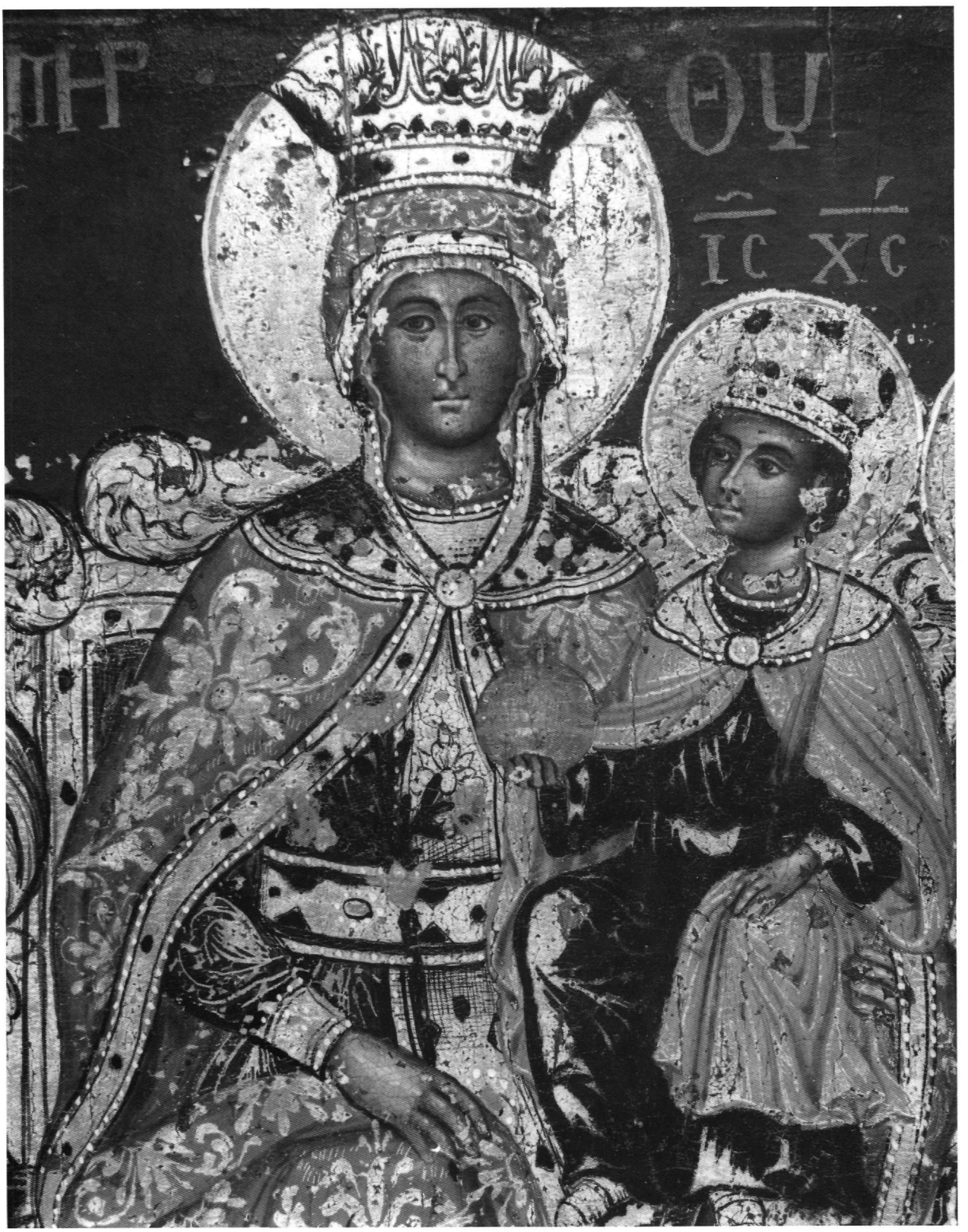


Fig. 2. Deesis, detail, Virgin and Child (photo: John Seyfried).

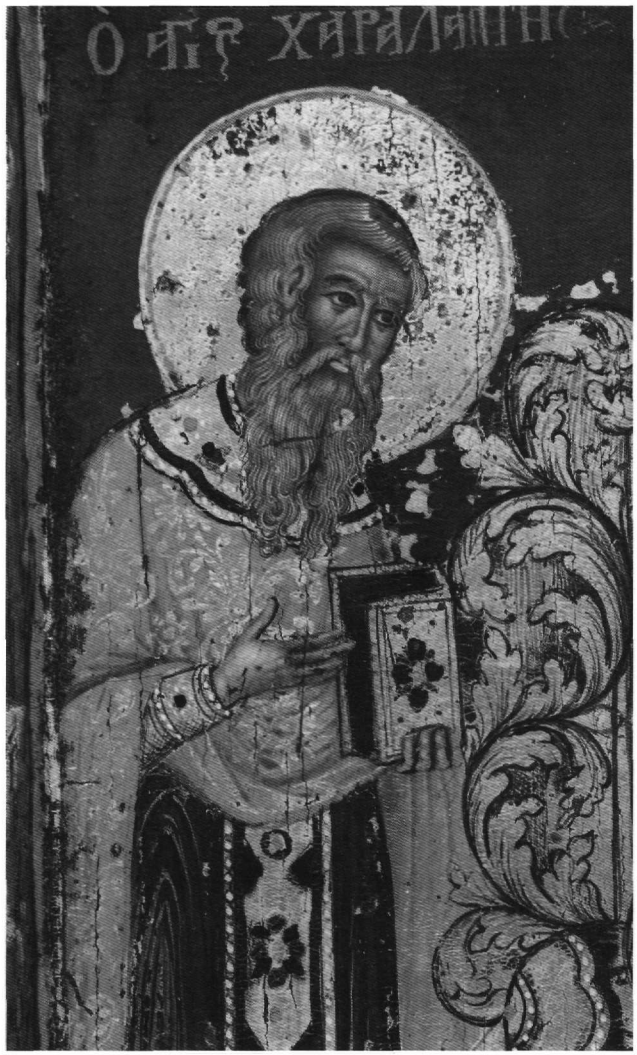


Fig. 3. Deesis, detail, St. Charalambis (photo: John Seyfried).

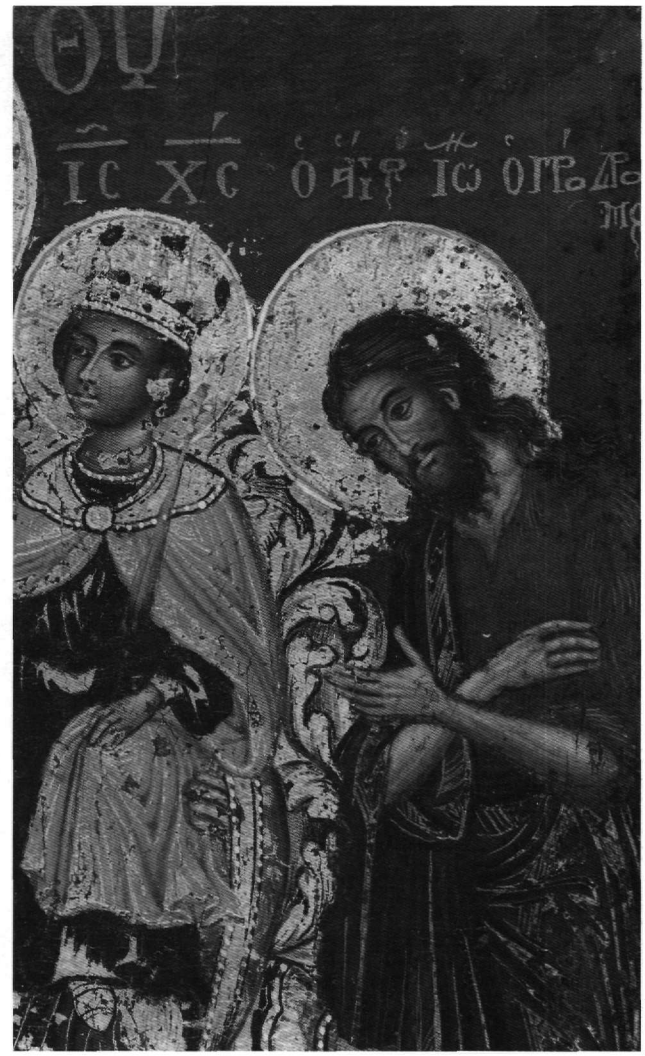


Fig. 4. Deesis, detail, Christ and St. John the Baptist (photo: John Seyfried).

tion of the Akathistos Hymn, an anonymous *Kontakion* (sermon in verse) in honor of the Theotokos, which dates from the sixth century and has been attributed by some to Joseph the Hymnographer and by others to Romanos the Melode. The hymn, sung during the service of the *Akathistos* during Lent, is also referred to as the *Chairetismoi* because of the 12 salutations to the Virgin in the poem[9]. In one of these salutations the Virgin is hailed as "the only one to give birth to the rose that does not wither", that is Christ. In popular tradition, however, the Virgin herself came to be designated as "Rothon to Amaranton". In the *Akathistos* the Virgin is also hailed as "the mother of the king", "the mystical rod that gave bloom to the flower that does not wither," "the star that brought forth the sun", "the unviolated flower", and "the fragrant lily", among other designations. The long stemmed blossoming lily the Virgin holds in the Deesis icon (Figs 1-2) is, most likely, a multiple allusion to "the mystical rod that gave bloom", "the inviolated flower", and the "fragrant lily", and the royal attributes of both figures certainly identify her as "mother of the king". The Virgin and Child of the Deesis icon, then, allude not only in a general way to the Incarnation but more specifically to its celebration in the *Akathistos*[10].

Not only is the Deesis icon similar to the *Rothon to Amaranton* type (Figs 8-9) in general iconography, but also in specific details, most notably, the rather western structure of the Virgin's outer garment, the maphorion, which covers her head and shoulders and drapes around most of her body. The traditional maphorion, a dark purplish-blue or deep wine-red garment, is plain and

covers the head and drapes from one shoulder to the other, totally covering the Virgin's chest (Figs 6-7). In the Deesis, however, as in most icons of the *Rothon* type, the maphorion is loosely draped around the shoulders and held together on the Virgin's chest with a pin. A white diaphanous veil projects from under the maphorion and frames the Virgin's face. Christ's mantle also is pinned on his chest and hangs loosely around his

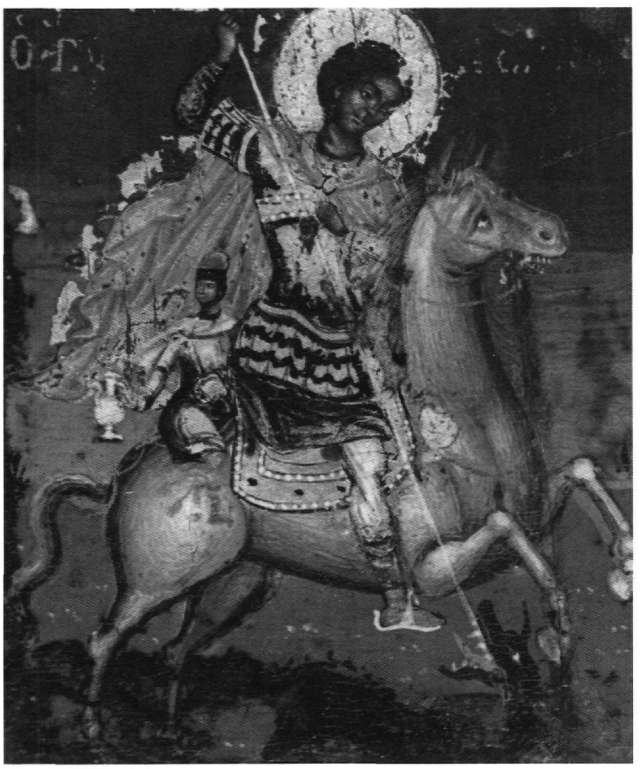


Fig. 5. Deesis, detail, St. George (photo: John Seyfried).

Fig. 6. Emmanuel Tzanes, Virgin and Child Enthroned, 1664. Byzantine Museum, Athens (photo: Byzantine Museum).

body. These Western and more specifically Italian elements, like the rich brocade-like effect of the Virgin's garment, bring to mind the brilliantly clad, elegant, and melancholy Virgins of the late Gothic Venetian painter, Paolo Veneziano[11]. Both stylistically and iconographically, these details infiltrated Byzantine painting as early as the fifteenth century, when, beginning shortly before the fall of Constantinople, painters began to migrate to Crete, then under Venetian rule, and found a clientele there and in Venice that wanted devotional panels of the Virgin and Child painted in a western style[12]. Western elements continue to be present in Cretan icons thereafter on into the eighteenth century, both because painters regularly came into contact with the West throughout this period and because of their work for Greeks of the diaspora in Italy and in more distant places, such as Vienna, Moldavia, and Roumania. The appearance of some motifs can be dated with greater specificity, as for example the elaborately carved Baroque thrones, which appear in icons in the late seventeenth century and be-

9. *Ibid.*, p. 224-226 and E. M. Jeffreys and R. S. Nelson in: Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, 1, p. 44.

10. *Ibid.* Of the 24 *Oikoi* (stanzas) of the hymn, half are devoted to the narrative of the Incarnation; the other half meditate upon its mysteries.

11. M. Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, University Park and London 1970, pls 25, 28, 69, 74.

12. See Gouma-Peterson, The Icon, with bibliography. For examples of such paintings of the Virgin and Child see From Byzantium to El Greco: Greek Frescoes and Icons (ed. M. Acheimastou-Potamianou), London and Athens 1987, p. 110, 111, 114 and N. Chatzidakis, Icons, nos 41-44.

come very popular during the eighteenth. Other motifs, such as the westernised garments of the Virgin, appear throughout this long period but during the eighteenth century become more ornate.

Continued western influence can be found also in devotional woodcuts and engravings specifically printed for an Orthodox clientele. These "paper icons", which began to appear in the seventeenth century, became increasingly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries[13]. Extremely interesting works, they are a rich source of information on the religious life and practices of the Orthodox Greeks of the diaspora and those living in the Turkish occupied lands of the Greek peninsula and the islands. They also provide clear evidence of connections between Orthodox Greeks in such urban centers as Venice, Vienna, Trieste, Budapest and such important monastic centers as Mt. Athos, Meteora, the monastery of St. John at Patmos, and the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. They began to be issued in the seventeenth century by various monasteries as a way to attract the support and financial help of lay persons, a pressing necessity for the survival of these monasteries during a period when imperial and court patronage no longer existed. They could be produced cheaply, in large numbers, and easily shipped in bulk over great distances. As these devotional prints began to circulate and become well known, demand for them among the Orthodox public increased. Wealthy Greeks began to sponsor and pay for their printing for monasteries and churches, and publishing houses in Venice began to also produce individual devotional prints, in addition to the books and tracts they had been publishing since the early sixteenth century[14].

Two documented instances shed some light on the extent and nature of these religious-commercial ventures. In September 1712, N. Melos writes from Nauplion to his brother in Venice to order for him (at his expense), from the press of the well known publisher Saros, images on paper for the churches of Nauplion. In May 1764, Constantine Saros and Demetrios Sykas, the *epitropoi* (lay committee) in charge of the church of St. Athanasios of Ioannina, write to Zaccharia Berko in Venice to order for them three hundred images of St. Athanasios, which were to be distributed to the faithful in Ioannina together with candles. Among the most popular subjects were images of the Virgin (Fig. 10). We know, for example, of a letter of 1782 from the *epitropoi*, Xaïkoustos Liontaris and Demetrios Kalamenios, to Panos Christodoulou in Venice asking him to order for them 300 "paper icons" of the Virgin decorated with gold. The prints were apparently lost, for the *epitropoi* did not receive the 300 prints and a year later placed another order for the same number of images[15]. In addition to being tokens of pilgrimage to, or in support of, particular monasteries, these icons on paper were also distributed on major holidays at Greek Orthodox churches both in Turkish occupied Greek lands and in other western cities with substantial Greek populations, such as Venice, Ancona, Messina, Genoa, Vienna, Trieste, and Budapest. In the nineteenth century the practice was extended to the churches of Constantinople, and continued there on into the early decades of the twentieth[16]. These icons made it possible for large numbers of Orthodox faithful who could not afford to commission a panel painting to own a devotional image. Of course, many who did own wooden panels also owned the paper equivalents, for no distinction was made among the Orthodox faithful between religious images on the basis of the material out of which they were made[17]. For, as St. Theodore the Studite had said

Fig. 7. Virgin and Child Enthroned and Angels, ca 1300. Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai (after: G. and M. Sotiriou, Icones du Mont Sinai, pl. 191).

centuries earlier "...he who reveres an image surely reveres the person whom the image shows; not the substance of the image"[18]. Neither the faithful nor the painters made distinctions between media, considering some better than others[19].

Clearly, the eighteenth century was a lively and active period for the Greek Orthodox population of the Balkans. It is marked, after the treaty of Karlovitz in 1699 and the Turkish conquest of the Peloponnese in 1715, by the penetration of Western commerce into the East, and by the rise of a Greek merchant class. In the process various local centers, the size of large villages, in the Chalkidiki, Epiros, the Peloponnese, and the islands, acquired greater importance and wealth and also became centers for production and acquisition of icons. Some also developed into centers for training of painters. The demand for icons on panel and paper is part of this wider phenomenon and is paralleled by the erection and decoration of new churches in both villages and monastic centers. Much of the decoration of these churches was done by itinerant painters, especially from Macedonia and Epiros, who also painted icons. These painters, related by family ties or place of origin, organized into traveling companies that moved through villages, towns, and monasteries, painting frescoes and icons for churches and for private use, and decorated the houses of the new merchant class[20]. That painting became a flourishing business is substantiated by the fact that approximately 750 painters active during the eighteenth century are known by name, which is two and a half times more than the number known for the seventeenth century[21].

Parallel developments in and cross-influences between images on wood and images on paper was inevitable and it is not surprising that images close to the Enthroned Virgin and Child of the Deesis icon are to be found in icons on paper. Of the twelve engravings of the *Rothon to Amaranton* type published by Dori Papastratou in her recent study, eight are of the Enthroned Hodegetria on a cushioned and ornate throne (Fig. 10), wearing a crown or being crowned by angels and, in four cases, holding a long-stemmed blossoming lily. The two major differences are that in all of these examples the royally attired and crowned Christ Child stands on the Virgin's left knee and is steadied by her left hand, and that a blossoming rose bush grows from under the Virgin's feet and, in four prints, reaches its fullest bloom under Christ's feet[22]. All the surviving engravings of this type date from the nineteenth century, but as the documents discussed above show, images of the Virgin on paper were equally popular in the eighteenth century and the type most likely had already existed then in

Fig. 8. Virgin and Child "To Rothon to Amaranton", 1738. Byzantine Museum, Athens (photo: Byzantine Museum).

13. See Dori Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες. Ὀρθόδοξα θρησκευτικά χαρακτικά, 1665-1899, 2 vols, Athens 1986 (hereafter: Χάρτινες εἰκόνες).
14. *Ibid.*, 1, p. 16-19.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
16. *Ibid.*
17. This is true from the earliest centuries of Byzantium on. See G. Vikan, Sacred Image, Sacred Power, in: Icon: Four Essays, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 6-19.
18. C. Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312-1453, Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972, p. 75.
19. Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, p. 27. There are documented cases of painters of frescoes who also did engravings.
20. Gouma-Peterson, The Icon, p. 59-61. For the most recent and most extensive discussion of the activities of Greek painters during the eighteenth century, see M. Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Ἅλωση (1450-1830), 1, Athens 1987, p. 99-132 (hereafter: Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι). See also T. Gouma-Peterson, The Survival of Byzantinism in 18th Century Greek Painting, Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin, 29 (Fall 1971), p. 11-60 (hereafter: The Survival), and A. Xyngopoulos, Σχεδίασμα ἱστορίας τῆς θρησκευτικῆς ζωγραφικῆς μετά τήν Ἅλωσιν, Athens 1957 (hereafter: Σχεδίασμα).
21. Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι, p. 101.
22. Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, p. 131-142, nos 122-132.

Fig. 9. Triptych with The Virgin and Child "To Rothon to Amaranton" and saints, ca 1720. Benaki Museum, Athens (photo: Benaki Museum).

icons on paper[23]. The Deesis icon (Fig. 1), however, is both more monumental and closer in spirit and style to traditional academic Cretan icons of the seventeenth century than the engravings[24]. This connection is especially evident in both the general structure and the very refined modelling of faces and hands of the four major figures (Figs 2-4). The flesh parts are carefully built up from dark-ocher to lighter tonalities, culminating in the carefully applied white highlights. The modelling is similar to that found in icons by Emmanuel Tzanes (Fig. 6), a well-known Cretan painter and priest, active in Crete and Venice (1655-1690), who, as most Cretan painters, could work in both a traditional manner and in a western style[25]. The modelling in the Deesis icon is softer and more inflected, however, than Tzanes's, which tends to be rather hard and smooth.

That the painter of the Deesis thoroughly understood the Cretan tradition is clear in the figure of St. John the Prodromos, the most traditionally rendered figure in the icon (Figs 1 and 4). He occupies the position this Saint often holds in the triadic Deesis, on the right of the central figure, and is represented wearing the goatskin tunic (*melote*) and over it the traditionally draped Byzantine himation. His melancholy and lined face is framed by thick wavy brown shoulder-length hair and a substantial dark beard. Variants of this type of St. John the Baptist can be found in Cretan icons from the sixteenth century on. In some he is shown wearing the more classical chiton and himation and in others he wears primarily the goatskin tunic with only a short himation, which leave his arms and legs bare emphasising his role as the prophet of the desert[26].

In the Deesis icon the restrained and classically Byzantine figure of the Baptist, dressed primarily in dark green, counterbalances the more ornately rendered figure of St. Charalambis on the left (Figs 1 and 3). That a

relatively little known saint, such as Charalambis, would be given this very exhaulted position in the Deesis is characteristic of the eighteenth century, when many heretofore obscure saints were brought to a new prominence and arranged in novel combination in single panels and triptychs. In the Benaki Museum triptych (Fig. 9), for example, the central image of the Virgin and Child of the *Rothon* type is flanked on the wings by Saints Tryphon, Theodore Stratilates, and George (left wing) and Saints Charalambis, Methodios, Antipas, and Athanasios of Athos (right wing)[27]. Charalambis seems to have been especially popular during both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He is often included in icons of the enthroned Virgin, as for example in the 1777 icon by John Kornaros at Mt. Sinai (Fig. 17) and is also placed next to the Virgin in representations of both the Hodegetria and the *Rothon to Amaranton* type, in both wooden panels and in icons on paper[28].

St. Charalambis, a priest or bishop of Magnesia in Asia Minor and a saint of the early church, was a contemporary of St. George and St. Demetrios. According to the Synaxarion, he was martyred at the beginning of the third century together with Saints Porphyrios and Dauktos and three women martyrs. Few representations of him exist in Byzantine art prior to the fourteenth century. Even during the Palaiologan period he was represented in only a few churches, in Macedonia and Serbia, primarily in sequences of the menologion and, in two cases, among individual figures of saints[29]. Representations of Charalambis on portable icons begin to appear in the late sixteenth century and substantially increase during the seventeenth. His new popularity in devotional images coincides with the publication of a lengthy version of his life by the Cretan monk Agapios

Fig. 10. Enthroned Virgin and Child "To Rothon to Amaranton", 1886. Monastery of the Annunciation, Skopelos, Greece (after D. Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, I, Athens 1986, 142).

23. The earliest surviving example of the *Rothon* type in paper icons dates from 1820 and was engraved by John Antonios Zoulianis in Venice. Several others were printed at Mt. Athos. The other four engravings of *To Rothon to Amaranton* in the published group represent the bust length Hodegetria with the Christ Child seated on her left arm. In a number of the prints the central figure is framed by scenes representing the twenty four oikoi (stanzas) of the *Akathistos*. For prints of other types of the Virgin and Child in paper icons see *ibid.*, 1, p. 109-130, 165-188; 2, p. 403-411, 491-501.

24. On Cretan icon painting see most recently M. Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι, p. 10-99, with bibliography. See also Xyngopoulos, Σχεδίασμα, Gouma-Peterson, The Icon and N. Chatzidakis, Icons.

25. For Emmanuel Tzanes see M. Chatzidakis, Icônes de Saint-Georges des Grecs et de la collection de l'Institut, Venice 1962, p. 128-139 (hereafter: Icônes) and N. Drandakis, Ὁ Ἐμμανουὴλ Τζάνε Μπουνιαλῆς, Athens 1962.

26. For examples see M. Chatzidakis, Icônes, pl. 6 and color pl. VIII and From Byzantium to El Greco (note 12 above), p. 74, 136, 137, 138, 141.

27. The Benaki Museum Triptych is not dated, but the close similarity of the Virgin and Child to an icon the *Rothon* type in the Archaeological Museum in Sophia, dated 1703, suggests that it should be dated in the first decades of the century. For illustration see Pallas, Ἡ Θεοτόκος, pl. 58.

28. For other examples in prints see Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, figs 110, 119. He is included in many eighteenth-century icons in the collection of the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai, which are unpublished. The photograph of the Enthroned Virgin and Child by John Kornaros is reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria expedition to Mount Sinai.

29. M. Vasilaki, Εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἁγίου Χαραλάμπους, ΔΧΑΕ, Δ΄, ΙΓ΄ (1985-86), p. 247-260 (hereafter: Εἰκόνα), is the first scholar to bring together the scant and scattered information on St. Charalambis and his representation in Byzantine and post-Byzantine art. For two icons of St. Charalambis that have been dated in the sixteenth century see Chrysanthi Baltoyianni, Icons. Demetrios Economopoulos Collection, Athens 1986, p. 44-45, pls 48-49.

Landos, in his book "New Paradise" (Venice, 1664). Scenes from this new and enriched version of St. Charalambis life began shortly thereafter to be included in a substantial number of icons[30]. This new popularity of the Saint appears to coincide with his identification as one of the protectors against the plague which hit the coastal areas and islands of the Mediterranean in epidemic proportions during the seventeenth century[31]. Additional evidence for this connection is provided by eighteenth-century icons and nineteenth-century icons on paper which represent the Saint standing on a personification of the plague, a dark-brown or black figure with the head of the devil, or on a skeleton[32].

In the Deesis icon St. Charalambis holds in his left hand a closed gilded and jewel-studded gospel book and raises his right hand in the gesture of supplication (Figs 1 and 3). In accordance with the text of his life, in which he states that he is 113 years old, he is shown as an old man with long white hair and beard. In the Deesis icon he has the monastic tonsure, which to my knowledge is unique among surviving representations of the Saint, and suggests that perhaps the icon was painted in or for a monastic context, or that either the painter or the donor were monks. The face of the Saint, painted with great care and refinement, provides a convincing portrait of an elderly man and contrasts with the idealized and classically structured face of the Virgin and the dark and ascetic but younger face of the Baptist. The colorful garments of St. Charalambis are based on the contrast between the plain, dark green, and traditionally structured long tunic (*sticharion*), with golden fold striations, and the long orange-red chasuble (*phailonion*) decorated with gold floral patterns. The long golden stole (*epitrachelion*), with red tassels, has jeweled crosses, and the gold neck border and cuffs are also studded with jewels. This very rich and decorative treatment of clerical vestments is characteristic of eighteenth-century icons, especially after *ca* 1750 (Figs 14-16) and may well reflect actual practice[33]. In the Deesis icon Saint Charalambis does not step on a personification of the plague, a detail which would have been inappropriate in the context of a Deesis composition, but in the panel under his feet is the image of St. George (Fig. 5), another saint who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was identified as a protector against the plague[34].

St. George is one of the most popular Byzantine saints. Regularly included among the elite of military saints in the decoration of churches, he was often paired with St. Demetrios, the protector Saint of Thessalonike. In early Byzantine examples both saints were portayed as youthful princely martyrs, dressed in the tunic and *chlamys*,

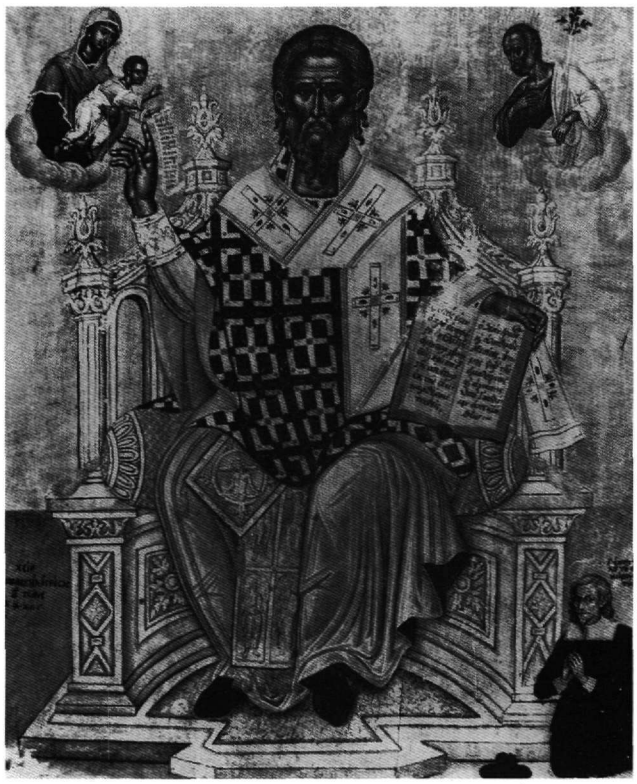
Fig. 11. Constantine Contarinis, The Three Hierarchs, 1715. Byzantine Museum, Athens (photo: Byzantine Museum).

but from the tenth century on they were shown in full military armor. St. George also is one of the few saints whose life was frequently represented in frescoes and portable panels[35]. The Saint on a white galloping steed slaying the dragon and accompanied by a young man riding on the horse's hind quarters and holding a wine jug, as portrayed in the Deesis icon, is a type that becomes popular from the fifteenth century on and, in this particular combination, does not seem to have existed earlier[36]. Both the dragon slaying and the rescue of the youth from Mytilene are miracles posthumously performed by the Saint. They derive from different and later Medieval accounts of the saint's life than his passion, and were rarely included in pictorial cycles[37]. One of the earliest representations of the Dragon Slaying occurs in the late twelfth-century frescoes of the Saints Anargyroi in Kastoria, and the earliest known example of the "accompanied" St. George is a thirteenth-century panel which was probably painted in the Holy Land by an itinerant French artist[38]. The number of representations of St. George on horseback greatly increased during the Crusades. The detail of the rescue of the young man from Mytilene would have been especially meaningful during a period when Christian knights were fighting the infidel. Taken prisoner by the Saracenes and serving as a personal attendant of the Emir of

Crete, the young man was miraculously rescued by St. George, as he was about to serve wine to the Emir, and returned to his mother in Mytilene, after she had prayed in the church of St. George. The story would also have been especially appealing to the Greeks under Turkish occupation and therefore became increasingly popular in icons after 1453. It continued to be so in the nineteenth century and was frequently included in icons on paper[39]. The earliest known example of a Byzantine icon combining the youth from Mytilene with the more famous dragon slaying is dated to 1441, a time during

30. *Ibid.*, p. 247-249.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
32. *Ibid.*, and Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, p. 295-299.
33. For another very colorful representation of St. Charalambis, in an icon in the Monastery of St. John on Patmos that has been dated to the eighteenth century, see M. Chatzidakis, Icons of Patmos, p. 178, pl. 163.
34. Vasilaki, Εἰκόνα, p. 252. St. George seems to have been identified as a protector against the plague especially in Crete. Other saints similarly identified are St. Spyridon, in the Ionian Islands, St. Athanasios, in the Ionian Islands and the Cyclades, and St. Nikanor. As Vasilaki has observed, the substantial number of saints identified as protectors against the plague, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, suggests that the need was pressing because of the extent of the epidemic.
35. T. Mark-Weiner, Narrative Cycles of the Life of St. George in Byzantine Art, University Microfilms, 1984 (hereafter: Narrative Cycles), and A. Kazhdan and N. P. Ševčenko, entry in Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, 1, p. 605-606.
36. M. Vasilaki, A Cretan Icon of Saint George, BurlMag 131 (March 1989), p. 208-214. R. Cormack and S. Mihalarias, A Crusader Painting of St. George: "maniera greca" or "lingua franca"?, BerlMag 126 (March 1984), p. 132-141. N. Chatzidakis, Κρητική εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου καβαλάρη σέ παρέλαση, Τά Νέα τῶν Φίλων τοῦ Μουσείου Μπενάκη (October-December 1989), p. 9-23 (hereafter: Κρητική εἰκόνα).
37. Mark-Weiner, Narrative Cycles, p. 21-25 and A. Kazhdan and N. P. Ševčenko, entry on St. George, Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, 2, p. 834-835.
38. Mark-Weiner, Narrative Cycles, p. 41 and Cormack, *op.cit.* (note 36). There are earlier representations of St. George and other saints on horseback, as for example in two icons at the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai, where St. George is shown killing an elderly seated man, probably Diocletian, and St. Theodore, also on horseback, is killing a serpent-like dragon. See K. Weitzmann, The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons, Princeton 1976, p. 71-73, pl. XXIX. For other Crusader examples of St. George and St. Demetrios on horseback see idem, Icon painting in the Crusader Kingdom, Studies in the Arts of Sinai, Princeton 1982, figs 64-65.
39. For icons on panel see M. Chatzidakis, Icons of Patmos, pl. 164; N. Chatzidakis, Κρητική εἰκόνα, figs 5-6; From Byzantium to El Greco, p. 128. For icons on paper see Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, p. 207-223.

Fig. 12. George Markou, St. Andrew, 1735. Monastery of the Phaneromeni, Salamis, Greece (photo: Photo-Archive Benaki Museum).



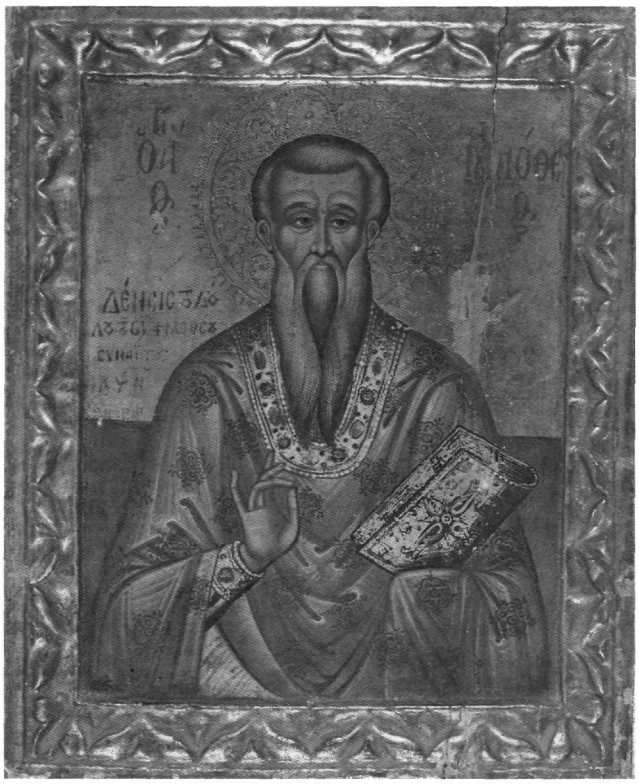
which the threat of the final annihilation of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Turks was imminent[40].

In the Deesis icon, St. George is dressed in the traditional military uniform worn by Byzantine soldier saints since the Palaiologan period: a short green tunic with long sleeves, a primarily gold cuirasse with green shading and a triple row of leather wings on the arms and around the pelvis, tightly fitting pantaloons (or long hose) and mid-calf boots. A red *chlamys*, pinned or knotted on his chest, flaps behind in the wind as he gallops forward on his white steed while killing the dragon with a long spear. The youth from Mytilene also wears a short tunic, mantle, and boots, but in addition wears a tall rounded cap suggestive of Turkish headgear. He grasps the wine pitcher in his right hand and seems to be holding on to St. George with his left. The attention paid to detail in this relatively small panel is very impressive, and certainly adds to the narrative vivacity of the scene. In this context it is rather surprising that the dragon, usually a scaly beast with colorful wings, is here represented as a rather simplified black shape with a devil-like head. Since this icon combines two saints identified as protectors against the plague, one of whom is St. George, it is likely that the black dragon also stands as a personification of the plague, to be vanquished by St. George through the entreaties of St. Charalambis to the Virgin and Christ.

In this icon, as in many others, St. George is paired with St. Demetrios (Fig. 1). The two saints are, in every way, mirror images of each other, except that the color scheme has been reversed. St. Demetrios rides a red (i.e. brown) steed, wears a blue-green *chlamys* and a short red tunic. Like St. George he holds a long spear with his right hand and kills a warrior who has fallen to the ground. This is the Bulgar Czar Ioannitzes, called Kalogianne (Good-John) by the Bulgars and Skylogianne (Dog-John) by the Greeks. The event alludes to the siege of Thessalonike in 1207, when according to legend the Saint saved his city by killing the Czar and forcing the retreat of the Bulgar armies[41]. Clearly St. Demetrios and St. George are presented in the Deesis icon as a pair both visually and functionally. The particular iconographic types and their combination used here continued to be

Fig. 13. Emmanuel Tzanes, St. James the Brother of Christ, 1683. Hellenic Institute, Venice, Italy (after M. Chatzidakis, Icônes, pl. 73).

Fig. 14. St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Artemios, 1779. Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio, U.S.A. (photo: Allen Memorial Art Museum).



popular throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are frequently represented in icons on paper and in some of these prints the two saints are paired as mirror images[42].

For reasons of both form and content, and perhaps also because of the wishes of the patron, the painter of the Deesis icon introduced a third military saint in the central space between George and Demetrios, thereby counterbalancing the triadic composition of the main section of the panel. The name of this saint is illegible but, as suggested above, the narrow space in which it was placed (on the right, next to the halo) suggests a saint with a relatively short name. St. Artemios and St. Niketas, both of whom were regularly represented among the group of warrior saints in Byzantine churches from the Palaiologan period onwards, and both of whom were included in eighteenth-century icons (Figs 14, 17), would be good candidates. The two Saints share the unusual distinction of having facial features like those of Christ[43]. The position of the central Saint immediately under the Virgin and Christ Child would, in view of this, have made the choice of either Artemios or Niketas very appropriate.

The carefully thought out and coherent iconographic program of this small icon and the excellent quality of its painting suggest that it was produced by an artist trained in a milieu of some sophistication. The structure of the figures, the definition of garments, and the model-

40. For illustration see Cormack, Icons, p. 20.
41. Papastratou, Χάρτινες εἰκόνες, p. 224.
42. For examples see *ibid.*, p. 207-213, 225-231, 315-317. According to Papastratou the two saints were especially beloved among country folk for whom they also symbolised the coming of summer (George) and the coming of winter (Demetrios) and the beginning of the related agricultural labours of each season, p. 202.
43. For a fuller discussion see Gouma-Peterson, The Survival, p. 15.

Fig. 15. St. Filotheos, 1750. Monastery of St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai (photo courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai).

Fig. 16. John Kornaros, The Virgin and Christ Child Enthroned with Saints Catherine and Barbara and Saints Charalambis, Parthenios, and Artemios, 1777. Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai (photo courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai).

ling of faces also indicate that the painter had been in contact with and thoroughly understood the academic Cretan tradition of the seventeenth century. The profusion of gold and the finely ground pigments which underlie the lively color scheme, the elegance and refinement of the brush stroke, and the meticulous attention to detail, indicate a painter of the first rank and a patron who could afford to pay for the best in both materials and services. Since painters moved from place to place and worked for a variety of patrons, it is difficult to establish where this icon may have been painted or where the painter may have come from. The task is made more difficult by the fact that no detailed studies of eighteenth-century religious and secular painting in areas occupied by the Turks or among the Greeks of the diaspora have been published nor has this material been photographically recorded as a corpus[44].

As stated above, the eighteenth century, in spite of the increased number and activity of painters, is characterised by the dispersion of activity from a few urban centers in Crete to multiple provincial centers, none of which were bigger than large villages. This resulted from the war of Crete (1645-69) and the subsequent Turkish occupation of the island, which severed the ties between Crete and Venice, destroyed the cultural and financial centers of the island, and limited the movement of painters between Crete and Venice. Large numbers of Cretan painters fled to Venice and to the Ionian Islands (still under Venetian rule) and there carried on the Cretan tradition of icon painting. Other centers developed in Turkish occupied lands, especially in Epirus, western Macedonia, and the islands. These painters working in more provincial milieus had to rely on their own ability to maintain a connection with the Cretan/Byzantine past. Some were able to hold on to the severe Cretan style, but inevitably, as the eighteenth century progressed, both western elements and elements of folk art were admixed in larger proportion. These intrusions helped to keep alive a tradition that would otherwise have stagnated.

Some of the Cretan painters active during the traumatic period of transition after 1669 moved to the Ionian Islands, as for example Elias Moskos (active 1646-1686) and Emmanuel Tzanes (1610-1690) to Zante, and Constantine Contarinis to Corfu (1715-1732)[45]. Contarinis belongs to a younger generation and is a good example of a painter who aristically survived the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Little is known about him, the major source of information being his signed and dated works, the earliest of which is an icon of the Three Hierarchs (Fig. 11) in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, dated 1715. In this icon Contarinis shows an adherence to the academic Cretan tradition as it had survived in, for example, the work of Emmanuel Tzanes. The intrusion of western motifs, such as the clouds and cherubs that surround the Trinity, is minimal. The rather strict byzantinism of this icon, characteristic of some of the work of the early eighteenth century, represents a conscious choice on the part of the painter. We know, in fact, that Contarinis could paint in several styles from another icon of his, dated 1718, where he combines very effectively a byzantine style, a Western style, and a folk art style[46].

Another painter, roughly contemporary with Contarinis, who also had a thorough grounding in the Cretan tradition was George Markou, a native of Argos who was active mainly in Attica[47]. His signed and dated works, most of them frescoes, span a period from 1719 to 1745 and are all located in the vicinity of Athens, where he seems to have resided. He also spent some time in Venice, where in 1729 he published at his own expense a religious service dedicated to St. Peter, Bishop of Argos and Nauplion. His earliest known frescoes, at the Moni Petraki in Athens (1719), he signed alone; but in the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Koropi (1732) and in the katholikon of the monastery of Phaneromeni at Salamis (1735), collaborators and students are included in the inscriptions. Among these were Anthony and Nicholas, perhaps brothers, who belonged to the prominent Athenian family of Benizelos. Two other of his students were George Kypriotes and Demetrios the priest, a former treasurer of Phanari. It seems then that George Markou established in Athens a modest center for training painters and the activity of his students, who propagated his style, continued into the second half of the century. Markou himself admired the work of Emmanuel Tzanes, which he had studied closely, as is clear if one compares his St. Andrew from the Phaneromeni (Fig. 12) with an icon of the same subject by Tzanes, in the Stathatou collection in Athens (now in the Benaki Museum), or with the image of St. James the Brother of Christ (Fig. 13), also by Tzanes, in the collection of the Hellenic Institute in Venice, dated 1683[48]. In the apse of the church of the monastery of Kaisariani near Athens, where George Markou and his students also worked, he used as his prototype for the image of the enthroned Virgin in the apse the icon of the Enthroned Virgin and Child by Tzanes (Fig. 6), which at the time was in a church near Athens[49]. In addition to the katholikon of the Kaisariani, the students of George Markou also completed the church of the Virgin at Vare (1736), St. Athanasios at Liopesi (1773), St. Paraskeve at Markopoulo, where the name of Markou is inscribed in the sanctuary (1741) and those of his students George

Kypriotes and Anthony Markou (1751) elsewhere in the church[50]. To the same circle of students and followers of Markou belongs a family of Athenian icon painters: George (1761), Athanasios (1769-1777), and John Ntountas (1774-1806). Their icons are technically perfect and repeat types created by Emmanuel Tzanes. They must have become well known because their icons reached as far as Smyrna, Constantinople, and Mytilene[51].

In conclusion, then, I would like to suggest that the painter of the Deesis icon was active during the middle of the eighteenth century and apprenticed within the kind of milieu that was provided by Markou and his students at Athens, a milieu through which he could have become thoroughly conversant with the academic tradition of the Cretan school. His figures of St. John the Prodromos and St. Charalambis are close to the Cretan tradition, as it survived in the work of such painters as Emmanuel Tzanes, Constantine Contarinis, and George Markou (Figs 11-13). St. Charalambis in particular is also both stylistically and typologically close to an icon of St. Filotheos (Fig. 16) at the monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, dated 1750 and commissioned as an invocation by the Sinaite monk Filotheos[52]. The closeness of the two figures reminds us again that both painters and styles travelled extensively during the eighteenth century and that origins from specific centers can only be tentatively suggested. A date of *ca* 1750 can, however, be proposed with greater certainty, for the Deesis icon does not have either the extreme planarity nor the softening of structure, or the extreme decorativeness of icons dated to the last decades of the eighteenth century.

The softness of structure is most evident in the Enthroned Virgin and Child (Fig. 16), with Saints Catherine and Barbara and Saints Charalambis, Parthenios, and Artemios below. Signed by the well known Cretan painter John Kornaros and dated 1777, the icon was commissioned by the Sinaite monk Parthenios from Smyrna. The softness in the modelling of the figures which, as a result, acquire an unnatural plumpness and the placidity of the almost identical faces are characteristic of Kornaros' work and exemplify one of the styles that became very popular during the late eighteenth century in large part due to his influence. Kornaros, who had worked in Crete, also was active at the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai for more than a decade (*ca* 1775-1790), painting both icons and frescoes and repainting a large number of older icons to which he added dates and the signatures of well known Cretan painters[53]. He continued to be active until *ca* 1800 in, among other places, Cyprus, where he painted the frescoes of the katholikon of the monastery of Kykkos, the most prestigious monastery of the island. His sweet, placid, and undifferentiated figures, standing against azur-blue grounds, which herald one of the main stylistic trends of nineteenth century icons, in no way influenced the painter of the Deesis icon who, as we have seen, remains close to the Cretan tradition of the seventeenth century.

The planarity and decorativeness also characteristic of late-eighteenth century work are evident in the icons of St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Artemios (Fig. 14) in the Allen Art Museum in Oberlin, dated 1770, and of St. Antipas in the Protaton at Mt. Athos, commissioned by Jeremiah the priest, signed by Nikephoros, and dated 1785[54]. Compared to St. Charalambis (Figs 1 and 3), St. Antipas and St. Gregory of the Oberlin icon (Fig. 14) look flat and schematic. Their garments lack both the Byzantine fold structure and the westernising definition of pliable cloth. In both cases and even more so in St. Antipas the ornament dominates over the structure of both garments and figures. This is not the case in either St. Charalambis (Fig. 3) or St. Filotheos (Fig. 15). In both these figures the structure of the face combines portrait elements with Byzantine typology. On the contrary in St. Antipas the facial structure has become both softer and more simplified. St. Gregory's face also is simplified, in fact, to the point of appearing mask-like (Fig. 14). His hair and beard are flat masses articulated by a white linear surface pattern. His wonderfully rich and colorful *phailonion,* in shades of light blue with

44. For the most recent brief overview of eighteenth-century painting see Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι, p. 99-132. See also Gouma-Peterson, The Survival, p. 11-60, and Xyngopoulos, Σχεδίασμα.

45. Gouma-Peterson, The Survival, p. 48-51, with bibliography and eadem, The Icon, p. 61-62.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Gouma-Peterson, The Survival, p. 42-44. Xyngopoulos, Σχεδίασμα, p. 283-289. Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι, p. 115.

48. For an illustration of Tzanes' St. Andrew see Gouma-Peterson, The Survival, fig. 3.

49. Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι, p. 115.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 115-116.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Published here by permission of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai. See also Gouma-Peterson, The Survival, p. 53-54.

53. On Kornaros see most recently Chatzidakis, Ἕλληνες ζωγράφοι, p. 119-120. The icon of The Virgin and Child by Kornaros is here published courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai.

54. For a more extensive discussion of the Oberlin icon see Gouma-Peterson, The Survival.

contrasting pink and wine-red flowers, is reminiscent of the floral panels that decorated the homes of wealthy merchants in the more prosperous Greek villages in the nineteenth century. This vital influence of folk art, less evident in the Deesis icon, increased in the last decades of the eighteenth century and survived the Greek Revolution of 1821. It is an important force in the nineteenth century, as is clear in both panels and the many icons on paper that survive from this period. The Deesis icon, on the contrary, belongs to a context in which the academic Cretan tradition played a vital role. At the core of its success is the balance between Byzantine concept and structure, western elements, and a love of ornament.

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APPENDIX

The fine quality of the Deesis icon is supported by the technical examination conducted by Aella Diamantopoulos, Paintings Conservator, Intermuseum Conservation Association, Oberlin, Ohio, U.S.A. The following is a summary report of her findings.

The gesso ground in the icon consists of a watery mixture of gypsum (calcium sulphate CaSO4) bound in animal glue, applied in several coats to produce a flat, smooth surface of considerable thickness. Examination under the stereomicroscope yields more specific information about the artist's working methods. It reveals sharp and defined incisions which bear witness to the very careful planning of the composition at the drawing stage, with every single feature and detail incised over the gesso layer. The incised lines were in this way used as a precise guide for the painted forms. The artist must have first traced his composition onto the gesso ground. He would then have marked, with the fine point of a stylus, the outlines and details of the figures and the intricate decorative features, as well as the haloes. Finally, he would have erased the drawing completely, leaving behind only the incision lines to guide him in the painting. This enabled the artist to position and define the features of his composition, already planned out on the gesso panel, without having to refer constantly to a painted prototype or to a drawn cartoon.

The delicate gold leaf was not laid directly on the gesso, but on an intermediate cushioning layer of orange-red bole. The bole, a soft orange-brown clay pigmented with iron oxides, was ground with water and brushed on with a water based medium or adhesive, such as glue, gum, or white of egg. It was applied up to the edge of the icon. It served two functions: to provide a smooth surface which could be burnished, and to give a warm color to the very thin gold leaf. Gold leaf appears to have been applied to the entire front of the panel, up to the edges of the icon. The sheets of gold extend well beneath the painted figures. Due to the tendency of the paint to flake when applied over gilding, there has been some paint loss. Once the gold leaf was laid, it was burnished, so that it acquired its full shining intensity and gave the illusion of solid gold.

Analysis of the icon reveals that gold leaf also provided the base for the decorative garments of St. Charalambis, the Virgin, the Christ Child, and St. George. The technique for executing cloths of gold and decorative textiles, known in Italian as "sgraffito", was applied here. First, the area to be represented as the cloth of gold was gilded. Next, a layer of the predominant color of the textile was painted in the usual egg tempera medium over the whole area of gold leaf to be patterned. At this point, the design of the textile would have been transferred to the paint surface by dusting powdered pigments through the pricked outlines of a paper cartoon. On lifting the cartoon, the pattern would appear as lines of dots on the paint surface. The gold parts of the design would then have been exposed to reveal the burnished gold beneath, by scraping away the appropriate areas of superimposed paint. The artist chose to also apply a few highlights with gold rather than with lead white, embellishing the painted draperies with lines of gilding. Gold paint was used to decorate the tunic (*sticharion*) of St. Charalambis, the himation of St. John the Baptist, as well as the mantles of the three soldier saints.

In the technical analysis, pigments were identified by mounting the original paint samples, including the ground, as cross-sections of pigment layers. Small samples were taken from areas of damage, in order to determine the build-up of paint layers. The cross-sections were embedded in polyester resin blocks, ground down and polished on one side to be viewed under the microscope. A preliminary examination of cross-sections revealed a possible palette of vermillion, a red lake glaze, ultramarine blue, earth colors (iron oxide), lead white and black, that were used to achieve the rich and subtle color combination on the icon. What appears to be a very darkened and disfiguring paint layer delineating details on the icon (e.g., the tunic of Christ, parts of the carving on the throne, and the stem of the lily) was investigated under the microscope. It is in fact a dark green pigment, possibly copper resinate, with a large proportion of medium in relation to the pigment used, and this could explain the excessive darkening of the paint layer. Thus the resin and/or oil medium has discoloured and has turned dark brown.

The icon has been beautifully rendered with a crisp, almost enamel-like quality by the application of the paint. The paint strokes seem to have been made with an exceptionally fine pointed brush, and in areas, the paint has been built up to a greater density so that the hair and beards are rendered with great precision by a series of short, impastoed strokes of paint.