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Secular painting in the Ionian islands and Italian art: Aspects of a multi-faceted relationship

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SECULAR PAINTING IN THE IONIAN ISLANDS AND ITALIAN ART:
ASPECTS OF A MULTIFACETED RELATIONSHIP
(18th – 19th Centuries)

Aphrodite Kouria

ABSTRACT: The contribution of Italian art, especially Venetian, was decisive to the secularisation of art in the Ionian Islands and the shaping of the so-called Ionian School, in the context of a broader Western influence affecting all aspects of life and culture, especially on the islands of Zakynthos and Corfu. Italian influences, mainly of Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque art, can be identified both on the iconographic and the stylistic level of artworks, with theoretical support. This article explores facets of the dialogue of secular painting in the Ionian with Italian art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focussing on works and artists that highlight significant aspects of this multilayered phenomenon and also through secondary channels that expand the horizon of analysis. Procession paintings, with their various connotations, and portraiture, which flourished in secular Ionian art, offer the most interesting material as regards the selection, reception and management of Italian models and points of reference.

The evolution of religious and secular art in the Ionian Islands since the early eighteenth century, with its theoretical support and grounding, is a phenomenon of particular interest in many respects, presenting important distinctive characteristics due to a number of factors. Several areas of research and certain issues related to this phenomenon remain unclear, blurred and intractable, as scholars face challenges on many levels: a lack of factual and archival documentation; a large number of artworks being lost or destroyed or whose location is unknown; many unsigned paintings; nebulous or ambiguous information; unverifiable accounts; difficulties in accessing private collections and private archives; considerable gaps in old photographic material concerning these artworks, as well as house interiors and the art collections they contained; and the impossibility of tracing the provenance of several paintings. All these factors severely hinder the survey of this field, making it extremely difficult to locate visual material and to provide documentation and to identify accurately works, artists and, in many cases, even sitters. These gaps, failings and challenges in primary research and, consequently, in the study of Ionian art, both religious and secular, are certainly due to a large extent to the devastating 1953 earthquakes on Zakynthos and Kefalonia and the subsequent fire on Zakynthos. This

objectively inadequate overview of the field consequently makes it difficult to study and evaluate an important aspect of the field – namely, the relationship of art from the Ionian Islands with Western, mainly Italian, art.

N. G. Moschonas wrote that:

It is true that since the fifteenth century Western influence in the Ionian region became stronger and was evident in all aspects and manifestations of public and private life, cultural activities, social behaviour and everyday life. More pronounced on Corfu and Zakynthos, less on Kefalonia and the other islands, stronger in urban environments, weaker in rural areas, the “European” tendencies of these islands’ societies led to a fruitful syncretism characteristic of the cultural climate of the Ionian region, which adds a distinctive dimension in the European synthesis.¹

The growth and consolidation of the bourgeoisie since the eighteenth century was a determining factor in the culture of the Ionian, with its extrovert, cosmopolitan character, the secularisation of art and the formation of the so-called Ionian School, in which the contribution of Italian art, especially Venetian, was decisive and can be identified both on an iconographic and stylistic level. Conditions had indeed become ripe for a new expressive language and an original repertoire of subjects. The quest for *naturale* – the naturalistic rendering of the human figure, objects and space – also found fertile ground in Post-Byzantine painting.² The leading figure of the Ionian School, a groundbreaking artist in many respects, Panagiotis Doxaras made a major contribution to the renewal of Ionian painting, both religious and secular, by adopting the teachings of the Italian Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque; nevertheless, available information does not suffice to enable a secure reading and evaluation of his oeuvre in its various manifestations. Doxaras also provided theoretical support for the innovations he introduced to iconography, technique and the pictorial language in general in his treatises

¹ N. G. Moschonas, “Τα νησιά του Ιονίου. Κοινωνία και θεσμοί στα Ιόνια Νησιά από τον 16ο έως τον 18ο αιώνα” [The Ionian Islands: Society and institutions in the Ionian Islands from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century], *Καθημερινή, Επτά Ημέρες* (22 December 1996), p. 6.

² See Eugenia Drakopoulou, “Αρχιτεκτονική – Ζωγραφική. Η θρησκευτική και η κοσμική τέχνη (1770-1821)” [Architecture – painting: Religious and secular art (1770-1821)], in Vassilis Panagiotopoulos (ed.), *Η Οθωμανική κυριαρχία, 1770-1821* [Ottoman rule, 1770-1821], Vol. II/1 of *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού, 1770-2000* [History of Modern Greece, 1770-2000], Athens 2003, pp. 239-264; also *id.*, “L’art religieux orthodoxe du XVIIIe siècle et ses relations artistiques avec l’Orient et l’Occident”, *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* IX (2012), pp. 141-159.

Τέχνη Ζωγραφίας [The art of painting] (1720, 1724) and *Περί Ζωγραφίας* [On painting] (1726), which contain his translations from the writings of Leonardo da Vinci, Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Pozzo and others,³ as well as praise for great Italian masters, whom he recommended as models.⁴ Doxaras' contemporary, Ieronymos Plakotos or Pit[t]oros, none of whose works survive, was reportedly regarded as an "excellent" artist "in the *naturale*". Plakotos decorated churches and homes with saints, *profane* [secular] figures, flowers, fruits, animals and birds.⁵

This article focusses on certain aspects of the relationship of Ionian secular painting and Italian art; it approaches this relationship, moreover, also via roundabout, secondary paths, expanding the horizon of analysis and drawing a multiplicity of meanings. Ionian artists came into contact with Western, mostly Italian, artists and their works through various channels and in different circumstances: during their studies in Venice and other cities, later on, such as Rome and Naples; through the mediation of prints (reproductions of paintings, for example);⁶ and they were also able to come into direct contact with European artworks on their native islands, in upper-class homes, a known fact in the case of Zakynthos. Important private collections of art and *objets d'art* on the island also attest to the close ties of the intellectually and culturally sophisticated Zakynthian society with Italy. In his descriptions of the pre-earthquake mansions of the great families, Dinos Konomos listed paintings of religious and secular subjects, Greek and foreign, some of which

³ See mainly *Λεονάρντο Ντα Βίντσι, Λεόν Μπαττίστα Αλμπέρτι, Αντρέα Πότσο, δια την ζωγραφίαν. Οι πρώτες μεταφράσεις κειμένων τέχνης από τον Παναγιώτη Δοξαρά* [Leonardo da Vinci, Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Pozzo, on painting: The earliest translations of essays on art by Panagiotis Doxaras], ed. and intro. Panagiotis K. Ioannou, Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2015; see also Denise-Chloe Alevizou, *Ο Παναγιώτης Δοξαράς, το Περί Ζωγραφίας κατά το ,αψκοτ' και οι άλλες μεταφράσεις. Τα τεκμήρια* [Panagiotis Doxaras, "On painting, 1726" and the other translations. The documents], Thessaloniki 2005.

⁴ See Alkiviadis G. Charalampidis, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη της εφτανησιώτικης ζωγραφικής του 18ου και 19ου αιώνα* [Contribution to the study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ionian painting], Ioannina 1978, pp. 29, 33.

⁵ For Plakotos, see mainly Yannis Rigopoulos, "Εργογραφία Ιερόνυμου (Γερόλυμου) Στράτη ή Πλακωτού ή Πιτ(τ)όρου (1670; – 26.2.1728). Έλεγχος πληροφοριών" [Artwork list of Ieronymos (Gerolymos) Stratis or Plakotos or Pit(t)oros (1670? – 26 February 1728): Fact-checking], *Επτανησιακά Φύλλα* 18/3-4 (Autumn-Winter 1997), Zakynthos, pp. 268-279.

⁶ Archival accounts mention prints in the studios of such painters as Panagiotis Doxaras, Antonios Rifios and Ieronymos Plakotos. See Charalampidis, *Συμβολή*, pp. 30, 58; also, Rigopoulos, "Εργογραφία", p. 271.

were attributed to Titian, Veronese, Piazzetta and Mantegna.⁷ Despite the reasonable and serious questioning of these attributions, the fact remains that artists on Zakynthos were able to train and cultivate their gaze and sensibility on high-quality Western artworks in the houses of families who were their patrons at the same time. This is an objective fact, a condition virtually ignored by younger scholars, which must always be taken into account during the investigation and study of Ionian art, particularly as regards its relationship with Western art.

Procession paintings, with their various connotations, are a common *locus* of Ionian painting and Italian, particularly Venetian, art. The best-known examples are *The Procession of St Haralambos* (1756; Zakynthos, Museum of Zakynthos; fig. 1) by Ioannis Korais and *The Procession of St Dionysios* (1766; Zakynthos, Museum of Ecclesiastical Art, Holy Monastery of Strofades and St Dionysios; fig. 2) by Nikolaos Koutouzis.⁸ Hybrids bridging religious and secular subject matter, these images are interesting examples of the fusion between the two types of painting. As noted by several researchers, this phenomenon constitutes a distinctive feature of the Ionian School. Produced on Zakynthos, these examples of art secularisation in the context of the Ionian School provide valuable, authoritative accounts of religious life and practices, also illuminating the island's history and social stratification. They constitute, moreover, significant documents about the role and importance of the image, which enjoyed the validity of a document in the minds of the inhabitants of this

⁷ See Dinos Konomos, *Ζάκυνθος (πεντακόσια χρόνια), 1478-1978* [Zakynthos (five hundred years), 1478-1978], Vol. I: *Καστρόλοφος και αιγιαλός* [The fortress hill and coastal area], Athens 1979, pp. 249-293.

⁸ Many scholars of Ionian art have studied procession paintings. See for instance Charalampidis, *Συμβολή*, pp. 17-23, 45-48; Katerini P. Delaporta, "Οι Ζακυνθινές Λιτανείες. Τα θρησκευτικά, ηθογραφικά και ιστορικά τους στοιχεία αποτελούν μαρτυρίες για την κοινωνία της εποχής" [Zakynthian Processions: Their religious, folkloric and historical details document the society of the time], *Καθημερινή, Επτά Ημέρες* (22 December 1996), pp. 28, 29; Efthymia Mavromichali, "Στοιχεία λαϊκού πολιτισμού στον ζωγραφικό τύπο της Λιτανείας. Η Λιτανεία του Αγίου Χαράλαμπος του Γιαννάκη Κοράη" [Folk culture elements in the procession genre: The Procession of St Haralambos by Giannakis Korais], *Folklore-Ethnography in the Ionian Islands, Acta Kefalonia, 27-29 May 2005*, Argostoli 2008, pp. 739-748; Dora F. Markatos, "Η τέχνη της Επτανησιακής Σχολής (18ος-19ος αι.). Δημιουργία – υποδοχή – πρόσληψη. Σύντομη επισκόπηση" [The art of the Ionian School (eighteenth – nineteenth century): Production – reception – interpretation: A brief overview], in Dora F. Markatos (ed.), *Η τέχνη της Επτανησιακής Σχολής, 18ος-19ος αι.* [The art of the Ionian School, eighteenth – nineteenth century], Technological Educational Institute of the Ionian Islands, Argostoli 2014, pp. 23-24 and pls 11-13.



Fig. 1. Ioannis Korais, *The Procession of St Haralambos* (detail), 1756, Museum of Zakynthos, Zakynthos.



Fig. 2. Nikolaos Koutouzis, *The Procession of St Dionysios* (detail), 1766, Museum of Ecclesiastical Art, Holy Monastery of Strofiades and St Dionysios, Zakynthos.

island, reflecting cultural models of the Italian Renaissance.⁹ Note that it was on Zakynthos that the syncretism of Greek and Western culture reached what was perhaps its most accomplished form in the entire Ionian region. Gentile Bellini's painting *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* (1496; Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia) has been pointed out as the main model for the procession paintings.¹⁰ The horizon of models must include the following paintings: *Ducal Procession* by Cesare Vecellio (1586; Venice, Museo Correr), *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio* by Giovanni Mansueti (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia; fig. 3), *Healing of the Possessed Man (Exorcism)* and *Arrival in Rome* by Vittore Carpaccio (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia) and *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lorenzo* by Gentile Bellini (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia).¹¹ All these works belong to the Venetian narrative painting genre of *istorie*,¹² whose descriptive wealth and pictorial power made them into an important manifestation of visual culture – the culture of the image and “spectacle” – in La Serenissima.



Fig. 3. Giovanni Mansueti, *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio*, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.

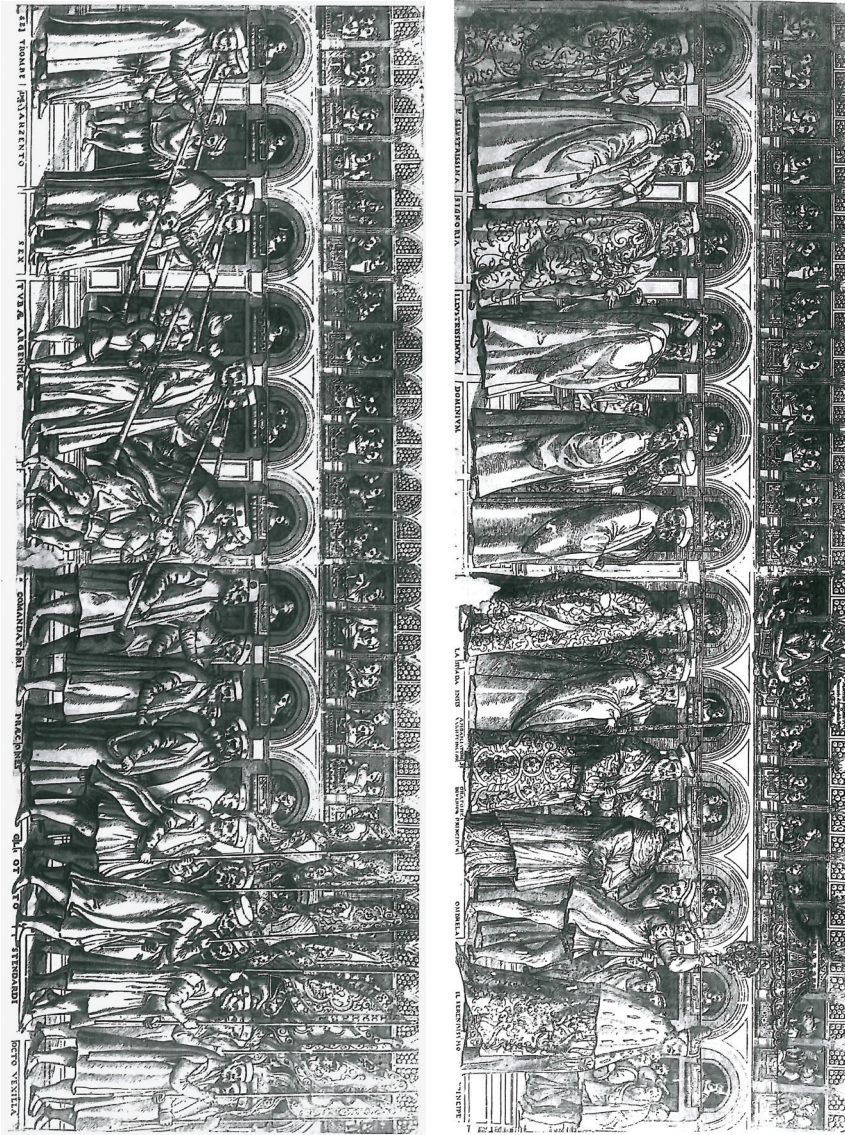
⁹ See Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994, *passim*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. XVIII. Charalampidis also referred to Benozzo Gozzoli's *Procession of the Magi* in the chapel of the Palazzo Medici in Florence; Charalampidis, *Συμβολή*, p. 22.

¹¹ Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, figs 103, 108, pls XXII, XX, respectively.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 131, 132, 135 ff.

A notable model is also the woodcut *Procession of the Doge* by Matteo Pagan (Venice, Museo Correr; figs 4, 5),¹³ a long, linear composition, echoed mainly in Korais' *Procession*.



Figs. 4-5. Matteo Pagan, *Procession of the Doge* (details), Museo Correr, Venice.

¹³ *Ibid.*, figs 95-98.

Religious and other processions in Venetian painting, with their codes, solemnity and strictly defined ritual, and religious scenes, such as miracles, which also feature detailed pictorial accounts of figures, costumes and the insignia of various officials, against an always specific and perfectly recognisable architectural background, were designed to record important public events authentically and accurately at specific moments in time within the city. It has been emphasised that a procession in Venice establishes a social stratification chart that can be taken in directly at first sight.¹⁴ This also applies, to a certain extent, to Zakynthian processions. In Korais' *Procession*, the figurative element of women and children watching the procession from house windows is yet another point of contact with Venetian models (see, for instance, Mansueti's painting *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio* and Pagan's woodcut).

A valuable account is that of the French traveller André Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, who saw Koutouzis' *Procession of St Dionysios* in the women's gallery in the church of St Dionysios: "One of the paintings that immediately captures the attention of foreigners is a work by a priest on Zakynthos [...] It depicts a procession of St Dionysios; upwards of three hundred figures can be counted; and I was assured that most did resemble actual individuals."¹⁵ Moreover, the inclusion of the artist himself at a young age amongst the people in the procession in the painting, beyond indicating an inclination for self-promotion, which would hardly be surprising in Koutouzis' case, attests in its own way to the validity of the image. The "eye-witness quality" characteristic of Venetian *istorie* is evident here, too.

The painted *istorie* of the early Italian Renaissance, with their documentary and narrative character and the prominent role of architectural context, namely the scenes of miracles that sprung from the paintbrushes of Bellini, Carpaccio and Mansueti, can reasonably be considered as references (if not models) also for certain votive images in Ionian art. These combine religious and secular subjects in their historical context, for instance the salvation of a young child from a deadly accident on the feast day of the Three Hierarchs or the rescue of a young man from a bull's attack through the intervention of the Archangel Michael.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁵ André Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, *Voyage historique, littéraire et pittoresque dans les Isles et possessions ci-devant vénitiennes du Levant [...]*, Vol. III, Paris An VIII [1799], p. 193.

¹⁶ See Eugenia Drakopoulou, "Υποδοχή και αφομοίωση της δυτικής τέχνης στη ζωγραφική των ορθοδόξων κατά τον 18^ο αιώνα" [Reception and assimilation of Western art in Orthodox painting during the eighteenth century], *Τα Ιστορικά* 52 (2010), pp. 144, 146 and figs 12, 13; and

The dialogue of Ionian painting and Italian art features several interesting aspects concerning the genre of portraiture, which flourished in secular Ionian art and with important examples in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Doxaras opened this chapter in a most iconic manner. In 1719, he painted the portrait of Count Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg, who defended Corfu during the Ottoman siege in 1716 (private collection; fig. 6).¹⁷ One of the supreme achievements of the Ionian School, the solemn, monumental portrait of Schulenburg demonstrates on multiple levels the relationship of the art of the Ionian Islands with Venice and moreover indirectly illuminates the personality of its creator.¹⁸



Fig. 6. Panagiotis Doxaras, *Count Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg*, 1719, private collection.

id., “Αρχιτεκτονική – Ζωγραφική”, pp. 261-262, fig. on p. 258. See also Angeliki Stavropoulou, “Storie devotionali nella pittura post-bizantina”, in Chryssa Maltezou (ed.), *Il contributo veneziano nella formazione del gusto dei Greci (XV-XVII sec.)*, *Atti del Convegno, Venezia, 2-3 giugno 2000*, Venice 2001, pp. 147-164.

¹⁷ See mainly Alkiviadis Charalampidis, *Έργο του Παναγιώτη Δοξαρά σε ξένη ιδιωτική συλλογή* [A work by Panagiotis Doxaras in a foreign private collection], reprint from *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη Στυλιανού Πελεκανίδη* [Tribute in memory of Stylianos Pelekanidis], Thessaloniki 1983, pp. 433-444.

¹⁸ A second, also naturalistic, portrait of Schulenburg by Doxaras, in miniature, is in the Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation Collection; see Nelly Missirli, *Ελληνική ζωγραφική, 18ος-19ος αιώνας. Εθνική Πινακοθήκη – Μουσείο Αλεξάνδρου Σούτζου και Συλλογή Ε. Κουτλίδη* [Greek painting, eighteenth – nineteenth century: National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum and Evripidis Koutlidis Collection], Athens: Adam Editions, 1993, p. 22.

Eminently relevant models for this work – also on account of the sitter’s identity – can be found in the portraits of high officials of the Republic of Venice, mainly combatants who distinguished themselves in the Ottoman-Venetian Wars in the second half of the seventeenth century in the Eastern Mediterranean; for instance, the full-length, monumental portrait of Admiral Lazzaro Mocenigo by Francesco Maffei (1656-1657; Schleissheim, Castello; fig. 7) and the portrait of the provveditor and captain Jacopo da Riva by Niccolò Renieri [Nicolas Régnier] (1649; Venice, Museo Correr).¹⁹ The portrait of Sebastiano Venier (c. 1571-1572) by Tintoretto (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum)²⁰ should



Fig. 7. Francesco Maffei, *Lazzaro Mocenigo*, 1656-1657, Schleissheim, Castello.

also be mentioned. Schulenburg’s pose, gestures and even the detail of the helmet on a piece of furniture near the sitter suggest that Doxaras had the benefit of familiarity with such portraits. The vista in the background with a landscape and a war scene, the curtain of precious fabric and the antique architectural element certainly allude to the typology and rhetoric of solemn Mannerist and Baroque portraits of eminent figures. From a purely pictorial point of view, this portrait eloquently documents the lesson Doxaras drew from sensuous Venetian colour (*colorito*), with its rich harmonies and qualities, not least through its interplay with light on various textures. The use of oil on canvas – it was Doxaras who introduced this innovative medium in the Ionian Islands – lent itself ideally to the artist’s expressive language and intentions.

¹⁹ See Maddalena Redolfi (ed.), *Venezia e la difesa del Levante, da Lepanto à Candia, 1570-1670*, exhibition catalogue, Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1986, cat. no. 258, pp. 163-164, and cat. no. 247, p. 158.

²⁰ See Miguel Falomir (ed.), *Tintoretto*, exhibition catalogue, Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2007, p. 109, fig. 50.

Doxaras seems to have been conversing with Italian references also on another level, as shown by certain complementary elements contributing to the textual construction of the image while expanding the horizon of the artist's Western models. It is certainly no surprise in such an artwork, especially one made by an artist who had participated in battle operations of the Venetians against the Ottomans, to see integrated figurative and pictorial patterns (on the pillar) based on engravings in the Italian editions of the famous Venetian cartographer-cosmographer Vincenzo Maria Coronelli and others.²¹ Serving as tools for political propaganda, these editions immortalised Venetian possessions and their fortifications, as well as military events and the victories of Venice and its allies during the Ottoman-Venetian Wars in the Mediterranean. In these widespread and well-established models, the printed images are often accompanied by arrangements of flags, weapons, shields and Turkish spoils (fig. 8),

which, in addition to their decorative role, also served a symbolic function in accordance with the considerations and intended role of these publications. It can reasonably be assumed that Doxaras was aware of these editions. Perhaps, indeed, publications dedicated to the Ottoman-Venetian Wars may have been amongst the books and prints in his collection.²²



Fig. 8. *Turkish Spoils*, engraving from Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, *Description géographique et historique de la Morée, reconquise par les Vénitiens [...]*, Paris 1686.

²¹ See for instance Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche delli Regni della Morea [...]*, Venice 1686; *id.*, *Description géographique et historique de la Morée, reconquise par les Vénitiens [...]*, Paris 1686; and Alessandro Locatelli, *Racconto storico della Veneta guerra in Levante [...]*, Cologne 1691.

²² Alkis Charalampidis, "Painting in the Ionian Islands, 18th-20th Century", in Marina Lambraki-Plaka (ed.), *National Gallery, 100 Years: Four Centuries of Greek Painting from the Collections of the National Gallery and the Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation*, Athens: National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, 1999, p. 52.

The fact, moreover, that he had already painted the portrait of Francesco Grimani, who had served as general proveditor of the Kingdom of Morea at Nafplion and as the supreme commander of the fleet,²³ is supportive evidence of his contact with military officials who played an important role in the history of La Serenissima and Venetian possessions in Greek territory. Another model for these motifs, noted by Charalampidis, is the relief on the pedestal of Schulenburg's statue, made by the Italian sculptor Antonio Corradini and installed on Corfu in 1718.²⁴

Nikolaos Koutouzis, a pupil of Nikolaos Doxaras, the son of Panagiotis, introduced an important new chapter in portraiture, which now left behind the solemnity, monumentality and narrativity of external elements. Portraiture flourished, patronised by the nobility and the wealthy bourgeoisie, who sought

to make their presence felt and to validate themselves through art. Understandably, a sitter's distinctively individual features now became the focus of a portrait.

Educated in Venice, probably in Tiepolo's studio, according to his biographers, Koutouzis was a multifaceted personality – a painter, a satirical poet and a priest – of a peculiar mental disposition, who worked in the turbulent and unstable political climate of the Ionian Islands in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth. Incisive, realistic and penetrating, his portraits offer psychological insight and intensity of expression (fig. 9). Scholars have vaguely mentioned influences from the (late) Baroque in his portraits, with their



Fig. 9. Nikolaos Koutouzis, *Portrait of Noble with Wig*, c. 1800, Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation Collection, Athens.

²³ See Michael G. Lambrynidis, *Η Ναυπλία από των αρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι τα καθ'ημάς. Ιστορική μελέτη* [Nafplion from antiquity to date: Historical study], Athens 1950, pp. 127, 130; *Λεονάρντο Ντα Βίντσι*, pp. 19-20. Location unknown.

²⁴ Charalampidis, *Έργο του Παναγιώτη Δοξαρά*, p. 441, pl. 2b. Charalampidis argued that Doxaras borrowed heavily from the sculpture.

dramatic tones, the painterly and expressive use of light and dark areas and the tendency to capture the sitter's emotional state and inner world – qualities also evident in his religious paintings. The uncomplicated arrangement, with its characteristic immediacy, placing the sitter in the foreground, focussing on the face and hands as vehicles of expression; a dark palette and minimal colour; and the use of certain complementary items, props that suggest the sitter's identity or profession and generally contribute to characterisation, are all central points of convergence with the great tradition of portraiture in the West, harking back to the Renaissance. An eloquent and instructive comparison can be made with works such as *Male Portrait with a Book and Clock* (Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst) and the portrait of Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (Kansas City, Missouri, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art) by Titian, "*Titian's Schoolmaster*" (c. 1570; Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art; fig. 10) by Giovanni Battista Moroni and the portrait of Lorenzo Soranzo (1553; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie) by Tintoretto.

The coveted status and timeless appeal of Western artists and their works are variously reaffirmed constants in the dialogue of Ionian and Italian portraiture. Often, they even contribute a special significance and role with respect to the sitter. The portrait of the young Ermannos Lountzis and his mother, Maria Martens-Lountzi, by Koutouzis (according to Dinos Konomos)²⁵ makes direct reference to two portraits by Bronzino, one of the leading exponents of Mannerism: the portrait of Eleonora of Toledo with her son, Giovanni (1545; Florence, Uffizi Gallery), and the *Portrait of a Lady in a Red Dress with a Fair-haired Little Boy* (c. 1540; Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art). There are evident



Fig. 10. Giovanni Battista Moroni, "*Titian's Schoolmaster*", c. 1570, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

²⁵ See *Επτανήσιακά Φύλλα* 28/3-4 (Autumn-Winter 2008), Zakynthos, illus. on p. 525.

similarities in the composition and in the sitters' poses and gestures. Through this artistic dialogue, the status of the sitters in Bronzino's paintings is reflected, so to say, upon these two members of an illustrious family of Zakynthos society.

In the priest and painter Nikolaos Kantounis' portraits and religious scenes, which to some extent imitated Koutouzis' art, Renaissance and (late) Baroque influences have also been identified, although the artist had not studied in Italy. Of special interest is his self-portrait (c. 1820; Athens, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum; fig. 11), with the allegorical figures of the Art of Painting and a nude, winged elder Time, with an hourglass and scythe. This depiction of time, and the antique, or mythological female figures as personifications of the arts were established thematic-symbolic motifs in Western art, widely circulating in print form. They have also been associated with artists' portraits. In the same iconographical vein, it would be useful to



Fig. 11. Nikolaos Kantounis, *Self-portrait*, c. 1820, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Athens.

mention here two engravings by Francesco Bartolozzi: *Allegory in Honour of Claude Lorrain* (c. 1764-1771; fig. 12) and its contemporary *Allegory in Honour of Pietro da Cortona*;²⁶ also, Gijsbert van Veen's engraving after a late self-portrait of Tintoretto, flanked here by the figures of the nude Atlas and of Minerva "Pictrix", palette in hand (c. 1595-1600).²⁷



Fig. 12. Francesco Bartolozzi (after Carlo Maratta), *Allegory in Honour of Claude Lorrain*, c. 1764-1771, The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, University Transfer from the Max Epstein Archive, 1981. 11.

²⁶ See Ingrid D. Rowland (ed.), *The Place of the Antique in Early Modern Europe*, exhibition catalogue, The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 1999, cat. nos 56, 57.

²⁷ See Falomir (ed.), *Tintoretto*, p. 378 and fig. 195.

During the same period, the religious painter Nikolaos Viskontis, following the trail forged a century earlier by Panagiotis Doxaras and his treatises, gave new dimensions to the encounter of the Ionian Islands with Western culture. A multifaceted personality²⁸ based in the village of Skoulikado on Zakynthos, Viskontis translated the treatise *De' precetti della pittura [...]* (Vicenza 1781) by the Italian Adamo Chiusole in 1820 as “Περὶ τῶν ἐντολῶν τῆς ζωγραφίας”. Also contained in the same manuscript codex is Viskontis’ essay “Περὶ χρωμάτων σύντομος διήγησις Νικολάου Βισκόντη” [A brief discussion of colours by Nikolaos Viskontis].²⁹ The exceptionally interesting literature recommended by Viskontis to his painting students demonstrates his remarkable bibliographic knowledge, as noted by Yannis Rigopoulos;³⁰ according to the latter, the books that the religious painter recommended, as well as those he used in writing his treatise, were in his personal library.

Viskontis’ case, another resounding proof of the intricate mesh of Zakynthos’ relations with the West, particularly Italy, also represents a major challenge to the in-depth investigation of this phenomenon in its multiple aspects, the perceptions of artistic and intellectual circles even in a rural setting, and their receptiveness to European culture. “It would be of interest,” observed Rigopoulos, “to explain, to the extent possible, the conditions and cultural context in which Viskontis developed his theoretical views on matters relating to artistic genres. Moreover, to justify Viskontis’ bibliographical choices, favourite authors and art manuals [...].”³¹ It should be noted that *The Procession of the Virgin’s Icon* (1828), installed in the women’s gallery in the church of the Virgin Anafonitria at Skoulikado, is also by Viskontis.³²

²⁸ He also taught Greek, French and Italian, as well as music.

²⁹ The unpublished codex is in the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive - Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece (ELIA-MIET), Athens. For this, see Yannis Rigopoulos, “Περὶ χρωμάτων σύντομος διήγησις Νικολάου Βισκόντη”. Παρουσίαση ανέκδοτου δοκιμίου που περιέχεται στον κώδικα Αδάμ Κιουζόλ, Περὶ των εντολών της ζωγραφίας [“A brief discussion of colours by Nikolaos Viskontis”: A presentation of an unpublished essay in the codex Adam Kiouzol, On the principles of painting], Zakynthos 1820. Reprint from the gift edition *Φύρα Τιμῆς για τον Μητροπολίτη Ζακύνθου Χρυσόστομο Β΄ Συνετό* [Flowers of honour for the Zakynthos Metropolitan Chrysostomos II Synetos], Zakynthos 2009, pp. 821-850.

³⁰ Including Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, Siena 1799; and Marco Vitruvio, *L’Architettura generale, vidotta in compendio dal Sigr. Perrault [...]*, Venice 1794 (see Rigopoulos, “Περὶ χρωμάτων”, p. 838).

³¹ Rigopoulos, “Περὶ χρωμάτων”, p. 848 note 20.

³² *Ibid.*, fig. 3.

From the mid-nineteenth century on, the dialogue with Italian art was enriched by new points of reference, fresh subject matter and novel pictorial expressions, since original content was being added to the repertoire of Greek painting as it evolved and reflected the changing historical and political contexts in the Greek world, as well as their impact on Europe. In the early decades after the Greek War of Independence, but later, too, historical subjects prevailed, as art was called upon to celebrate the epic struggle, to memorialise important events and individuals, thus ensuring through its own language historical collective memory. The contribution of Dionysios Tsokos from Zakynthos to this iconography was decisive, moreover initiating significant variants of the dialogue with Italian art, mainly with the related paintings by his teacher in Venice, Ludovico Lipparini, on two levels: the subject matter and the style. Lipparini depicted subjects from the Greek War of Independence, as many other European painters did in the philhellenic climate, with idealistic, Romantic-Neoclassical expressions in the visual arts and literature.

A notable example is the painting *The Death of Markos Botsaris* (c. 1844-1847; Athens, Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation Collection; fig. 13) by Tsokos – a simpler version of the work of the same title by Lipparini, which dates



Fig. 13. Dionysios Tsokos, *The Death of Markos Botsaris*, c. 1844-1847, Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation Collection, Athens.



Fig. 14. Ludovico Lipparini, *The Death of Markos Botsaris*, 1841, Musei Civici, Trieste.

from 1841 (Trieste, Musei Civici; fig. 14), and of its 1844 version that went on display in Venice in the same year, which Tsokos must have seen.³³ Tsokos most likely produced his own work during his studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice between 1844 and 1847.³⁴ Distancing himself from the narrative quality of his teacher's multi-figured works, the Greek artist focussed on the mortally wounded hero, thus adding expressive force to his painting.

In his painting *Boat with Greeks* (Metsovo, Evangelos Averoff Museum), inspired by the uprooting of the inhabitants of Parga in 1819 when the British ceded it to Ali Pasha, Tsokos faithfully echoed Lipparini's painting on the same subject (Verona, Banca d'Italia), which went on display in 1844 in Venice and became very popular.³⁵ Tsokos' variation, titled *Fleeing Parga*

³³ See Olga Mentzafou-Polyzou (ed.), *1821: Figures and Themes from the Greek War of Independence, from the Collections of the National Gallery and the Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Naflion Annexe, Athens 2004, p. 48, cat. no. 13. This variant was lithographed. See the illustration in I. G. Μυκονιάτης, *Το Εικοσιένα στη ζωγραφική. Συμβολή στη μελέτη της εικονογραφίας του Αγώνα* [The War of Independence in painting: Contribution to the study of the iconography of the War], doctoral thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki 1979, fig. 49, p. 155.

³⁴ *1821: Figures and Themes*.

³⁵ *Συλλογές Ευαγγέλου Αβέρωφ. Ταξιδεύοντας στο χρόνο* [Evangelos Averoff Collections: Travelling in Time], exhibition catalogue, Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza Foundation, Athens

(Evrpidis Koutlidis Foundation Collection), has been compared to *Refugees from Parga* (1845) by another Italian artist, Carlo Belgioioso (Athens, Benaki Museum).³⁶ Tsokos' painting, however, conveys a more emotionally charged treatment of the subject matter, intensified by the somewhat naive style, and an emphasis on the religious element, with the figure of a priest holding a cross and a Gospel book in the centre of the painting.

Apprenticeship was not the only condition for the selection of specific models by Greek artists. This is also illustrated by the case of the Corfiot painter Haralambos Pachis and his work *The Arkadi Holocaust*. A prominent member of the thriving Greek community in Trieste, George Afentoulis commissioned Giuseppe Lorenzo Gatteri, an eminent history painter in the city, to produce a painting of the holocaust of the Arkadi Monastery in 1866 during the Cretan Revolution – an event that strongly resonated in Italy. This painting (now in the National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum in Athens; fig. 16) was copied in a simplified version by Pachis (Athens, Evripidis Koutlidis



Fig. 15. Haralambos Pachis, *The Arkadi Holocaust*, Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation Collection, Athens.

2000, cat. no. 301, p. 266. For a reproduction of Lipparini's painting, see 1821: *Figures and Themes*, p. 92.

³⁶ See Mykoniatis, *To Eικοσιένα στη ζωγραφική*, figs 82-83 and p. 92. See also Caterina Spetsieri-Beschi and Enrica Lucarelli (eds), *Risorgimento greco e filellenismo italiano. Lotte, cultura, arte*, exhibition catalogue, Rome: Edizioni del Sole, 1986, C19.

Foundation Collection; fig. 15). As noted by Caterina Spetsieri-Beschi,

The conception and preliminary design – if not the work itself, so closely tied to the oil painting in Trieste – was most probably made in Italy. After his two-year stay of intensive study in Naples and the Academy of St Luke in Rome (1868-1869), Pachis made a long journey of artistic discovery in Italy and in Europe, until 1870, when he returned to Corfu. During his travels (or maybe even before, during the time of his apprenticeship), he must have visited Trieste³⁷ and come into direct contact with the Italian work.³⁸

Pachis' painting lacks the dramatic tension of the cluster of fighters that we see in Gatteri's painting, with its echoes of the Baroque, as well as minor incidents in the foreground and on the left. Gatteri's rich and epic composition, of course, required painting skills and experience which Pachis did not possess. In Pachis' case, however, the leaner treatment of the subject highlights the historic event, which the painting is called upon to immortalise.



Fig. 16. Giuseppe Lorenzo Gatteri, *The Arkadi Holocaust*, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Athens.

³⁷ Pachis may have entertained hopes for commissions from wealthy Greeks in the city, as had been the case with Tsokos years before.

³⁸ Caterina Spetsieri-Beschi, *Το "Ολοκαύτωμα του Αρκαδίου". Σχέσεις προτύπου και αντιγράφων* [The "Arkadi Holocaust": Connections between the model and copies], reprint from *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* 30 (1975), Athens 1978, pp. 294-308, pls 115, 122, 123.

The determining factors of the dialogue of the Ionian School with Italian art, the selection, reception and management of Italian models and generally of Italian stimuli on the iconographic, stylistic and even symbolic level by Ionian artists constitute a multilayered phenomenon, unfolding on a complex field of interrelated dynamics. It is these interrelated dynamics that often cast a multifocal light on works and make interpretative versions proliferate. As evidenced by some of the cases studied in this article, the multifaceted dialogue of Ionian secular painting with Italian art, and Italian culture in general, on both the practical and the theoretical level, still presents numerous challenges both to primary research and to examining and interpreting this subject in its various manifestations.

Art historian

Translated from Greek by Dimitris Saltabassis

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Figs 3, 4, 5: Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994, pl. XXI, p. 159; fig. 95, p. 172; fig. 98, p. 173.

Fig. 7: Maddalena Redolfi (ed.), *Venezia e la difesa del Levante, da Lepanto à Candia, 1570-1670*, exhibition catalogue, Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1986, cat. no. 258, p. 163.

Fig. 8: Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, *Description géographique et historique de la Morée, reconquise par les Vénitiens [...]*, Paris 1686.

Figs 9, 11: Marina Lambraki-Plaka (ed.), *National Gallery, 100 Years: Four Centuries of Greek Painting from the Collections of the National Gallery and the Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation*, Athens: National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, 1999, fig. 11, p. 196; fig. 13, p. 198.

Fig. 10: Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, fig. 89 p. 79.

Fig. 12: Ingrid D. Rowland (ed.), *The Place of the Antique in Early Modern Europe*, exhibition catalogue, The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 1999, cat. no 57 p. 103.

Figs 13, 14: Olga Mentzafou-Polyzou (ed.), *1821: Figures and Themes from the Greek War of Independence, from the Collections of the National Gallery and the Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Nafplion Annexe, Athens 2004, cat. no. 13, p. 49 and p. 48.

Fig. 15: Caterina Spetsieri-Beschi, *Το “Ολοκαύτωμα του Αρκαδίου”. Σχέσεις προτύπου και αντιγράφων* [The “Arkadi Holocaust”: Connections between the model and copies], reprint from *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* 30 (1975), Athens 1978, pl. 123.

Fig. 16: Caterina Spetsieri-Beschi and Enrica Lucarelli (eds), *Risorgimento greco e filellenismo italiano. Lotte, cultura, arte*, exhibition catalogue, Rome: Edizioni del Sole, 1986, E1, p. 428.

