

# Piotr Grotowski

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## The legend of St. George saving a youth from captivity and its depiction in art

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## *The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art\**

Piotr Grotowski, Cracow

Few saints can boast the rich hagiography and variety of artistic depiction of St. George, an officer in the Roman Army, who was martyred during Diocletian's persecutions. Eusebius of Cesarea did not mention him in his *History of the Church*, nor in *On Palestinian Martyrs*.<sup>1</sup> However, as early as the year 323 an inscription was placed in Saccaea (Shaqqa) in Hauran which mentioned George among other saints, while the fragments of the oldest redaction of his *Life*, dating from the 5th century, survive in the form of a palimpsest.<sup>2</sup> As a soldier George appears in the *Life of Saint Theodore of Sykeon* composed in the 7th century.<sup>3</sup> But most important for his iconography was the much later writing of his *Miracula*.

Already in pre-Iconoclast representations the saint appears not only in patrician attire, but also as a warrior in armour with spear and shield.<sup>4</sup> However, he has only been depicted on horseback since the 10th century.

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<sup>1</sup> Euzebiusz z Cezarei, *Historia Kościelna, O męczennikach Palestyńskich*, transl. and introd. A. Lisiecki, Poznań 1924, repr. Kraków 1993 (= *Histoire ecclésiastique / Eusebe de Cesarée; texte grec, traduction et notes*, [= *Sources chrétiennes*, LV], ed. Gustave Bardy, Paris 1984).

<sup>2</sup> The text can be found on the first pages of Cod. Vindobonensis lat. 954.

<sup>3</sup> *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*, ed. and transl. E. Dawes, introd. H. Baynes, London 1948, pp. 8-9. George with a sword in his hand appears to Theodore's mother and other women.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. Walter, 'The origins of the cult of Saint George', *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, LIII, 1995, pp. 317-318. This cites an example of St. George depicted in sixth-century wall-paintings from Bawit, where the saint is shown as a warrior.

Apart from cycles of his life, where emphasis is often placed on the motif of martyrdom, artists also began to show events from the *Miracula* which were little connected with the saint's biography. The most popular legend – of George fighting against the dragon and saving the sacrificial princess – acquired a new meaning, becoming both historical and symbolic representation. One should also classify in the same category of images a group of his equestrian representations, showing George's posthumous miracle of rescue of a youth imprisoned by infidels, a miracle known in several versions.

Among the representations of the saint in the art of the Eastern Church are occasional depictions of George on horseback accompanied by the considerably smaller figure of a young boy holding a vessel similar to a jug or a kettle, and sometimes a towel. As early as the 19th century, iconographers interested in Byzantine art noticed iconographic differences between those images without, however, being able to pinpoint their literary source. Adolph Didron was the first to mention the presence of a boy sitting behind the rider. Being unable to find any explanation for this, he left the issue unresolved.<sup>5</sup> In Enlart's opinion, the boy is supposed to be a portrait of the painting's donor. According to the conventions of medieval art, however the donor's portrait was normally located in the bottom part of the composition, shown rather in a *proskynesis* pose.<sup>6</sup> Clermont-Ganneanu, on the other hand, claimed that the person accompanying the saint was a woman with an amphora. In his opinion, the female person was replaced by a figure of young man, and he compared this process to the myth of Hebe and Ganymede.<sup>7</sup>

Only the German philologist Johann B. Aufhauser has established a basis for further investigations on the topic of St. George with an adolescent. Firstly, in his publication examining the story of the fight against the dragon, he identified the boy with a certain Pankratos, Pasikrates or Passekras – a servant of the saint and the author of his *Life* who had been an eyewitness at his master's martyrdom.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as early as 1913, Aufhauser corrected his previous findings by publishing a collection of legends of miracles performed by the saint. This publication was of key significance in

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<sup>5</sup> A. M. Didron, *Manuel d'iconographie chrétienne*, Paris 1845, p. 372.

<sup>6</sup> C. Enlart, *L'Art Gotique en Chypre*, I, Paris 1899, p. 248.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Clermont-Ganneanu, 'Horus et Saint Georges', *Revue Archéologique*, XXII, 1876, p. 393, note 2.

<sup>8</sup> J. B. Aufhauser, *Das Drachenvunder des Heiligen Georg in der griechischen und lateinischen Überlieferung*, [= *Byzantinisches Archiv*, V], Leipzig 1911, p. 166.

the further understanding of the iconography of George riding on horseback, accompanied by a boy.<sup>9</sup> Among other tales, Aufhauser published three versions of the story about the boy's salvation by the miraculous intervention of the saint. Although the construction and the plot are similar in each of them, all versions differ in details and historical background. That is why it is worth summarizing all three versions here.<sup>10</sup>

The oldest legend – as far as chronology of the source is concerned – is entitled *Heteron thayma peri tou arpagentos neon apo Syriais (De iuvene Paphlagonesi capto)*. The text is preserved in an eleventh-century redaction in *Codex Parisinus 1604* on pages 174v-177v; its later variants can be found in the *Codices Chalki* (1559), *Athous Josaphaion 60* from 1617 and *Athous Paulou 91* dated generally to the 17th century. This version of the story reads as follows:

During their invasion of Paphlagonia the Agarenes<sup>11</sup> took many people into captivity, among them a young boy who was a servant in the church of St. George in Phatris.<sup>12</sup> Some of the prisoners were killed, the rest turned into slaves. The boy was of such beauty that he was chosen as a servant for the Arabian ruler. As he rejected the offer to become a Muslim, he was sent to work in the kitchen. In his misfortune the poor boy prayed to Saint George. Once at evening, when he was lying in bed, he heard a voice coming from the yard and calling his name. The boy opened the door and saw a rider who caught him and placed behind himself on the horse. Then the steed rushed forward and started to gallop. The rider brought the boy to a certain building, and then disappeared. The exhausted youth fell asleep and next morning was awakened by the people, who were dismayed because his Arabian clothes suggested the presence of enemies. The boy recognised those people as monks. As it transpired, he had been brought to Monastery of St. George. All of them went to a church to offer a thanksgiving prayer to God for saving the youth.<sup>13</sup>

A more complex version of the legend survives in a manuscript written by the monk Theophanes in the year 1028, kept in the Moscow Synodal Library (*Codex Mosquensis 381*, fol. 11-16v). It can also be found in the fol-

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<sup>9</sup> *Idem, Miracula S. Georgii*, Lipsiae 1913.

<sup>10</sup> A french translation of the legend with the discussion about the text published by A. J. Festugière: 'Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), Saint Georges', [in:] *Collection grecques de miracles*, Paris 1971, pp. 313-315 and *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> *Agarinoi* – Hagarenes, Agarenes, descendants of biblical Hagar (Gen 16, 1-16), Egyptian slave of Abraham. The mother of Ishmael, according to Byzantine belief, was the ancestor of all Arabs. In the nineteenth-century redaction from *Codex Joasaphaion 308* Agarenes was replaced by Turcs ("strateuma ton tourkon").

<sup>12</sup> In Georgian versions from the 14th-16th centuries Phatris appears as Patri, Parti, or even Patari. Also the Georgian manuscript *Kutajskij 127, H-285* reallocates the plot from Paphlagonia to Palestine, see G. Sabinin, *Raj Gruzii*, St. Peterburg 1882, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> J. B. Aufhauser, *Miracula...*, pp. 13-18.

lowing later manuscript versions: *Vaticanus 679* dated to the 11th century, *Parisinus 502* from the 12th century, *Ambrosianus 192* from the 14th century, *Athous Xenophon 4* from the 14th century, a manuscript housed in the National Library in Athens (no. 278) from the 14th century, *Paris Coislin 275* from the 15th century, a manuscript from the Theological School *Chalki 39* dated to 1617; *Codex Athous Joasaphanion 66* from the 17th century, from the monastery Barlaam (no. 191) in Meteora from the 17th century; and no. 1026 in the National Library in Athens from the 17th century. The legend is known by the title taken from the Vatican manuscript: *Diigisis peri tou paradoxou thaumatos tou agiou kai panendoxou megalomar tyros Georgiou tou par' autou gegonotos eis aichmal[ot]jisthenta paida kai par' elpida sothenta*, although in the literature its Latin version has been accepted: *De filio ducis Leonis capto in Paphlagonia*. This legend was enriched with numerous details, although the general scheme of events remains constant. The place of action was also changed. According to it:

The cult of Saint George was propagated in Paphlagonia, especially in the place called "Potamos itoi i Oikiakos", where a church of the saint was situated, to which numerous pilgrims were coming. A soldier lived there, named Leon. He and his wife Theophano revered this martyr, and when their son was born, they named him George. When the boy had grown up, his parents entrusted his education to those who maintained the shrine. When Bulgarians, Hungarians, Scythians, Medes and Turks threatened the northern borders of the empire, the emperor Phocas recruited an army. Leon, who was too old to become the commander of Byzantine forces, sent his twenty-year-old son George in his stead. Before the expedition started, they went to the church where George had been baptised, and the father invoked the protection of the saint patron for his namesake. The Byzantine army was defeated. Those soldiers who were not drowned at sea, nor killed by famine were taken as prisoners. Young George, who was captured by the Bulgarians, was so handsome that their ruler made him a steward and kept the boy in his residence. Meanwhile the worried parents of the boy prayed to Saint George to liberate their child. His mother in particular was pained by the loss of her son, of whom she was reminded whenever she met boys his age. The feast of the martyred saint came and the parents of the prisoner went to the church for evening liturgy, following which they invited their relatives and friends for the traditional supper. However, sadness reigned during the supper, as everybody remembered the fate of the host's son. The same evening, the Bulgarian ruler ordered the boy to bring water for hand-washing during the supper in the palace. While the boy was going downstairs with a jug<sup>14</sup> of hot water and a towel, the saint

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<sup>14</sup> Greek *koykoymion* – jug, kettle. The origin of the word is most fully explained by L. Kretzenbacher, *Griechische Reiterheilige als Gefangenenretter*, Wien 1983, pp. 20-21, citing among others "koumarion" from *De Caeremoniis aulae byzantinae* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and the biblical story about Elias and a widow of Sarepta (1 Kings 17). He quotes also other literature.

appeared to him on a white horse, ordered the boy to sit behind him, and immediately transported the youth to his home in a miraculous way. At first the parents of the boy fainted, when they saw the Bulgarian clothes and steaming jug while the terrified guests started to shout. Only after a few minutes, when all of them recognised Leon's son, they started to celebrate because of his miraculous return, and drank the delicious, still hot water from the jug. The prayers of thanksgiving in the church of Saint George lasted for the whole night. George offered the vessel, which he had brought from the Bulgarian court to serve as a chalice during mass. When he grew up he told his story many times.<sup>15</sup>

One should notice that this version contains some elements which echo historical events. This gives us some clues about the legend's date of origin. Andreas and Judith Stylianou judge that the emperor Phocas, who appears in the text, can be identified with Nicephorus II reigning in the years 963-969.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless one should remember that this name appears only in a later redaction of the story. The reconstruction proposed by Leopold Kretzenbacher seems more convincing. He identifies George's parents with "domestikos ton scholon", Leo Phocas and his wife Theophano. And the defeat of the army of young George can be connected to the battle on the Achelos river near Anchialos on 20 August, 917. In this battle the Byzantine army, commanded by Leon, was defeated by the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon<sup>17</sup>. Events described in the legend can, therefore, be interpreted as an echo of 10th century wars between Byzantium and the Bulgarian Empire. The reference to "oi de en ti thalassi katepootisthan" about drowning people in the sea<sup>18</sup> can be considered a recollection of the struggle near Anchialos and the land-sea expedition against the Bulgarians in 917.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, hitherto, nobody has paid attention to another detail of the story which reflects actual circumstances – namely the fact that Leon was too old to be a commander of the expedition and sent his son instead. The custom of adolescent male descendants taking over the military duties of the father is connected with the formation of the thematic system in the Empire's Asian provinces between the 7th and 10th centuries. Retiring soldiers received parcels of land in particular *themes*. To maintain the property rights to land thus acquired, they had to send a son or male rela-

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<sup>15</sup> J. B. Aufhauser, *Miracula...*, pp. 18-44.

<sup>16</sup> A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, *The painted churches of Cyprus*, London 1985, p. 467.

<sup>17</sup> L. Kretzenbacher, *Griechische Reiterheilige...*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>18</sup> J. B. Aufhauser, *Miracula...*, p. 23, noticed that this passage had been taken from the book of Exodus (15, 5). Therefore using literary convention one can refer the word "thalassa" not only to the sea but also to the river mouth near which this battle happened.

<sup>19</sup> G. Ostrogorski, *Dzieje Bizancjum*, Warszawa 1967, pp. 224-228, especially 226.

tive to the army. Intensification of this custom during the 9th and 10th centuries is mentioned in other texts, including hagiographic ones.<sup>20</sup>

The third version of the legend, preserved only in late manuscripts, originated from the period after the fall of Constantinople. The earliest version is included in *Codex Vaticanus 1190*, written down by John Presbyter in the year 1542. The narration of the story is more laconic than in previous texts, as indicated by the short title *Etergon thauma*, slightly extended in the Latin version *De iuvene Mytilenaeo capto*.<sup>21</sup> A similar redaction of the legend is preserved in the seventeenth-century codices *Atheniensis 1026* and *Barlaam 191*, and also in *Athos Joasaphanion 308* written down in the 19th century.

In Mytilene on Lesbos there was a church dedicated to Saint George. While planning the attack against this island, the Arabian ["Agarinoi"] pirates from Crete chose the day of the feast of the saint, when all the inhabitants were together in the church to celebrate the liturgy. Amongst those taken into captivity was the young and very handsome son of a widow. The Emir of Crete made him his personal cupbearer. For a whole year the despairing mother prayed to St. George hoping to get her son back. With particular fervour she asked the saint on his feast-day, in other words on the anniversary of her son's kidnapping by the Saracens. At such a moment, the boy was giving a glass of wine to the emir. Unexpectedly St. George appeared on a white steed, caught the boy and brought him to his mother's house. All the inhabitants of Mytilene revered the saint for his miraculous rescue of the boy.<sup>22</sup>

Although the third version is known only from late manuscripts, the facts described in it can be related to the situation on the islands of the Aegean Sea in the 9th or 10th centuries. Stavros Mihalarias and Robin Cormack think that Arabian rule on Crete (824 to 961) and also their attack on Lesbos (about 867) would naturally have been included in the story of the boy's capture.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> About recruitment in the thematic system see J. Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army c. 550-950. A Study on the Origins of the Stratiotika Ktemata*, Wien 1979, pp. 41-65; also by the same author, the more recent 'Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLVII, 1993, pp. 1-67, especially 27. This also includes a bibliography on the subject.

<sup>21</sup> Under the longer title: '*Etergon thauma tou panendoxou kai thaumatourgou Georgiou tou tropaiofhorou peri tou arpasthentos eterou tinos neon*' this legend appears in *Codex Joasaphanion 308* (J. B. Aufhauser, *Miracula...*, p. 101), which could be a suggestion that in the Vatican manuscript the scribe shortened the pattern he used.

<sup>22</sup> J. B. Aufhauser, *Miracula...*, pp. 100-103.

<sup>23</sup> Supported by a historical research of V. Christides, 'The Raids of the Moslems of Crete in the Aegean Sea. Piracy and Conquest', *Byzantion*, LI, 1981, pp. 76-111, the year of 867 was presumed as a *post quem* date for the origin of the third version by R. Cormack, S. Mihalarias, 'A crusader painting of St. George: "maniera greca" or "lingua franca"?' *The Burlington*

The above comparison of these three legends allows one to say that – with the exception of some repeated motifs of which the structure of the story is built (like the boy's one-year slavery, his prayers to Saint George and the miraculous rescue by the mounted saint) – different narrative elements appear in successive versions of the legend. Some of them can be attributed to historical facts, which suggests a hypothesis concerning the date when particular versions were composed. The texts of all three legends must definitely have been composed between the second half of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century. The *ante quem* date is determined by the presence of Arabian pirates from Crete and the Bulgarian ruler, tsar Symeon, memories of whom were undoubtedly still alive among the authors of the legend. Hence texts must have come into existence during the lives of a few generations, when an oral tradition still functioned.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand some evidence exists that the text of the legend was already known to Symeon Metaphrastes at the end of the 10th century. Such presumptions result from the fact that a Moscow manuscript (from between 1542 and 1564), containing the legend, is supposed to have Greek source.<sup>25</sup> The original text, no longer extant, which could have been used by Metaphrastes – or even his version of the text – was a pattern for the Coptic translation of the legend, at least contemporary with the three versions published by J. Aufhauser. Numerous Greek words appear in this text, which confirms the use of Byzantine sources by the author.<sup>26</sup>

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*Magazine*, March 1984, pp. 132-141. L. Kretzenbacher, however, (*Griechische Reiterheilige...*, p. 22) dates it generally to the 10th century, though he inclines to the thesis that the events described in the text are related to Saracen expeditions of the 9th century. A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, 'I vyzantini techni kata tin periodo tis Fragkokratias (1191-1570)', *Istoria tis Kiprou*, V, 1996, p. 1264, also propose years of 824-960.

<sup>24</sup> It seems unbelievable that the Mytilenian version (known only from late manuscripts) was written after 1071, when the Byzantine army was defeated in the battle near Mantzikert and Turkish tribes captured Anatolia. No trace of this event exists in the redaction of this legend; similarly the author did not mention the Norman expedition, nor the passage of the first Crusade.

<sup>25</sup> E. S. Ovčinnikova, 'Vnov' otkrytyj pamiatnik stankovoj živopisi iz sobranija Gosudarstvennogo Istoričeskogo Muzeja', *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, XXXVII, 1976, pp. 229-230. The author suggests that the legend was taken from Metaphrastes' *Menologion*, put together under the order of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Nevertheless this text under the date of April 23 contains only a description of the martyrdom of George, together with the legend of the finding of the cattle and a few less important miracles, without mentioning the miracle with the boy, cf. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca*, Paris, CXV, col. 141-161.

<sup>26</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge, *George of Lydda. The Patron Saint of England. A study of the Cults of Saint George in Ethiopia*, London 1931, *passim*.



The motif of kidnapping a handsome adolescent and then making him a steward was common among the Greeks because of the classical myth about Ganymede, son of the Trojan king Tros (or Laomedon), who was captured by Zeus or Cretan Minos. Both stories are connected not only by the character of the young cupbearer, but also by the place where he was captured. According to different versions it happened on Mount Ida in Troas, in the town of Harpage in Mysia in Asia Minor, or on Crete.<sup>27</sup>

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Josef Myslivec, whose monograph on the iconography of St. George draws on sources published by Aufhauser, linked Post-Byzantine Moldavian, Georgian and Athos images of George with a boy on horseback with the chronologically second version of the legend about the son of Leo the Paphlagonian.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, this scholar rejected as false Kondakov's thesis, which like Aufhauser says that the figure accompanying Saint George is his servant.<sup>29</sup> However, Myslivec thought the first version of the legend (about an adolescent from Paphlagonia) was the literary source of a different composition. In this George, wearing the traditional garb of his martyrdom, after liberating the boy and bringing him to the monastery, offers him to the care of priests.<sup>30</sup>

The next examples from sixteenth to nineteenth-century Romanian and Athos art were provided by Maria Golescu in her paper devoted especially to the problem of images of St. George with an accompanying figure. She also enriched the body of known sources with two added versions of the legend, but in her opinion none of them can be definitely recognised as the literary pattern for the representations of St. George and the boy. In addition, she noticed that the "Mytilenian" version is only insignificantly modified in relation to the primary "Paphlagonian" legend. She also pointed to the popularity of this subject in Post-Byzantine graphic art.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> P. Grimal, *Słownik mitologii greckiej i rzymskiej*, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1990, pp. 110-111.

<sup>28</sup> J. Myslivec, 'Svatý Jiří ve východnokřesťanském umění', *Byzantinoslavica*, V, 1933/4, p. 341

<sup>29</sup> N. P. Kondakov, *Russkaja ikona*, III, Praha 1931, p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

<sup>31</sup> M. Golescu, 'Saint Georges delivre l'adolescent emmené en captivité par les infidèles', *Bulletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice*, XXX/3, 1937, pp. 128-131.

A step backwards, which has confused investigations in this field, was David Talbot Rice's report delivered at the Sixth International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Paris. Unaware of earlier research, he tried again to find an explanation of the motif of an accompanying youth. This fact seems especially strange because Talbot Rice knew Myslivec's publication, to which he refers in his notes. To explain the presence of the boy in images of Saint George, he argued that this person should be seen in the religious context of crusader culture as a squire, or as a representation of the princess. If the latter is the case then the motif was derived from Persian iconography.<sup>32</sup> His mistake was corrected soon by the Bulgarian researcher I. Dujčev who, in a separate paper, focused on representations of George rescuing the youth in Bulgarian art. He presumed that the source for the authors of the composition was the version about the son of the general Leon.<sup>33</sup>

Questions connecting the image of Saint George and an adolescent in Georgian art with representations of Saint George and the dragon, were examined by E. L. Privalova in an extensive paper covering all previous findings. Knowing the Greek version of the legend, she also used later Georgian versions to explain the iconographic difference between representations. Privalova focused mainly on the early examples mentioned, as well as later works, separating autonomous representations of the legend from the single motif of an accompanying person that occurred also in illustrations of other miracles. In her opinion, the presence of the iconographic theme was caused by an aesthetic need to reflect the couple on the representation of St. George killing a dragon.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, no other text of the legend was known to D. R. Howell, who tried to explain the presence of the second rider by transferring the Muslim legend about Al-Khadr who accompanied Moses or even a story about a cook from the *Romance of Alexander the Great* to the Christian tradition. According to his theory the representation of St. George riding

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<sup>32</sup> D. Talbot Rice, 'The Accompanied Saint George', [in:] *Actes du VI<sup>e</sup> congrès international d'études byzantines*, II, Paris 1951, pp. 383-387. The thesis is supported by the Coptic *Synaxarion*, according to which Saint George was to be accompanied by the princess, as the researcher published in his book: Idem, *The Icons of Cyprus*, London 1937, p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> I. Dujčev, 'Due note di storia medievale', *Byzantion*, XXIX-XXX, 1959-1960, pp. 259-266. especially pp. 259-261. Also by the same author – Razkaz z "čudoto" na velikamučenik Georgi sus sina na Luv Paflagonski – plennik u Bulgarite, [in:] *Isledovanija v pamet na Karel Škoril*, Sofia 1961, pp. 189-200.

<sup>34</sup> E. L. Privalova, 'Hudožestvennoe rešene dvuh kompozicij "čudes" sv. Georgija v gruzinskih rozpisah zrelogo srednevekovia', *Vestnik otdelenja obščestvennyh nauk AN Gruzinskoj SSR*, I, 1963, pp. 181-221; see also by the same author, *Pavnisi*, Tbilisi 1977, pp. 93-109.

with an adolescent on horseback was established by artists in the monastic society on Mount Sinai where the influence of Christianity and that of Islam overlapped.<sup>35</sup> The papers of Howell and Talbot Rice show that – long after the proper explanation was found by Myslivec – for some researchers the subject of St. George with a boy still remained a puzzle.<sup>36</sup>

Independently of Privalova's work, false interpretations were collected and corrected by Otto Meinardus in his discussion of mounted saints rescuing their followers from captivity.<sup>37</sup> He rejected Howell's thesis of the Muslim origin of the image of St. George with the youth, though he admitted that relationship between this saint and al-Khadr is strong. Referring to both the *Mytilenian* and the *Paphlagonian* versions, this author dated them roughly to the period between the 11th to 16th centuries. But he was the first to notice that the popularity of this subject in Christian societies under Muslim control results from the symbolic understanding of the legend in which St. George appears as a heavenly defender of faithful against the infidel persecutors.<sup>38</sup>

While discussing the icon of St. George with a boy in the State Museum of History in Moscow, E. S. Ovčinnikova studied literary sources other than the hitherto mentioned Greek and Georgian manuscripts. In her opinion the *Thesaurus* – which was written by the monk Damaskinos (Subdeacon and Studite of Thessaloniki) and published between 1528-1558 in Venice and contains a Neo-Greek version of the story, as well as Slavic translations – contributed to the popularisation of the subject in Balkan art. Providing examples mainly from places on the coast of the Black Sea, the author distinguished a dependent iconographic variant combining elements from the stories about the youth and about the fight with the dragon.<sup>39</sup>

An article was devoted to this problem by the German researcher Thomas Raff who, having analysed a large group of representations, distinguished two iconographic subtypes. The first one containing only the image of the saint with a youth on horseback was called "autonomous" to distinguish it

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<sup>35</sup> D. R. Howell, 'Al-Khadr and Christian icons', *Ars Orientalis*, VIII, 1968, pp. 41-51.

<sup>36</sup> Amongst other wrong interpretations of the figure of the boy accompanying St. George it is worth mentioning the theory that it could be a funeral portrait of a child buried in the neighbourhood of the wall-painting in a church, cf. O. I. Dombrovskij, *Freski srednevekovogo Kryma*, Kiev 1966, p. 39.

<sup>37</sup> O. Meinardus, 'The Equestrian Deliverer in Eastern Iconography', *Oriens Christianus*, LVII, 1973, pp. 142-155.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-234.

from the type which became popular from the 14th century, where the dragon and sometimes also the princess were included. He also paid attention to the epithet “Diasoritis” often applied to scenes with a youth. Raff’s investigation was based mainly on material collected on the Greek islands, and particularly on Crete, Rhodes and Cyprus.<sup>40</sup>

Raff’s systemization of these two iconographic types was verified by Leopold Kretzenbacher in his two consecutive dissertations and enriched with some further examples from the Greek Islands and the Balkan peninsula. To explain the increased popularity of this iconographic subject under Turkish rule, he pointed to the ideological function of representations of St. George with a youth, particularly apparent in nineteenth-century graphics of the Bulgarian National Renaissance. The anti-Turkish – or more generally anti-Muslim – message of representations of this saint rescuing a Christian prisoner from pagan captivity is, in his opinion, undeniable. Moreover, this author noted the fact that the representation of St. George with the boy is included in numerous groups of images of saints who are shown with a person accompanying them. He then compared their legends. In all cases the ideological message of the image is the same and refers to protection by the saint, who appears on a horse and carries a believer praying to him.<sup>41</sup>

Independently of the work of the German scholars, R. Cormack and S. Mihalarias returned to this subject in their article about an icon housed in the British Museum, which they recognized as a thirteenth-century work from a crusader workshop (fig. 1).<sup>42</sup> As a literary pattern for this image, they proposed only the *Mytilenian* version of the legend, arguing their choice by the fact that the young boy holds in his hand a glass of wine, and that in the rocky background landscape a spot of blue paint is visible which, they claim, represents the sea. Although a broader perspective on the relevant iconography was not their principal aim, they also published for the first time in the case of comparison an icon from the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, which surely originated from the crusaders’ workshop.

Also within the context of the crusader legacy, more precisely, the frescoes in one of chapels of the monastery of John Chrysostom above

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<sup>40</sup> T. Raff, ‘Der hl. Georg als Knabenretter’, *Münchener Zeitschrift für Balkankunde*, III, 1980, pp. 113-126.

<sup>41</sup> L. Kretzenbacher, ‘Sankt Georg mit dem Jüngling auf dem Streitross. Zur antitürkischen Volksdeutung eines mittelalterlichen Bildmotivs’, *Münchener Zeitschrift für Balkankunde*, I, 1978, pp. 181-196; and also *Griechische Reiterheilige...*, especially pp. 7-36.

<sup>42</sup> R. Cormack, S. Mihalarias, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-141.

Koutsovendis, A. and J. Stylianou discussed the iconography of Saint George with an adolescent. Fundamentally those authors based their text on previous considerations by Golescu as well as Cormack and Mihalarias, showing only their own proposition of the view of historical events described in the legend. Unlike the other authors, they used only Damaskinos' text.<sup>43</sup>

Jaroslav Folda and Erica Cruikshank Dodd have recently contributed to the subject in their discussion of crusader art. They emphasise the popularity of the cult of Saint George in Syria and Palestine as well as accounting for the common representation of a riding warrior saint as being the result of the culture of chivalry dominating in the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Like Cormack and Mihalarias, they paid attention only to the "Mytilenian" version of the legend. Folda collected more numerous examples,<sup>44</sup> but Dodd tries to explain more deeply the popularity of this subject in the Holy Land. When the first of the authors is satisfied with the statement that the key of the popularity of St. George in art was his sanctuary in Lydda,<sup>45</sup> the second returns to the Kretzenbacher's thesis concerning the political and symbolic function of the image of the saint saving an adolescent from the court of "an Algerian ruler". In Dodd's opinion the popularity of this topic in twelfth-century art is connected with the need to compensate for the loss of Jerusalem in 1187. Furthermore, the topic is unknown among Copts in Egypt.<sup>46</sup>

Other authors, mainly in catalogues, also mention the legend about St. George saving an adolescent from the captivity. However they usually only repeat earlier theories and their statements are not important for the research on this subject.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, *The painted churches...*, p. 467.

<sup>44</sup> J. Folda, P. French, 'Crusader frescoes at Crac des Chevaliers and Marqab Castle', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXXVI, 1982, pp. 177-212, especially 194-195.

<sup>45</sup> J. Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098-1187*, Cambridge 1995, p. 403; by the same author 'Crusader Art', [in:] *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era AD 843-1261. The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 1997, p. 395.

<sup>46</sup> E. C. Dodd, 'The Monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi, near Nebek, Syria', *Arte médiévale*, series 2, VI/1, 1992, pp. 61-135, especially pp. 126-127 and footnote 75.

<sup>47</sup> Among numerous publications in the category of catalogue one can mention D. Wild, *Les icônes. Art religieux de l'Orient*, Berne 1947; *Îcônes Melkites. Exposition organisée par le Musée Nicolas Sursock du 16 mai au 15 juni 1969*, ed. V. Cârdea, Beyrouth 1969, especially p. 229, where M. Chatzidakis discusses this type within the work George of Candia in Sinai in the 16th century. However, this author mentions only a late version of the legend, according to which the adolescent was brought to Algeria. Previous statements in a form of encyclopaedic definition were published by E. Kirschbaum, W. Braunfels, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, VI, Rom – Freiburg – Basels 1974, col. 366-390, especially 371; and L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, III/2, Paris 1958, p. 578.

This survey suggests that considerable effort has been devoted to explain the significance of the companion of St. George in depictions of this legend. So far, however, authors have concentrated first and foremost on how to explain the composition using the text of the legend, and have presented artistic evidence selectively, often as a marginal aspect, and without integrating it satisfactorily. On the other hand, the more comprehensive studies by O. Meinardus, T. Raff or L. Kretzenbacher neglect a considerable group of paintings discovered in the last twenty years. Therefore they present the subject incompletely. Such situation calls for a fresh attempt to adapt the theories advanced to date, taking into account the new evidence.

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The oldest currently known representations of the legend date from the turn of the 11th and of the 12th centuries. Hence they were created at the same time, or soon after the text had been edited. All early images, which have survived, are in Georgian churches dedicated to St. George. They are a part of cycles of St. George's life and were designed to complement an equestrian representation of the warrior fighting with a dragon.<sup>48</sup>

In a group of five scenes found in early medieval Georgian churches, one in a bad repair and painted on the southern wall of a small church in Adiši, Upper Svanetia (northern Georgia), shows the oldest scene. On this fresco dated to the second half (or possibly end) of the 11th century St. George is depicted in armour, wearing a cloak flying in the wind and galloping on a white steed. A disproportionately small figure sits sideways behind George's back, with a jug in his right hand and holding on to the saint's back. These arriving figures are welcomed by two further figures with arms open in a gesture of surprise. They wear red cloaks and long decorative tunics and are located at the opposite side of the scene. Undoubtedly, they represent the boy's parents.<sup>49</sup> Rich clothing indicates their high social rank. Furthermore, it should be noted that the oldest Georgian translations of the legend, which remained in fourteenth-century manuscripts, contained only two versions of the story: *Paphlagonian* and *On the son of Leon*. Both points suggest that the fresco is linked with the latter version. The episode on the fresco shows the young *stratiot* George coming back to his home.

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<sup>48</sup> E. L. Privalova, 'Hudožestvennoe rešene...', p. 190, 206.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193, 208, fig. 2.

The same episode was probably illustrated on the seriously damaged fresco from the first quarter of 12th century<sup>50</sup>, in the upper row of images painted on the walls of the south-western apse of the church in Bočorma. The part where the youth was shown is almost totally destroyed, but his leg is still visible behind St. George, above the sheath tied to the saddle. In this case the walking horse is presented in a static manner. As in the Adiši painting, there is a person standing on the left hand side – probably one of the boy's parents. Yet behind him appears an architectural background, in which young George's home is visible. A building – a *coulisse* closing the composition – flanks fresco's second side.<sup>51</sup>

The scene of George coming back with the boy freed from captivity was enriched with another frescoed motif from the period between 1158 and 1184 in the church in Pavnisi.<sup>52</sup> This representation of the miracle with the youth is located on the wall in the south-eastern part of the church, below a complex composition showing the saint fighting with the dragon. Both scenes are distinguished by their size among other images of the saint's life: the painter used twice as much wall space for each of them.

In order to illustrate the boy meeting his parents the painter diverged from the formula he had used hitherto and applied a continuous representation. On the left side of the composition is shown St. George, holding a spear (*kontarion*); he is wearing a dark-red cloak, golden armour, with a blue chiton appearing from under the armour, and a round shield. The saint is sitting on a horse unusually painted in ochre colour, whose forelegs are raised. As in the previous examples, behind the saint's back is a youth in a pink tunic and blue leggings, holding a tall, rather convex ewer. Owing to the clothes and ewer his repeated figure can also be recognised in the centre part of the composition. A woman in a long dress is leaning over him, embracing him tenderly. She can be identified as the boy's mother – Theophano. The background for this emotionally expressive couple is an undamaged lower part of a figure in white tunic and red cloak, probably boy's father; whereas the right side of the scene is occu-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 197 (note 74).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 208, fig. 5; the author interprets the scene as an illustration of the *Mytilenian* version, cf. below, note 108. The architectural forms in the background, however, differ from the formulas accepted for sacral buildings by the art of the Eastern Church. Note too the lack of the garment elements typical to priests (see Ch. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982, *passim*) which is contrary to her interpretation.

<sup>52</sup> E. L. Privalova, *Pavnisi*, p. 18.

pied by four banqueters sitting at the table spread with an abundance of dishes.<sup>53</sup>

The ease with which the artist designed the composition, the anatomical correctness and dynamic representation of the figures, the ample colouring, his ability to express feelings and impression of depth created by the image show that the author of the painting was a sensitive observer, exploiting his perceptions in art. The fact, that he applied an ochre colour to George's steed, contrary to the canon of the time, suggests the painter's willingness to experiment. In the light of these observations, it is probable that the Pavnisi painting was the first where the motif of banqueters had been added to the subject of the miraculous rescue of the youth.

The Pavnisi composition was copied on the northern wing of the transept in the church in Ikvi, but small changes were made. The fresco, dating from the turn of the 13th century, was compositionally similar to the preceding example. Below it is the scene showing the fight against the dragon. The armoured George, holding a lance, arrives from the left on a white horse with his cloak streaming in the wind. Behind him a boy sits in a long tunic and a calpack on his head, holding a ewer with a spherical base.

On the right side the figure of the boy is repeated, this time standing in front of the table, behind which two banqueters and the boy's parents are presented in rigid poses.<sup>54</sup> As opposed to the Pavnisi fresco, the painting from Ikvi is characterised by fossilised form and schematic composition, lack of movement and of psychological portrayal of the depicted figures. However, as far as the history of iconographic representation is concerned, this fresco is an important link, because of the explanatory inscription "St. George returned the prison from Bulgaria to his parents",<sup>55</sup> in the middle of the upper part of the composition. This inscription confirms the identification of earlier compositions as illustrations of versions of the legend *On the son of Leon*.

Apart from the four above-mentioned scenes, a small fragment of painting remained in the church at Zemo-Arcevi near Gori, in the middle of Georgia. The church was probably decorated in the 12th century, but the large extent of destruction of the frescos does not allow precise dating. On

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<sup>53</sup> Eadem, 'Hudožestvennoe rešene...', pp. 213-216, fig. 7; Privalova associates the style of paintings with the twelfth/thirteenth-century works from Kincvisi, Vardzia and Bethania.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 194, 210-212, fig. 3; the author dates the painting to the wide period between the end of the 11th century to the beginning of the 13th century.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 211, gives the original Georgian inscription, together with its Russian translation.



the western wall an image of a white saddled horse carrying two figures has survived, only the lower parts of whom are visible. The rider can be identified as a warrior thanks to *pteryges*, being a lower part of his armour, whilst the accompanying person possesses an attribute in the form of a big ewer, similar in shape to the vessels from Pavnisi and Ikvi. Therefore, the damaged scene can be recognised as the miracle with the youth.<sup>56</sup>

St. George was among the most popular saints in the art of medieval Georgia, and the number of portraits depicting him in military dress is greater than in the art of any other country.<sup>57</sup> An equestrian representation of St. George, recognised as the oldest extant, is located in the Georgian Holy Cross church in Achtamar (915-921).<sup>58</sup> This fact should not surprise us in the light of the saint's popularity, developed on the basis of the cult of a male lunar deity from the pagan period.<sup>59</sup> With time, George was recognised as a patron saint of the country. In the 13th century the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Jacob of Vitry, who described Georgians in his *History of the East*, thought the name of their country derived from St. George.<sup>60</sup>

Although the certain popularity of subjects connected with the person of St. George – as well as his various representations emerging for the very first time in Georgian art – could be sufficient to explain depiction of this subject, the moment when this theme appears on church walls seems also to be of importance. Although it cannot be dated precisely, the oldest representations occurred in the second half of the 11th century, i.e. in the period of the invasion of the Seljuk Turks, which lasted from 1066 until the whole country was conquered in 1089. The frescos created at that time had to have an anti-Muslim overtone and promote the saint as a guardian of Christians, protecting them against infidels. The legend *On the son of Leon*

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 218, fig. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Numerous examples in goldsmiths' work of the images of George dated to from the 9th-10th century up to the 19th century are published by G. N. Čubinšvili, *Gruzinskoe čekannoje iskusstvo*, I-II, Tbilisi 1959, *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> Initially equestrian representations of St. George showed him spearing the Roman emperor Diocletian, and this image was combined with the figure of St. Theodore killing the dragon. This is the way, how both saints were depicted on the relief decoration on the wall of the Achtamar church, see for example J. G. Davies, *The Church of the Holy Cross, Aght'amar*, London 1991, p. 102, figs. 35-38.

<sup>59</sup> I. A. Džavahišvili, *Kartveli eris istoria (History of Georgian nation)*, Tbilisi 1960, pp. 44-56. On the other hand A. Rysteneko, 'Legenda o sv. Georgii i drakone v vizantijskoj i slaviano-russkoj literaturah', *Zapiski imperatorskogo Novorossijskogo universiteta*, CXII, 1909, p. 459, suspects a connection between St. George and a superior military deity.

<sup>60</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Historia orientalis*, Paris 1597, quot. foll. D. Marshall Lang, *Dawna Gruzja*, Warszawa 1972, p. 90.

might seem well-suited to Georgia, a nation famous for its warlike spirit. Interesting is that the theme did not disappear after Georgia had regained independence in the year 1121, but spread into other Orthodox countries.

To the oldest examples of non-Georgian representations of the legend of St. George rescuing a youth from captivity one can include an image from Northern Cyprus, dated to the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries and therefore contemporary with the paintings from Pavnisi and Ikvi. It is located in a cemetery chapel of Panagia Aphenirika at St. John Chrysostom monastery in the village of Koutsovendis, on the southern slopes of the Kyrenia Mountains.<sup>61</sup> The wall-painting – not in the best condition – in the south-western niche shows a warrior in lamellar armour with a mail breastplate, holding a lance and a round shield hung on his right shoulder, trotting on a white steed. The pre-pubescent face, surrounded with light hair curls and a halo, suggests St. George.<sup>62</sup> Behind his back a boy sits, bareback, and holding a ewer, a white towel and a cup in his hand.

Despite considerable damage to the painting, covering not only a part of the boy's head, but also the lower part of the composition, one can state that – comparing to the Georgian representations – the author reduced the theme here and limited himself to the depiction of an accompanied rider. Nowadays the Cypriot painting is the oldest known composition of such limited formula.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to Georgian examples, however, the steed is shown over blue waves with reddish fish. One can therefore expect that an artist was inspired by the version about the son of a widow of Mytilene rather than one of “Paphlagonian” legends, although the presence of the cup, the ewer and the towel does not permit us to establish precisely the subject.

Another example of a similar redaction of the theme is a small icon kept in the British Museum and dated to the mid-13th century (fig. 1). Although Cormack and Mihalarias, who studied this icon, did not unequivocally state, where the icon was created, they suspected a crusader workshop in Palestine,

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<sup>61</sup> A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, *The painted churches...*, pp. 456-467, fig. 280. For information about the paintings in the *katholicon* of St. John monastery see also: C. Mango, ‘The Monastery of St. Chrysostomos at Koutsovendis (Cyprus) and its Wall Paintings, Part I. Description’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLIV, 1990, pp. 63-94.

<sup>62</sup> For information about the importance of physiognomy as an element defining saints in Byzantine art see: H. Maguire, *The Icons of their bodies: Saints and their images in Byzantium*, Princeton 1996, *passim*; and A. Kazhdan, H. Maguire, ‘Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLV, 1991, pp. 1-22.

<sup>63</sup> As the fresco in Zemo-Arcevi is not in good condition, its identification as a simplified type, suggested by Privalova, is devoid of real basis. Cf. E. L. Privalova, ‘Hudožestvennoe rešene...’, p. 218.



Fig. 1. *Saint George with an adolescent*, icon attributed to the crusader workshop in Holy Land (now in private collection – housed in British Museum), ca. middle of the 13th century (photo by P. Grotowski).

working in a Greek manner rather than a Cypriot society. In their opinion the icon was in all likelihood produced in Lydda, east of Jaffa, where St. George's *martyrium* was located.<sup>64</sup> Due to the portability of the icon,

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<sup>64</sup> R. Cormack, S. Mihalarias, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-141. *Ibid.*, description, note 1. Widely dated to the third quarter of 13th century, more precisely to the middle of the century, pp. 134-137; the icon was auctioned by Christies in 1978 as a nineteenth-century Russian work from a British collection. However the background is graced with a convex ornament of twisting vegetation formed in a plaster covering the icon, recalling the manner popular in thirteenth-century workshops in the Levant. Such attribution is confirmed by the way in which the physiognomy is modelled, and the arrangement of drapery close to the that on the miniatures of the Bible kept in the Paris Arsenal Library under the no. 5211, dated to 1250-1254;

however, it is not possible to decide unambiguously whether it was actually produced in the vicinity of Jerusalem as a gift for the shrine in Lydda or in one of the Cypriot workshops. However, the icon undoubtedly comes from a Frankish workshop operating in the East.<sup>65</sup>

Excellent condition permits us to see the most minute details of the composition. George is shown in armour resembling a *bekhter* or a hauberk, with a Roman officer's belt on his chest (*zoni stratiotiki*), leather flaps (*pteryges*), a dark-blue tunic appearing from underneath, and a carmine chlamys streaming in the wind. His head is decorated with a narrow diadem of pearls and rubies.<sup>66</sup> He is mounted astride a walking white horse, orientated to the right (compare that in Koutsovendis). The saint is armed with a lance and a circular shield hung round over his shoulder.<sup>67</sup> He faces the viewer. The saint's right arm passes round the youth's neck (*perivolatis*). The youth wears a sky-blue tunic descending to his knees and a brown cap with a black stripe around it. A slender goblet in the youth's left hand and a small bluish streak – probably a symbol of the sea – surrounded by detailed painted, diminutive vegetation in a rocky landscape suggest that the *Mytilenian* version was illustrated here.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand the version *On the son of Leon* mentions that the vessel brought by the youth had been used as a chalice for liturgical purposes. This fact cautions us to adopt a careful approach to such identification. We must look for confirmation in other works.

The sea filled with fish – a part of the landscape under the horse's hooves – is painted much more clearly on an icon from St. Catherine's church on Mount Sinai. Probably it is the work of a western painter, contemporary

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Cormack and Mihalarias' thesis was accepted in: *Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. D. Buckton, London 1994, p. 176.

<sup>65</sup> For information about artistic relationships and the transfer of works of art between the Sinai monastery, Cyprus and Crusader countries see: K. Weitzmann, 'A group of early twelfth-century Sinai icons attributed to Cyprus', [in:] *Studies in memory of David Talbot Rice*, redaction G. Robertson, G. Henderson, Edinburgh 1975, pp. 47-61.

<sup>66</sup> On the iconography and symbolic meaning of a diadem in representations of saint-warriors see A. Arnulf, 'Eine Perle für das Haupt Leonis VI', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XXII, 1990, pp. 69-84.

<sup>67</sup> In the light of the fact that the gear of cavalrymen typical in Byzantine art is also mentioned in written sources, Cormack's suggestion that the military elements shown on the icon are a product of the artist's imagination should be excluded, cf. R. Cormack, S. Mihalarias, *op. cit.*, p. 132; About literary resources see. J. F. Haldon, 'Some aspects of Byzantine military technology from the sixth to the tenth centuries', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, I, 1975, pp. 11-47, T. Kolias, *Byzantinische Waffen*, Wien 1988, *passim*.

<sup>68</sup> R. Cormack, S. Mihalarias, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

with the London representation. In both cases the background is decorated by the same method, and, as far as the composition is concerned, the two paintings only differ in details. On the Sinai icon a rider and his horse move towards the left. The saint's chest and belly are protected by body armour and the boy wears a long tunic with sleeves. Some difference is also visible when comparing the manner in which the saddle and trappings are represented.

The thesis that the theme of a sea bay under the horse's hooves was introduced into the iconography of St. George rescuing a youth is permitted by the reconstruction of the next two early examples of this subject, which survived in fragments. Since the sea and swimming fishes are not present in the images of other riders in medieval art, they make it possible to identify the original scene.

The first of these examples is a fragment of a fresco on the northern wall of the so-called "Baptismal Chapel" (discovered in 1935) in the Syrian Crusaders' castle of Crac des Chevaliers. Only the bottom part of the composition remained: the legs of a white horse are visible and a patch of blue water with swimming fish is placed under the hoofs. According to J. Folda the fresco belongs to a group of images of St. George with the son of the widow of Mytilene and could be attributed to the hand of a Frankish or Catalan master working in the 12th and 13th centuries.<sup>69</sup>

The painting in a chapel at the monastery of Mar Musa al Habashi (St. Moses the Ethiopian), near Nebek, Syria, dates from the same time. On the southern wall of the main nave an image of St. George galloping on a white steed is placed amid six equestrian images of Holy Warriors, among whom feature Sergios holding a crusader standard and Theodore killing a dragon. The upper part of the image was destroyed as in Crac des Chevaliers, but the remains of a Greek inscription "[O AGI]OS GE[ORGIOS]" below the rider's leg identifies the person unambiguously. Under the mount's hooves can be seen water with pinkish fish. As distinct from the previous examples, this painting is the work of a local Syrian workshop.<sup>70</sup> It proves that at the end of the 12th century, the legend was already well known in Syria not only in the Crusader community, but also among local Arab inhabitants.

The evidence of the exceptional popularity of the legend of St. George rescuing a youth in the art of crusader kingdoms can be also found in the survived wall-paintings remaining in Lebanese churches in Edde, Enfe and

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<sup>69</sup> J. Folda, P. French, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>70</sup> E. C. Dodd *op. cit.*, pp. 84-87, fig. 29.

Bahdeidat.<sup>71</sup> All of them date from the mid-thirteenth century and, therefore, are contemporary with the above mentioned icons. However, as far as the technique is concerned they are a part of local artistic tradition.

Syrian Orthodox society must have played a leading role in copying from Georgia an equestrian motif of George with a youth. Simultaneously, at the end of the 12th century, a type began to appear where the sea is visible at the bottom part of the composition. Numerous Georgian monastic societies with long traditions in the Holy Land, as well as pilgrims to holy sites, may have participated in promoting artistic patterns.<sup>72</sup> Finally, the transfer of these patterns must have been supported by the plans to recapture Jerusalem from Saladin's hands and to revive diplomatic relations with the crusader countries, plans made by the Georgian king Lash-George IV (1213-1222), who traced his genealogy back to the house of David. It remains uncertain whether these contacts were long-lasting enough, as the intentions of the Georgian sovereign were destroyed by the Mongols, who appeared in the Middle East in the year 1220. Nor can the possibility be excluded that the theme of the miraculous salvation of the youth was developed in Syrian and Georgian societies in parallel.

The popularity of St. George in the crusader countries in Levant can be justified by various circumstances. First of all, one should remember that Palestine, as St. George's homeland and as a possible site of his martyrdom,<sup>73</sup> already had a special cult in the early-Byzantine period. This is confirmed by pilgrims' reports on their stay in Diospolis (the present day Lydda). These reports, going back to the first half of the 6th century,<sup>74</sup> mentioned the saint's relics working miracles. The *martyrium* over the saint's tomb,

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<sup>71</sup> Y. Sader, *Peintures murales dans les églises Maronites médiévales*, Beirut 1987, pp. 21-22, fig. 26.

<sup>72</sup> Among the most important Georgian monasteries in twelfth-century Palestine, the following should be mentioned: the Monastery of Peter the Iberian near Bethlehem and that of St. Saba in the valley of the Cedron River. One should remember the Georgian Church's care of the Chapel of Finding the Holy Cross and its temporary protection of the Calvary in the Church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

<sup>73</sup> According to another version, George died in Nicomedia, following which his body was moved for burial in his home at Lydda. This was temporarily renamed Georgiupolis and so George of Cyprus names it in his seventh-century work *Descriptio orbis Romani*. Another place which boasted of the martyr's relics was the church built circa 515 in Ezra (Zorava), see *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, II, Oxford 1991, p. 834; Ch. Walter, 'The origins of the cult...', p. 314.

<sup>74</sup> Ch. Walter (see previous note) gives the years of 514/515 as the very first time when the cult of St. George's relic was mentioned; texts of the relations are published by P. Greyer, *Itinera hierosolymitana saeculi VI-VIII*, Wien 1898, pp. 139-294.



Fig. 2. *Saint George carrying away the boy over the sea*, Cypriot icon from the church of St. Marina in the village of Filousa Kelokedaron (now in the Byzantine Museum of the Bishopric of Paphos), late 13th century (after Sophocleus).

rebuilt by Justinian I, had been ruined by Muslims circa 1010. But the Crusaders built a new church and a monastery there once they had captured Jerusalem. The fame of this place was strengthened by the legend of supernatural assistance from the saint during the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>75</sup> The

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<sup>75</sup> This legend was presented by William of Tyre in his *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, Book 8, Ch. 16; see *Willemi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, [in:] *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, XIII, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, H. E. Mayer, G. Rösch, Turnholt 1986, p. 407. According to another version of the legend, St. George supported the Crusaders during the siege of Antioch in the year 1098. The motif of the

sanctuary grew successfully throughout the 12th century until the invasion of Saladin in 1177. Then, after its reconstruction complete in 1192, it became an important site of pilgrimage. The Crusaders' protection of the Lydda sanctuary – and many other churches dedicated to St. George at that time – can be understood in the context of the developing culture of chivalry, present also in secular art.<sup>76</sup>

Taking all these factors into account one should not be surprised at the popular reception of St. George rescuing a youth in Crusader art, particularly in the context of Saladin's invasion. The loss of Jerusalem, coinciding with the introduction of the new theme taken from the saint's biography into the paintings in churches, made that theme particularly apposite. Recalling the saint's protection must have heartened the faithful in a difficult time.

Current knowledge must leave the issue open as to whether the theme of the accompanied saint on horse back emerged in Armenian art of the 12th and 13th centuries, which would be helpful in assessing the role of Georgian iconography in the introduction of this theme to Crusader art. Based on the approximate dating of particular works one can try to reconstruct the process of geographical expansion of the theme in Levantine art. It must have been transmitted from works created in Syria and Palestine to Cypriot examples. This thesis is not militated against by the early date of the image in the monastery of Koutsovendis, since it may have been produced once Richard the Lion-Heart captured the island in 1191.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the lower, destroyed part of this work can be reconstructed according to the "Syrian" option, with the fragment of a sea.

Undeniably, the icon in St. Marina's church in the village of Filousa Kelokedaron, currently kept in the Byzantine Museum of the Paphos bisho-

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saint supporting the fighters had been known before that time and had appeared in the report of the Georgian catholicos Visarion from the wars against the Persians, see J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 365. Also St. Demetrius was often seen defending Thessaloniki from barbarians, see for example the set of *Miracula* written by John, bishop of Thessaloniki, ed. P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, I, Paris 1979, pp. 133-138.

<sup>76</sup> See for example coins minted by Roger of Antioch with the equestrian representation of the saint, R. Pesant, 'S. George and the dragon on the coinage of Roger of Antioch', *Spink numismatic circular*, C/3, 1992, p. 79, figs. 1-4.

<sup>77</sup> For information concerning traces of Richard the Lion-Heart's conquest of the island in Cypriot paintings, see A. Stylianou, 'Sociological reflections in the painted churches of Cyprus', *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensi. Figura*, XIX, 1981 [= *Les pays du Nord et Byzance (Scandinavie et Byzance)*. *Actes du colloque d'Upsal* 20-22 avril 1979], pp. 523-529.



pric<sup>78</sup>, was produced when the Crusaders reigned in Cyprus. The icon, dated to the turn of the 7th and 8th centuries, illustrates the patron of the church and the scenes of her martyrdom. However, on its reverse side is an image of St. George from the late 13th century, as usual on a white horse (fig. 2). Under his hooves is the blue strip of sea, filled out with carmine fish and as wide as the icon. Behind the saint's back a youth sits in a light lily tunic, holding a ewer-like vessel with a rotund convexity by its slender neck. New elements here include a pearl-diadem on George's head, and the blessing *Manus Dei* appearing from heaven at the upper-right corner of the icon. Next to it is an inscription: "GeORGiOS O KaPPADOx" written in two fields painted in the relief background with a wealth of ornament. The term accompanying the saint's name can be read as "Cappadocian", thus, it has a toponymic character, just as the epithet *Blacherniotissa* referring to Mary or *Chalkiplates* to Christ. But as for St. George this term does not mean a particular iconographical type,<sup>79</sup> but only refers to one of the versions of saint's *Life*, which derived his origin from Cappadocia.<sup>80</sup>

While the group of early representations of St. George and the youth in Georgia, the Holy Land, and Cyprus is so numerous, examples from before the end of the 13th century in other countries are rare. Amongst them is a painting in a Cappadocian three-apse church in Antigous (the present day Ortaköy near Altunhisar), which, according to one of the legends, was George's place of origin. When the church was decorated Antigous was already ruled by Seljuks. The painting is dated to before 1293, though some conjecture that it may have been created later.<sup>81</sup> The lower part of the south-

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<sup>78</sup> S. Sophocleus, *Icons of Cyprus 7<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Nicosia 1994, pp. 75-76; A. Papageorgiou, *Icons of Cyprus*, Nicosia 1992, pp. 73, 77, Fig. 53. This author inclines to date the icon even to the 14th century.

<sup>79</sup> J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 319, mentions the expression "Cappadocian" appearing on the standard of the Moldavian ruler Stephan the Great, dated to the beginning of the 16th century, where St. George was presented sitting on the throne, holding a sword in his hands and the dragon lying at his feet.

<sup>80</sup> E. Wallis Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia. The Coptic Text edited with an English Translation*, London 1888; see also J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae...*, CXV, col. 249; and *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalia*, CCCX, Brussels 1888, p. 205.

<sup>81</sup> C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce*, Paris 1991, pp. 252-253 f. N. Thierry (note 20) says that the painted decoration of the nave comes from the same period as that of the vestibulum; the *terminus ante quem* of the paintings in the vestibulum is determined by the epitaphs on the walls from the year 1293. On the other hand M. Restle and F. Hild, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini. Kappadokien (Kappadokia, Charisianon, Sebasteia und Lykandos)* [= *Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften philologisch-historische Klasse Denkschriften*, CXLIX], II, Wien 1981, p. 232. *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, III, Stuttgart

ern apse of St. George's church contains an image of the mounted saint with a boy. Its bottom is not in sufficiently good condition to decide if the sea was depicted there; however, an inscription still survives next to the rider: "ho Diasoritis".<sup>82</sup> As in the case of the above mentioned Cypriot icon, this epithet is probably of toponymic character and derives from the antique name of Ortaköy, or, according to another version, from the name of the monastery on Amorgos Island within the Cyclades. The expression *Diasoritis* is usually linked to the composition modelled on the image from the monastery, where the saint is presented frontally, from the waist up, with a lance in his right hand and a round shield in his left.<sup>83</sup>

Also on Crete, which soon after Cyprus became a Western colony (after the Fourth Crusade Boniface of Montferrat, who has been granted Crete, sold it to Venice) subject of St. George saving the youth from captivity appears in the middle of the 13th century. The present of a new, roman-catholic ruler was not an obstacle for Orthodox donors and artists.<sup>84</sup> To the oldest examples one can add the fresco from St. George's church in Kantano Selinas, which was painted during the 1240s.<sup>85</sup> The next two examples

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1978, col. 969-1115, suggests, that the church was built in the 13th century, but reallocate the decoration to the Post-Byzantine period.

<sup>82</sup> Information about the inscription is provided by V. N. Lazarev, 'Novyj pamiatnik stanovoj živopisi XII veka i obraz Georgija – vojna v vizantijskom i drevnerusskom iskusstve', [in:] *Russkaja srednevekovaja Živopis' – stati i issledovania*, Moskva 1970, p. 78, note 123. G. de Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce – Texte*, II, part 1, Paris 1936, p. 241 writes that St. George is killing the dragon with his spear, but today it is hard to verify if it is a mistake of the author, or if in this case two legends were actually put together. This author gives also older bibliography about the term *Diasoritis* (H. Grégoire, *Saint George le Diasorite*, *Revue de l'instruction publique en Belgique*, LII, 1909, pp. 1-3).

<sup>83</sup> T. Raff, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-120, establishes a connection between the epithet and the ancient name of Ortaköy, and gives different examples of this iconographic subject. On the contrary J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 322 links this term with the monastery in Amorgos Island within the Cyclades and points out that this iconographic topic is connected mainly with another composition. He provides examples of the fresco on the Orthodox Church in Staro Nagoričino (14th century), the icon from the Historical Museum in Moscow (pre-15th century) and the fresco in the Athos Monastery of Xenophont; see also: A. Kyriaki Vassiliov, 'O agios Georgios o Diasoritis auf Siegeln. Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte der Laskariden', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XC, 1997, pp. 416-424, especially 419-420.

<sup>84</sup> For recent research about the Cretan environment of painters working during the period of Venetian rule see A. E. Laiou, 'Venetians and Byzantines: Investigations of Forms of Contact in the Fourteenth Century', *Thesaurismata, Bolletino dell'Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini*, XX, 1992, pp. 22-43; also: M. Georgopoulou, 'Late Medieval Crete and Venice: An Appropriation of Byzantine Heritage', *Art Bulletin*, LXXVI, 1995, pp. 479-496.

<sup>85</sup> S. Maderakis, 'I ekklesia tou 'Agiou Georgiou stin Kantano Selinou', the report pronounced during the Annual Symposium of Christian Archaeological Society in Athens (4-6 of May 2001).

from this island are dated from the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries. The first of them survived on the North wall of the naos in the church of the Panagia in Saitoures (near Rethymnon) ascribed to circa 1300.<sup>86</sup> Among mounted military saints is depicted St. George with the boy holding a vessel. In his right hand the warrior keeps a lance with a small pennon beneath the top. This motif as an element of iconography of holy knights appears undoubtedly under the influence of western chivalric culture. A bit later is the representation from St. George's church in Komitádes near Chora Sphákion, in western Crete. The fresco was painted by Joánnis Pagomenos in 1313/14.<sup>87</sup> Though this painting is not in its original condition, it is still possible to identify the sea with swimming fish under the belly of the horse and a boy sitting behind St. George's back.

While the image from the church in Komitádes precisely repeats the patterns developed in Syria, the icon from Erzerum, Asia Minor, which was produced in 1327 and taken to Alexandropolis<sup>88</sup> by Greek refugees in 1827, is the earliest example of a new compositional arrangement. The theme of a boy accompanying the saint was combined here with the legend of the fight against a dragon, resulting in an unhistorical amalgamation of two events: the first one taken from *Life* of the saint and the posthumous one known from the *Miracula*. George is shown thrusting his spear into the monster, against the background of a princess and her parents surrounded by their entourage, standing on the coping of the city walls. The emperor Selinus holds keys in his hands, signifying that he entrusts the rule over the city to the victorious warrior and confirming its conversion to Christianity, which was a condition of the saint's help. The motif of the sea was removed from the icon.

The legend of George defeating the dragon and rescuing the princess remained in many texts from various periods, but the oldest version known today comes from Georgia and is dated to the end of 11th century, although

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<sup>86</sup> I. Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete, I, Rethymnon Province*, London 1999, pp. 231-232, 336, fig. 290.

<sup>87</sup> T. Raff, *op. cit.*, p. 126, for general information on the paintings in the church see: M. Bissinger, 'Kreta: byzantinische Wandmalerei', *Münchener Arbeiten zur Kunstgeschichte und Archäologie*, IV, 1995, p. 97.

<sup>88</sup> H. F. Lynch, *Armenia. Travels and Studies, I, The Russian provinces*, London 1937, pp. 128-129, fig. 25. Since the icon was repainted its stylistic features cannot be recognised easily and some trials were made to re-establish the dating in both directions: backward as far as the 11th century and forward to the post-Byzantine era. On the icon itself, however, survived the date 1327.

older examples surely existed.<sup>89</sup> The legendary versions are no older than the examples of its illustration in art, with the Cappadocian painting in St. Barbara's rock-church in Soandos (Soğanli) made between 976 and 1021,<sup>90</sup> generally considered to be the earliest example. On the other hand the extended version including the city walls of Lasia and the emperor's entourage standing there spread in Georgia through the 12th century.<sup>91</sup>

The combination of the two themes is not justified by the hagiography, where both legends are distinct and refer to different periods of time. Obviously the messages conveyed by both events are alike, but one cannot identify the fight against the transcendental evil symbolised by the dragon with the protection of Christians from infidels. It seems to be the case that the reason for combining these themes lies somewhere else and should be sought in a compositional transition occurring at that time.

First of all it should be remembered that the paintings illustrating "the miracle with the boy" on the walls of Georgian churches were composed as a pendant to the complex scene of saving the princess. Probably the decoration in the rock-church of "Three Riders" in the Eski-Kermena graveyard in the Crimea was inspired by these paintings. The decoration can be interpreted as an intermediate phase between the "autonomous" representation of the miracle with the boy and the composition combining both legends.<sup>92</sup> On the west wall three saints on horses were painted, going from the left to the right side (fig. 3). While the first of them (frontal view) is riding calmly

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<sup>89</sup> The text of the legend preserved in the Georgian manuscript in the library of the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem (*cod.* 2) has been recently quoted in an English translation Ch. Walter, "The origins of the cult...", pp. 320-321. A direct formal template for the legend was probably the story of St. Theodore Tyron fighting against the dragon to rescue a woman named Eusebia. This thesis is strengthened by the fact that equestrian representations of George and Theodore killing the dragon were often set together.

<sup>90</sup> Traces of the theme of St. George killing the dragon appeared in art earlier than it was in Cappadocia, could be found in Georgia. On the early-feudal stele from Kvemo Kartli is preserved the inscription "this is a dragon" and the letters "rg" and "i" next to the representation of the warrior (letters located by the sides of the warrior's head); see E. L. Privalova, "Hudožestvennoe rešene...", p. 182.

<sup>91</sup> Ch. Walter, "The origins of the cult...", p. 322. Beside the examples from Pavnisi and Ikvi Walter gives other additional ones from Bočorma (circa 1100) and Adiši (the end of 11th century). Taking into account the oldest redaction of the legend of the dragon and the princess and the theme's popularity in the art of the Caucasus region, he is inclined to accept its Georgian origin.

<sup>92</sup> The idea of the Georgian origin of the pattern used by the painter is also supported by the motif of a spirally twined dragon's body, appearing in the art of this country as early as the end of the 10th century (the plaques with the representation of Sts. Theodores of the Holy Cross from Sakdari), see G. N. Čubinšvili, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, fig. 40.



Fig. 3. Three images of the Warrior Saint on horseback, wall painting in the rock church of the “Three Riders” in Eski-Kermena (Crimea), beginning of 14th century (scheme after Ovčinnikova).

and holds a spear in his hand, the second one is spearing a dragon and the third, galloping, is accompanied by a young man behind the rider’s back. Although the facial features are now blurred, the hairstyle pinned with a headband or a diadem, as well as the similar oval-shaped faces suggest that the same figure of the warrior-saint was depicted here three times. As no traces of facial hair are visible, it is most likely that Procopius, Demetrius or George himself was shown here.<sup>93</sup> Since the former two have not been illustrated together with a dragon it could be concluded that the author of this work presented three scenes from St. George’s life. It may be that the author followed a chronological order and illustrated George coming back from the campaign against the Persians, then his fight against the dragon and, finally, the posthumous miracle of the rescue of the youth – all scenes arranged according to the direction in which the figures move.<sup>94</sup> This interpretation of the third scene is confirmed by the specific clothes of the boy,

<sup>93</sup> Although the legend about Theodore Tiro saving a boy sold into captivity to Ishmaelites is older than George’s miracle (see Ch. Walter, ‘Theodore, Archetype of the Warrior Saint’, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, LVII, 1999, pp. 168-169; this author quotes *BHG* 1764, dated in his opinion to the 8th century – in contrast to other scholars who move the time of the legend’s composition to the period after 934, *ibid.*, p. 167, note 11), nevertheless, equestrian representations of the unbearded Theodore (Stratilates – sic!) fighting against the dragon, accompanied by a youth (usually identified by the inscription “Son of the widow”) appeared relatively late, first of all in a Coptic environment, and were undeniably based on the iconography of St. George. Moreover, themes unknown from the representations of St. George appear here: the figure of a widow raising her arms in a gesture of prayer and her son fastened to the tree, see O. Meinardus, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153, (fig. 8).

<sup>94</sup> The thesis of the identity of three warriors in Eski-Kermena was made by E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, p. 232, who also recognizes the figure of the rider as St. George.



Fig. 4. *Saint George with the young man mounted behind him kills the dragon*, fresco in the church of St. John the Theologian in Paleochora on Aegina, 14th century (after Velmans).

particularly his cap resembling a hat with a brim turned down and his outer garment with braided fasteners. Almost identical clothes are worn by a youth on a fresco painted at the same time in the church of St. John the Theologian in Paleochora on Aegina (fig. 4).<sup>95</sup> In this case the saint can for certain be recognised thanks to the remaining inscription “O AGIOS G[E]O[RGI]OS”.

Another issue concerning the Crimean painting was its origin. One must agree with E. Ovčinnikova, that it is the work of a Byzantine workshop, which is confirmed by the presence of Greek inscriptions. However to date

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<sup>95</sup> T. Velmans, ‘La pittura parietale e le icone’, [in:] *L’arte Bizantina in Grecia*, ed. A. A. Novello, G. Dimitrokallis, Milano 1995, fig. on p. 192. An inscription from this church (now in the Archaeological Museum) requests reader to pray “for the forgiveness of the sins of your Servant Count Pedro”. It means that murals must by painted circa 1338-1350 (?) when Catalan Lord Pedro I Fadrique ruled over the island.

the painting to the 12th/13th century, as she does following O. Dombrovskij, seems to be too early.<sup>96</sup> Despite of some surface loss on the painting which blurs its style, the manner in which the clothes fall in folds, the stocky proportions of the figures and some elements of garment suggest the influence of Palaeologian painting. This suggests a date towards the end of 13th century, but taking into account the provincial character of the work the dating may be allocated to the first half of the 14th century.

In order to resolve the issue of the Eski-Kermena image of St. George it may be assumed that the artist, who limited the composition to its necessary elements by removing frames separating the two episodes, created a basis merging them into one composition. It is obvious that the Crimean painting should be treated only as an example of a certain tendency, which also could have occurred in other places and became the origin of a new formula: to present both miracles at the same time. This process was assisted by the ease with which the author could incorporate an inconspicuous theme of an “additional” hero into the story of the fight against the dragon.

The communities connected with Georgian art were then a cradle for this iconographic variant, since within them two popular legends merged into this unhistoric unity. From the beginning of the 15th century onwards this variant started to occur beside the “autonomous” one. A good example is a fresco in St. George’s church in Plemenianá, western Crete, produced in 1409-1410.<sup>97</sup> However the “Syrian” type is still represented for example by an image dated to the late 14th-early 15th centuries in St. Nicholas’ church in Diamyliá Fountoukli on Rhodes. This image is accompanied by the inscription “O AGIOS GEORGIOS O KORAI O DIASORITIS”.<sup>98</sup> The fresco

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, p. 230; O. I. Dombrovskij, *op. cit.*, p. 36. The Russian researcher supports his hypothesis by the date in the inscription, starting from the digits 12. He forgot, however, that Byzantines often measured time from the creation of the world, which was supposed to have happened on 25th of March 5508 B.C. Therefore, the 13th century corresponds with the “Byzantine” years of 6709-6809, which by no means permits the date he proposed. Also M. Golescu, *op. cit.*, p. 128, agrees in dating the painting to the beginning of the 14th century, although she does not exclude the hypothesis that Theodore Tyron was depicted here.

<sup>97</sup> L. Kretzenbacher, *Griechische Reiterheilige...*, p. 27 alongside the date of 1409/10 gives another one – 1449 – based on older literature. But current knowledge allows us to reject this date. Recently M. Bissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 207, opted for an earlier date, justifying his point by noting that both the way of modelling and the colours are similar to the style of the paintings from Sugia and Spelia (end of 14th century).

<sup>98</sup> A. Orlandos, ‘Vyzantinoi kai metavyzantinoi naoi tis ‘Rodou’, *Archeion ton vizantinon mnimeion tis ‘Ellados*, IV, 1948, pp. 190-197, fig. 147; T. Raff, *op. cit.*, p. 120, fig. on the insert after p. 116. He interprets the word “KORAI [...]” as “KORAIOFOS”.

from 1457-1465 in St. Ann's church in Anisiráki, western Crete, may also be an example of the variant with the patch of sea under the steed's belly. Unfortunately, its lower part was destroyed and now only a static form of the remaining part enables us to reconstruct the original appearance of the entire painting.<sup>99</sup> Its condition leaves unresolved whether the roundels on two sides of the saint's head contained any inscriptions. The possibility cannot be excluded that the inscription *Diasoritis* was placed there, as on the illustration of the legend circa 1475 on the wall of St. Michael the Archangel's church in the village of Pedoulas in the Troodos Mountains on Cyprus.<sup>100</sup>

It seems to be the case that the regularity with which this epithet accompanies the saint raising the youth over the sea waves is not accidental, all the more so since other popular epithets like *tropaioforos*, *nikaioforos* (bringing victory) and *megalomartys* (great martyr) do not occur in this group of images. Current knowledge does not suffice to explain the significance of the inscriptions accompanying St. George rescuing the boy, and to what extent they are connected with St. George's church in Ortaköy or the monastery on Amorgos. On the other hand it is undeniable that the regularity of occurrence of the inscriptions surely bore a meaning which is not fully understood by the contemporary observer. The most probable explanation seems to be proposed by Raff who thinks that this term is taken from word *diasozo* – (to keep safe though, bring one well though).<sup>101</sup>

The process of disseminating the iconography of the miracle with the youth reached its apogee at the end of the 15th century, probably under the

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<sup>99</sup> L. Kretzenbacher, *Griechische Reiterheilige...*, p. 28, fig. 3, on the basis of how the spear in St. George's hand is arranged, classifies this representation in the "autonomous" group. The researcher does not draw attention to the fact that the horse's head droops, which implies that his legs are not raised up – as is typical for representations with the dragon. Static composition as an element typical for the iconography of the miracle with the boy was noted by N. Chatzidakis, 'Saint George on Horseback "in Parade". A Fifteenth Century Icon in the Benaki Museum', [in:] *Thimiamia sti mnimi tis Laskrinas Mpoura*, I, Athina 1994, p. 62.

<sup>100</sup> The epithet was written in the form of "DIASORITIS" G. Sotereriu, *Ta vyzantina mnimeia tis Kyprou*, III, 1935, fig. 103; and T. Raff, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-120. An example of the "Syrian" type, painted at the same time in Cyprus but without the epithet *Diasoritis*, is a fresco in the Holy Cross church in Agiasmati near Platanistasa (1494), see A. Stylianou, J. Stylianou, *The painted churches...*, p. 206, fig. 119. In this case the latter describe the figure of the boy as "enigmatic" (sic!).

<sup>101</sup> T. Raff, *op. cit.*, p. 120. This author also collects older literature on this subject on pp. 118-119. His hypothesis supports W. Braunfels and E. Kirschblum, *op. cit.*, col. 371, who translate the term as "rider". On the other hand I. Spatharakis, *op. cit.*, p. 321, note 20 and p. 336, note 214 comes back to the thesis of the toponymic character of this epithet, although he connects it rather with the monastery in Lydian Dios Hieron.



influence of the first Slavic translations of the legend. Simultaneously the type of images, which combined the two legends, started to occur in larger numbers than the “autonomous” type. The following two examples may illustrate this tendency: a fresco from 1493 in St. George’s Orthodox church at the Bulgarian monastery in Kremikovci, with the dynamic depiction of St. George killing a dragon,<sup>102</sup> and the icon in St. George’s Orthodox church in the village of Struga, near Ohrid.<sup>103</sup> The large figure of the princess standing at the city gate is common to both works.

An interesting example of limited composition with the representation of the dragon only (without the princess or city walls of Lasia) is a silver gilded plaque from the Georgian cross in Čhari, at that time belonging to the territory of the independent duchy of Samcche-Saatabago (now in the Museum of Georgian Art in Tbilisi). This cross from the turn of the 16th century is one of the roods popular in Georgia, which were placed in front of the altar.

According to the inscription this object was made by the master Mamne from the donation of Svimon and Basil Šotasdze.<sup>104</sup> Among twelve scenes of the cycle illustrating St. George’s martyrdom and miracles is the representation of the miracle with the young boy and the dragon, placed near the image of St. George spearing Diocletian on a horse and rescuing the princess (fig. 5). Although the picture is limited to the figure of the rider (today destroyed), his companion holding a jug, the blessing hand appearing from heaven and the dragon at the bottom, the significance of the plaque for this subject is substantial thanks to the inscription in the background. The Georgian inscription reads: “Here is St. George rescuing a young captive from Bulgaria” and thus it repeats the message of the inscription in Ikvi. While the fresco form refers to the story *On the son of Leon*, the composition of the plaque does not correspond to the theme suggested by the inscription, apart from the figure of the boy behind the saint’s back. Moreover, the presence of the dragon also departs from the text and in this case should be treated as a symbol, an attribute or even the mechanical repetition of a theme the author had got used to. However, to associate all representations of the two legends with the version *On the son of Leon* solely on the basis on this one work seems to be too advanced interpretation and requires confirmation by other examples.

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<sup>102</sup> K. Paskaleva, *C’rkvata sv. Georgi v Kremikovskija Monastyr*, Sofia 1980, fig. 47. The city is identified with the Slavic inscription “LASA GRAD”, see J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

<sup>103</sup> E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, p. 232, fig. 3.

<sup>104</sup> Š. J. Amiranašvil, *Istorija gruzinskogo iskusstva*, I, Moskva 1950, p. 257, fig. 170.



Fig. 5. *Saint George with the young man mounted behind him kills the dragon*, gilded silver plaque from the altar cross from Čhari (Duchy of Sameche-Saatabago), master Mamne (now in the Museum of Georgian Art in Tbilisi), 15th-16th century (after Amiranašvili).

The literary source of two representations from northern Rus' (dated to the turn of the 16th century) also remains ambiguous. Both examples reject the tradition of illustrating the miracle with the youth through the equestrian representation of St. George. The first one – the Novgorod or Pskov icon from the end of the 15th century – is kept in the Pokrovskij monastery at the Rogožskij cemetery in Moscow. The second example is provided by the icon of a later date of origin from Ustiužna-on-Mologa, influenced by the Novgorod school.<sup>105</sup> In both cases George fighting against the dragon

<sup>105</sup> J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, Table II, fig. 2; A. Rybakov, *Ustiužna, Čerepovec, Vyterga*, Leningrad 1981, p. 15, fig. on the insert after p. 32.

(without the accompanying youth) is presented on the main panel (*kovčeg*) of the icons, while on the frame panels (*klejmo*) there is the story of the Saint's martyrdom and posthumous miracles. A single scene referring to the miracle with the youth was placed just on this frame panel, near the illustration of the legend of the Saracens desecrating an image of George. The saint wears a red cloak covering here a long dress typical for an image of martyrs and commits the boy to the care of a priest wearing a *sakkos* and *omophorion*. The scene is placed against a background of symbolic architecture, more substantial than on the icon from Ustiužna. In the Moscow icon the background is limited solely to the altar ciborium suggesting that the event took place in a church.

J. Myslivec is of the opinion that the *Paphlagonian version* – about the youth captured from the church in Phatris by Saracens – became the theme of this kind of scene, which illustrates the moment when the boy came back to the monastery where he had served.<sup>106</sup> However, the text of this version does not mention any meeting between St. George and the priests, but it says that the boy was left at night in a place which turned out to be a monastery in the daytime. E. Privalova, who refers to the late Georgian text of the *Mytilenian* legend – bearing traces of translation from Russian – offers a different explanation of the scene. According to her, the son of a priest was captured by Arabs while trading and taken to Palestine. Having rescued him, St. George transported the boy to the church dedicated to the Saint at the moment when the boy's father was celebrating liturgy.<sup>107</sup> Although literary sources of both variants came into existence much later, and the oldest Russian translations of the Greek legend date from the 16th century, one of the legends must have been known in Rus' earlier, perhaps only in oral form.<sup>108</sup> Therefore it is difficult to find out today whether the author illustrated the version with the priest's son literally or used a chronological approach to make its meaning clearer.

It is highly probable that the iconographic type of a rider accompanied by a boy, existing in Georgia, Asia Minor, the Balkans and the Caucasus, was unfamiliar to the artists from northern Rus', who had to create their own formula to illustrate the legend. This thesis is strengthened by the fact that no equestrian representations of St. George the Warrior in the illustra-

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<sup>106</sup> J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

<sup>107</sup> E. L. Privalova, 'Hudožestvennoe rešene...', p. 209, especially notes 93, also for bibliographical reference to the source literature.

<sup>108</sup> E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

tions of this miracle can be assigned to the Russian artistic environment. This lack is clearly visible considering the popularity of the theme of St. George killing the dragon and the promotion of the cult of the warrior saint by Russian dukes – particularly Yurij Dolgorukij.<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand the fact that the choice of episode from the legend was different from elsewhere could have been affected by the political situation in late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century Russia. This did not require George to be depicted as a saint defending Christians, contrary to other lands conquered by infidels. This view is also confirmed by the difference in illustrating the other legend, namely, the story about the miraculous liberation of a boy named Basil by St. Nicholas from Agarenian captivity. That story was modelled on the similar legend of St. George. In the art of northern Rus'<sup>110</sup> the story was depicted using the same composition scheme as discussed above,<sup>111</sup> whereas in the Balkans the form is similar to equestrian representations of George accompanied by the boy. Furthermore, on the sixteenth-century Suzdal icon from the Sirotkin collection, where scenes from the life of St. Nicholas of Zaraïsk are shown, the legend of Basil liberated from Arabian captivity was extended to two scenes.<sup>112</sup> The first

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<sup>109</sup> For information on the popularity of the representations of St. George and the dragon in fifteenth-century Novgorod see A. Jääskinen, 'St. George the Victorious in the Medieval Art and Folk Tradition of Novgorod', *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Figura, Nova Series* XIX, 1981, pp. 333-344; about the cult received from the sovereigns with its origin in Kievan Rus see V. N. Lazarev, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-88.

<sup>110</sup> The legend similar to the "Mytilenian" version of the story of St. George is preserved in the 11th century manuscript *Codex Vindobonensis Theologicus Graecus 148* from 1193. It describes the miraculous liberation of a Christian boy who was captured and taken to Crete. The boy was rescued whilst he was serving the Arab emir at a table. The text of the legend is published by G. Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos. Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche. Texte und Untersuchungen*, I, Leipzig-Berlin 1913, pp. 188-195, although a similar version is also preserved in the earlier text *Codex Parisinus Graec. Suppl. 1273* from the 11th century, *ibid.*, pp. 273-275. This story was also known to Jacob of Voragine who mentioned it in his *Golden Legend* under the date of the 6th of December, see Jakub de Voragine, *Złota legenda*, transl. J. Plezia, introd. M. Plezia, Warszawa 1983, pp. 69-70 [= *La Légende Dorée*, le bienheureux J. de Voragine, Paris 1902]. According to one of the versions mentioned by him the captive was named Adeodat and came from Normandy.

<sup>111</sup> The icon from Ustiužna, dated to circa 1540 and produced in the same environment as one of the St. George representations, is similarly composed; see A. Rybakov, *op. cit.*, p. 31, fig. on the insert.

<sup>112</sup> The Russian painter undoubtedly used an older pattern that was known in Byzantine art at least since the 12th century. One can find an early example of this iconographic subject on the frame panel of the icon of St. Nicholas from Sinai monastery, cf. N. Patterson Ševčenko, 'Close Encounters: Contact between Holy figures and the Faithful as represented in Byzantine Works of Art', [in:] *Byzance et les images*, Paris 1994, p. 263.

one shows the miraculous manifestation of the saint in the court of the Cretan emir, while the second scene presents the boy being returned to his parents (fig. 6). Both scenes resemble motifs occurring in early Georgian frescos depicting the legend of St. George.<sup>113</sup>

The variety of depictions of St. George rescuing the youth was used in the mid-16th century to compose several scenes arranged in narrative sequence. It was incorporated into an extended cycle of twenty-eight scenes of the martyrdom and miracles of St. George decorating the *katholikon* of the monastery in Voroneţ. The paintings made circa 1547 and donated by the Moldavian metropolitan Gregory Roşca cover both internal and external walls of the church which is dedicated to St. George. In one of the lunettes of the narthex, and on the neighbouring wall are four fields bordered with red lines where the legend of the miracle with the boy was illustrated.<sup>114</sup>

The narration goes along the lower row of frescos from left to right. In the first field a ruler is shown near the left border. He wears a tall, open diadem (*tympanion*) on his head and sits on a throne with a footstool. A youth is standing in front of him in a long dress similar to a robe with slit sleeves and wearing a tall, pointed cap. He is giving a cup to the ruler. A guard with a sword on his shoulder is standing behind the throne. The architectural background with an overstylised *exedra* behind the throne suggests that the scene is happening in a palace. The arrangement of the composition resembles to a certain extent the scene from the side fields of the Suzdal icon with St. Nicholas of Zارايسк. Similarly, the episode takes place in the palace of the king, whose servant the boy is. But on the Moldavian fresco the rescuing saint is not present. It is difficult then to define the relationship between both works. Besides, the arrangement of a figure standing in front of the ruler is common in such art.

In contrast to the first scene, the second directly reflects one of the versions of the legend. In order to present George escaping with the boy the artist chose the "Syrian" approach with a patch of sea, in this case illustrated as semicircular waves. An interesting trick was used to suggest the continuity of narration. In the background, on the left bank of the sea and thus behind the saint's back, is a wall with a window. The wall is an extension of the palace walls, whereas rocky landscape fills out the right

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<sup>113</sup> N. V. Rozanova, *Rostovo-Suzdalskaja živopis' XII-XVI vekov*, Moskva 1970, nos. 92, 97-98.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, Table IX, fig. 3, Table X, fig. 1.

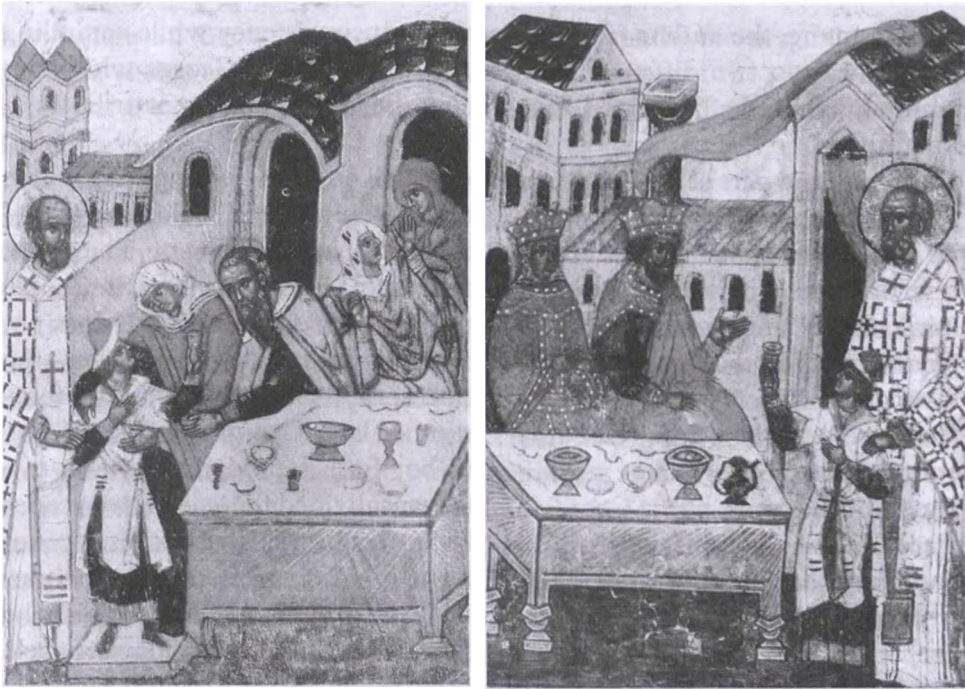


Fig. 6. *St. Nicholas returning Basil to his parents*, fragments of a North-Russian icon of St. Nicholas of Zaraisk, Rostov-Suzdal School (now in the Fine Arts Museum in Gorki), 16th century (after Rozanova).

side of the composition. The willingness to emphasise the relationship between these scenes and to distinguish them from other themes must have driven the painter when he decided to maintain the proportion of figures within a scene and make the youth almost as tall as George. It is worth mentioning here that the painting from Voronež is the northernmost example of the “Syrian” iconographic variant.

The third scene was divided into two fields by the line of the corner between neighbouring walls. In the first of these two fields the saint is orientated to the right, i.e. towards the second part of the composition. He wears a red cloak and long white tunic, hemmed at the bottom with decorative trimming, and raises his right arm as if to present the boy standing in front of him and holding a cup. The wall in the background of the composition suggests that the events take place in a house. St. George’s clothes and gesture show clearly that the artist used the pattern known from North Russian icons from the Ustiužna and Rogožskij monasteries in Moscow.

What is more, the author failed to avoid an inconsistency while compiling the story from two different sources, namely, that St. George who wore a breastplate in the previous scene is now shown without any attributes of knighthood.

The second part of the episode was depicted on the adjoining wall, where the artist showed the boy's parents standing behind a table laid for a festivity and three other figures, presumably the parents' guests. The artist referred here to the oldest Georgian iconographic formula, where St. George miraculously appears in the boy's home during the sad banquet. It does not mean, however, that he had to model his work on the oldest examples – the iconographic theme of banqueters sitting at the table appears on the fourteenth-century icon from Ubisi and on other later Georgian works.<sup>115</sup> The episode from the legend of rescuing the boy from captivity, shown on two panels of the frame of the Georgian icon, was divided there into two scenes placed at the same height, as in Moldavia. But in the first of these scenes St. George and the boy are riding a horse, which implies that the painter working in Voroneţ used only selected iconographic elements which he needed to close the narration. The last element of the Moldavian cycle seems to illustrate the legend *On the son of Leon*, and this is how J. Myslivec identifies it.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately he does not quote inscriptions accompanying particular episodes, which would permit one to verify his finding. They are also illegible on the illustrations published by him. The theme of the boy's parents sitting at the table appears also in other Balkan works, namely on one side-field of the seventeenth-century icon of St. George, kept in the Serbian Patriarchate in Peć, where the literary original is clearly identified by the inscription "LEONOVA" (Leo's).<sup>117</sup> However, there is an example of using the same pictorial formula to illustrate another version of the legend. This is an icon produced in the first half of the 19th century in Asia Mi-

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<sup>115</sup> T. Velmans, A. Alpago, L. Novello, *Mirror de l'invisible. Peintures murales et architecture de la Géorgie*, Milano 1996, p. 119, mention examples of the scene of the boy's rescue from frescoes in Georgian churches in Ači (13th century), Kalendžiča (14th century) and Ubisi (14th century). E. L. Privalova, 'Hudožestvennoe rešene...', p. 210, among the examples of a late redaction with a group of banqueters, the author enumerates also miniatures from the manuscripts collected in the Institute of the Georgian Academy of Science under the numbers: A-454 (18th century) fol. 41r, H-2904 (18th century) fol. 63v and S-2842 (19th century) fol. 38v.

<sup>116</sup> J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 341; his identification is also accepted by M. Golescu, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>117</sup> J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-348.

nor, where St. George is accompanied by the youth, the dragon, and the princess visible at the gate of Lasia. The bottom part of the icon is divided into twelve panels and illustrates the cycle of the saint's martyrdom enlarged by two miracles.

In the foreground of the composition stands St. George while a group of people sits at the table; a woman is raising her hand towards the boy who is standing next to her. This scene is provided with the inscription at the top "o agios eletheronei tis chyras tón yíon (the saint liberates widow's son)".<sup>118</sup> It does mean that the painter refers here to the "Mytilenian" version of the miracle. Another known variant of the text about Arab pirates assaulting Lesbos tells us about the boy's parents also taking part in this story.<sup>119</sup> Obviously the icon mentioned above and the text of the legend were created much later than the painting in the Romanian monastery, so it seems that it is not necessary to suppose that the "Mytilenian" version of the legend was being illustrated in Voroneț, but final confirmation of Myslivec's identification would be possible after the inscription has been read.

The iconographic solutions employed by the Voroneț master are not likely to be found in the art of the 16th century. At that time they were being replaced by the representation referring to the legend of the rescued princess, which became a dominant variant and almost superseded the others. The youth accompanying George might appear both in more complex scenes with the princess Alexandra and the city walls, where her parents were observing the fight, and in the limited variant depicting only St. George fighting against the dragon. The former solution is found in the frescoes from the Orthodox church Panagia Koumbeliki in Kastoria (15th-16th centuries) and the work from the Moldavian St. George's church in Hîrlau (1530), where George is attacking the speared dragon<sup>120</sup> with his sabre raised over his head; the Balkan icon dated to the 15th/16th centuries in the National History Museum of Moscow;<sup>121</sup> and the Greek icon painted by the master Jeremy (Palladas?) circa 1600 from Henri Pharaon's collection

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<sup>118</sup> *Les icônes dans les collections suisses*, introd. M. Chatzidakis and V. Djurić, Geneve 1968, nr 135. The icon is described: "O AGIOS GEORGIOS". Below the horse there is a Greek inscription: "made by Charlamp son of John [...] on 13th April to save the soul of John, the servant of God, and Sotira, his wife".

<sup>119</sup> E. L. Privalova, 'Hudožestvennoe rešene...', p. 209.

<sup>120</sup> In Romanian painting a figure of the devil appears from the dragon's muzzle. J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 362, Table XVI.

<sup>121</sup> E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, pp. 228, 234, fig. 1.





Fig. 7. *Saint George with the young boy mounted behind him kills the dragon*, Cappadocian icon (now in the Byzantine Museum in Athens), 16th century (photo G. Pagrinianos).

in Beirut.<sup>122</sup> Amongst them by reason of numerous details the icon from St. Nicholas church in Sinarades on Corfu is distinguished.<sup>123</sup> This work, which shows clear Venetian influences on the stylistic level, shows St. George accompanied by a boy with a jar. The saint is using a rapier to attack the dragon, whose body is pierced by a broken spear. Besides various

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<sup>122</sup> *Ícônes Melkites...*, p. 236, fig. 97. On the icon there is a following inscription: "Stephan, servant of God, offers prayers", a not the Signature by the hand of Jeremy.

<sup>123</sup> *Vyzantini kai metavizantini techni stin Kerkyra*, Kerkyra 1994, fig. 98.

elements known from other images (such as the princess and the city walls with her parents) a new feature appears here, namely that a chain is fastened round the boy's legs, with its end circling round his waist. In this way the painter tries to emphasise a fact that the boy was a prisoner. However this unusual detail did not become typical part of the iconography of the miracle.

Examples of the latter variant without the princess and city walls are provided by the icon in the Antivouniotissa Museum on Corfu<sup>124</sup> dated to the turn of the 16th century; a Greek icon<sup>125</sup> kept in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and a Cappadocian icon generally dated to the 16th century illustrating St. George's Passion in the Byzantine Museum in Athens (fig. 7).<sup>126</sup> In all three cases, the youth was painted as a disproportionately small figure with a ewer and towel. But on the Cappadocian icon the figure of Christ appears against the background of a polygonal mandorla instead of the blessing *Manus Dei* emerging from heaven above the saint. Among interesting examples of this group of representations with regard to the Oriental costume of the boy wearing a turban on his head one can include a textile from the St. Paul Monastery of Mount Athos (16th/17th centuries).<sup>127</sup> On the icon from St. Anna Skete of Athos the princess appears, but in a rocky landscape.<sup>128</sup> In this example and on the icon from Corfu the youth's neck is wrapped up in a towel. This motif appears in later iconography, too.

Paradoxically, in spite of the popularisation of the text of the legend in the 16th century, the process of transition from the "historical" theme of the miracle with the youth into the image of the accompanied St. George killing the dragon strengthened. The Damaskinos neo-Greek edition of the versions with "Leon's son" and "the son of the widow of Mitylene"<sup>129</sup> – as well as its Slavic translations – did not prevent the disappearance of the theme in art.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., fig. 94; *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, Th. Liva-Xanthaki, Athens 1986, p. 128, Fig. 131; the remains of the inscription "O G[EO]R[GIOS]" are hardly visible.

<sup>125</sup> D. Talbot Rice, "The Accompanied Saint George...", fig. 1.

<sup>126</sup> G. Sotiriou, *Guide du Musée Byzantin d'Athènes*, Athènes 1955, p. 20; inscription "O 'AGIOs GEORGIO TROPEOFOROS" is placed near the saint's head.

<sup>127</sup> P. Huber, *Athos. Leben, Glaube, Kunst*, Zürich 1969, fig. 167.

<sup>128</sup> *Treasures of Mount Athos*, ed. Th. Xanthaki, D. A. Hardy, Thessaloniki 1997, pp. 589-590, figs. 2, 113.

<sup>129</sup> Damaskenos, *Thesaurus*, Venezia 1528, repr. Thessaloniki 1971, pp. 216 and ff.

Among late examples of the “autonomous” representation of the legend is the fresco in the *trapeza* in the Athos Dionisiou monastery dated to 1603.<sup>130</sup> Near the representation of “John Climacus’ ladder of virtues”, on a small, bordered field is an image of the miracle with the youth. St. George is sitting on a horse galloping over waves shown schematically as overlapping sky-blue semicircles. The boy in a hat and with a ewer is standing behind the saint’s back and an angel is coming down from heaven. The saint, whose only weapon is a symbolic cross on a long shaft,<sup>131</sup> is heading towards the city walls on the left side of the composition. There is an inscription at the top: “‘O agios Georgios lytroumenos ton y[i]on tis chiras paraloxeo[s] ek tis aichmalosias (St. George rescues the widow’s son from captivity)”<sup>132</sup> This scene can be unequivocally identified as the illustration of the *Mytilenian* version of the miracle due to the inscription and sea theme, particularly prominent here, and may be classified as the significantly modified “Syrian” type. Therefore, if the painter knowingly referred to the tradition of representing the particular “Mytilenian” variant of the legend by combining the sea waves theme and the inscription unambiguously describing the subject, then the sea theme would be recognised as defining the literary source of all “Syrian” compositions.

An Armenian miniature with a single theme of St. George and the youth was also painted in the 17th century. One dubious element is the face of St. George, unusually shown with a beard and moustache. The saint is holding a lance to which is fastened a pennant with a red cross on a white background – probably a reflection of crusader art. Below a horse, on a flowery meadow are two figures kneeling, probably the donors of the icon or the boy’s parents.<sup>133</sup>

Examples of the “pure” representation of the legend can be found in the 17th century in the Sinai communities, hermetic at that time. Two icons of

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<sup>130</sup> G. Millet, *Monuments de L’athos*, I, Paris 1927, figs. 211, 3; and P. Huber, *op. cit.*, fig. 211.

<sup>131</sup> The motif of a tall cross (*crux hastata*) used as a weapon, with the help of which the holy rider fights evil symbolised by a dragon or a female demon – Lilith/Gyllou, is known in Byzantine iconography at least from the 7th century, among others from amulets and paintings in Bawit, see M. Mango, *A silver plate with a holy rider*, unpublished 1987; Ch. Walter, ‘The intaglio of Solomon in the Benaki Museum and the origins of the iconography of warrior saints’, *Deltion tis Christianikis Archaologikis Etaireias*, series 4, XV (1989-1990), pp. 33-42.

<sup>132</sup> Quot. foll. J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>133</sup> *Les icones dans les collections suisses...*, no. 8. The author of the catalogue note names the youth as George, probably having recognised the kneeling persons as Leon and Theophano.



Fig. 8. *Saint George with the boy mounted behind him kills the dragon*, engraving made by hierodeacon Euthymios (now in the Library of Simonopetra Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece), ca. year 1858 (after Xanthaki).

folk art style from St. Catherine's Monastery, not precisely dated to the late 17th or even 18th century, represent St. George accompanied by the youth riding over the sea waves and swimming fishes. In contrast the examples from Cyprus represent various iconographic redactions.<sup>134</sup> In the icon from St. Kendeas' Church in the suburbs of Paphos,<sup>135</sup> produced during Venetian rule on the island, St. George's martyrdom is depicted. The centre field

<sup>134</sup> D. R. Howell, *op. cit.*, p. 41, figs. 1, 2.

<sup>135</sup> A. Papageorgiou, *op. cit.*, p. 146, fig. 98, dates this work to the first half of the 16th century. The inscription on the icon: "O PERIVOLIATIS" (orchard, gardener) refers to the person of St. George.

contains an image of St. George with a boy, and the presence of the sea with fish permits one to assign this icon to the “Syrian” type, traditional on the island. That this iconographical variant remained popular after the Turks had conquered the island is confirmed by the fact, that in 1619 it was exploited by a painter on the reverse side of the *Crucifixion* icon in St. George’s Church in Korakou.<sup>136</sup> On an icon from the turn of 17th century (in the Church of the Panaghia Eleousa in the village of Pano Panagia<sup>137</sup>) there are three figures in front of the saint, identified by D. Talbot Rice as donors. However, they could equally be seen as the parents of the young George and one of the invited guests. Thus, it would be an example of the oldest Georgian iconographic version of “the miracle with Leon’s son”. Finally, a Cypriot icon from the 17th century, auctioned at Sotheby’s, illustrates St. George with the adolescent piercing the dragon’s muzzle with a long lance and the princess kneeling on the right side.<sup>138</sup>

An interesting example of the updated theme comes from the Georgian environment of the 17th and 18th centuries, where both “autonomous” compositions and those combining the motif of the saint’s young companion with the fight against the dragon<sup>139</sup> existed together. The silver icon *Miracles of St. George* from the mid-17th century in the Georgian Monastery of Ilori illustrates George killing the dragon. The saint is accompanied by a small figure of the boy, which is referred in the background inscription: “St. George is rescuing the prisoner from captivity in Khorasan”.<sup>140</sup> The reference to Bulgaria or Algeria, present in the text of the legend, was replaced in an inscription with the name of the North Persian land, where Georgians

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<sup>136</sup> D. Talbot Rice, *The Icons of Cyprus...*, p 239, Table 33, fig. 81; exact dating is possible thanks to the preserved inscription “ACHTH.CHY”. Talbot Rice recognises fish below the horse’s hooves as snakes and on that basis links this icon to the group of representations with the dragon.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240, Table 33, fig. 83.

<sup>138</sup> *Fine Icons*, the catalogue of the auction house Sotheby from Monday, 3rd of December 1979, fig. 33.

<sup>139</sup> E. L. Privalova, ‘Hudožestvennoe rešene...’, p. 219 provides more examples. Apart from the earlier paintings from the churches in Nikorcmiida and Nakuraleszi (15th century), she mentions the fresco from the village of Czukuli in Svanetia (dated to the turn of 16th and 17th centuries) and two scenes depicted on the southern wall of the exonarthex of the Orthodox church in Calenjikha. An example of a representation of the “double” legend is the seventeenth-century plate form Čhari founded by the Tzaritza Mary; see G. N. Čubinšvili, *op. cit.*, fig. 571.

<sup>140</sup> The inscription is not precisely quoted by J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 362, who dates the icon to 1657. E. L. Privalova, ‘Hudožestvennoe rešene...’, p. 211, gives the date of 1651 and quotes the inscription in the original version and its Russian translation.

captured by Turks were undoubtedly sent during the turbulent 17th century. This is strong evidence that the story of the miracle with the youth was still being associated with the protective role of St. George, who guards Christians from warlike infidels.

While the “autonomous” representations of the legend were still found on Sinai, Cyprus and in Georgia, in the case of Greece most compositions merge the story of the miracle with the youth and the fight against the dragon. This theme remained popular in the 17th century in the iconography of the Greek islands, particularly in the Cretan environment.<sup>141</sup> As an interesting example from an Italian-Cretan workshop one can recall an icon dated to the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries where the youth is dressed in Oriental style and a fissure appears below the steed’s hooves – maybe a reminiscence of the sea coast from the “Syrian” variant.<sup>142</sup> The monastery workshops on Mount Athos were an important artistic centre promoting the theme of combined legends. Apart from the foregoing examples the fresco in the narthex of Vatopaidi monastery *katholikon* and the icon on the iconostasis of the *katholikon* of Philotheou monastery<sup>143</sup> support the above conclusion as well. Many Greek icons from the 17th century, which illustrate the combined legends, are scattered among museums and private collections, and it is not possible to determine the environment in which they were produced.<sup>144</sup> Iconographical elements taken from various cultural

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<sup>141</sup> A late example from the Dodecanese is provided by an icon now housed in Patmos (mid-18th century), see M. Chatzidakis, *Eikones tis Patmou*, Athinai 1977, p. 182, figs. 198, 199. The Italian-Cretan trend in iconography is represented by an icon painted in 1649 by the hierodiaton Joseph, now in the Museum of Art and History in Geneva: *Les icônes du Musée d'Art et d'Histoire Geneve*, ed. M. Lazović, S. Frigerio-Zeniou, Geneve 1985, no. 29; see also N. P. Kondakov, *op. cit.*, vol. II, fig. 135. The constant presence of the theme in Cretan painting is confirmed by an icon painted by Anghelos (the end of 15th century) and another icon, kept in the Museum of the Greek Institute in Venice; see M. Chatzidakis, *Icônes de Saint-Georges des Grecs et de la collection de l'Institut Hellénique de Venise*, Venise 1962, pp. 27-28 and 119, fig. 58.

<sup>142</sup> *Les icônes dans les collections suisses...*, no. 46. The motif of a cave from which the monster creeps out appears also in autonomous representations of the fight against the dragon. But it is clearly visible that the crack on the other Greek icon from the end of the 17th century, currently stored in the Museum of Orthodox Church at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade (cat. no. S-4779), is filled out with blue colour, which shows that the author's intention was to paint a patch of sea.

<sup>143</sup> M. Golescu, *op. cit.*, p. 128; J. B. Aufhauser, 'Das Drachenwunder...', Table 5.

<sup>144</sup> Examples of such icons can be found in the Munich collection of Ilias Neufert, see *Ikonen 13. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. H. Skrobucha, München 1969, no. 51; E. S. Ovcinnikova *op. cit.*, fig. 5; in the Beirut collection of Henri Pharaon (inscription “O A[GIOS] GEORGIOS”), see *Icônes Melkites...*, p. 237, fig. 101, among the icons collected by Siegfried Amberg-Herzog,

traditions are mixed together on many of these icons – e.g. the mask on St. George's shield depicted on eighteenth-century icon from the workshop of John Simenos in Asia Minor<sup>145</sup> – but they are without importance for the history of the iconographic subject of St. George with a boy.

As in Greece, the tendency to incorporate the theme of a boy accompanying St. George into the scene of the fight against the dragon prevailed in other national Balkan schools active during the Turkish occupation. Among the examples coming from Romanian duchies – and even from Transylvania, where the text of the legend often appeared in the seventeenth-century *Synaxarions* – are icons in the Municipal Museum in Oradea and from Cotroceni (now in the Museum of Sacral Art in Bucharest), as well as the silver binding of a gospel book given to St. George's Orthodox Church in Bucharest by Constantine Brincoveanu in 1707.<sup>146</sup> Among Bulgarian representations of the theme one should mention the wall-painting in the Orthodox church of Marcia (17th century);<sup>147</sup> a Turnovo icon of 1684 with the scenes of St. George's martyrdom illustrated in the side fields (the icon is housed in the National Gallery of Art in Sofia);<sup>148</sup> and a seventeenth-century icon from Arbanasi in the Orthodox Museum of History and Archaeology in Sofia.<sup>149</sup>

In the 18th century the iconographic theme of a youth behind St. George fighting against a dragon occurred in Coptic paintings, supposedly under

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see *Les icones dans les collections suisses...*, no. 69: this icon comes from northern Greece and was produced in the 1730s. However, W. Felicetti-Liebenfels, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Ikonenmalerei*, Olten-Lusagne 1956, p. 95, fig. 124, identifies it as a work from the Greek islands and dates it to circa 1500; D. Wild, *op. cit.*, fig. 9; in the Museum of Art in Bucharest (inscription "GEORGIOS"), see *De la Matei Basarab la Konstantin Brincoveanu. Arta secolului al. XVII-lea. Muzeul Național de Artă*, ed. A. Daobjanschi, O. Iancovescu, București 1992, p. 31, no. 12, and C. Nicolescu, *Rumänische Ikonen*, Berlin 1976, p. 48, fig. 48 (both publications attribute the icon to the workshop of a Wallachian master influenced by a Greek painting); in the Hermitage collection of N. P. Lichačev, see E. S. Ovčinnikova, *op. cit.*, fig. 4; in the collection of Georgios Tsakyroglos (four icons, one of them from mid-17th century, three dated to the end of the 17th century), see A. Karakatsani, *Eikones. Syllogi Georgiou Toakyroglou*, Athina 1980, p. 40 and fig. 46, p. 116 and fig. 146, p. 123 and fig. 169, and p. 124 and fig. 173; and in the Roger Cabal Collection (an icon from the end of the 17th century, unpublished so far, dimensions 43,5 x 28 cm).

<sup>145</sup> *Les icones dans les collections suisses...*, no. 128. Inscription: "O AGIOS GEORGIOS O THAYMATOYRGOS", and signature "CHEIR IOANNOY IEREOS TOU SIMENOU".

<sup>146</sup> M. Golescu, *op. cit.*, p. 131, fig. 1; J. Myslivec, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

<sup>147</sup> A. Boschkov, *Die Bulgarische Malerei von den Anfängen bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*, Recklinhausen 1969, fig. 163.

<sup>148</sup> Idem, *B'lgarskata ikona*, Sofia 1984, p. 247, fig. 149.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243, fig. 145.

the influence of Armenian artists. An icon of the year 1752/53, associated with the Armenian Diaspora in Cairo, may provide a good example. Apart from the saint accompanied by the boy, the princess, city walls and the dragon were shown on this icon. The work of the painter Eustachios – a nineteenth-century icon in the Coptic Church of the Holy Virgin in Hârat ar-Rûm<sup>150</sup> – also shows that the theme caught on.

A group of late images of St. George with a youth and a dragon was created in the Balkans, undeniably driven by the national movement of liberation directed against the Ottoman Empire,<sup>151</sup> arising in the first half of the 19th century. Keeping the anti-Muslim message of the theme in mind the artists connected with the Bulgarian National Renaissance referred to it with particular pleasure. Among the works produced in Bulgaria during the 19th century some images of George with the boy can be found: an icon of 1838 painted by the priest Dymitr Kančov, currently in the Regional Museum of History in Veliko Turnovo; an icon from the 19th century in the Museum of Icons in Varna;<sup>152</sup> and an icon kept in the National Gallery in Plovdiv.<sup>153</sup>

Balkan printing workshops of the 19th century using the theme of St. George in their works played an important role in its popularisation (fig. 8).<sup>154</sup> Presumably the influence of these graphic patterns contributed to the fact that in the 19th century the representation of the double miracle eventually squeezed out the older “autonomous” compositions even in

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<sup>150</sup> Two examples, unknown to D. Talbot Rice, ‘The Accompanied Saint George..’, p. 386, are provided by O. Meinardus, *op. cit.*, p. 151, both icons are illustrated on the insert. On the first icon at the top there are two inscriptions: Greek “O AGIOS GEORGIOS PIMALITON” and Arabic “My master, the king Mari-Ġirġis al-Malati. Painting by unworthy Ibrahim and Yûhann the Armenian, in the year of 1469 [1752]”, while the second icon has only an Arabic description: “Icon of the great martyr Mari Ġirġis. Made by Astâsi [Eustachios] ar-Rûmî al-Qudsî, the painter. Remember, Lord, protect your servant, the unworthy priest Bakhûm [Pakhomius] and reward him for his hardship and admit him to the heavenly kingdom. 1555 [1838/9]”. Meinardus does not reject the possibility that in Coptic art St. George is accompanied by his servant instead of the rescued boy.

<sup>151</sup> E.g. the seal of the Monastery of St. George the Galatian from 1836, see M. Golescu, *op. cit.*, figs. 2, 3.

<sup>152</sup> A. Boschkov, *Die bulgarische Ikone*, Berlin 1986, nr 16; also his *B'lgarska ikona...*, fig. 380.

<sup>153</sup> *Ikonen 13. bis 19. Jahrhundert...*, no. 384.

<sup>154</sup> E.g. the woodcut by Nikola S. Kilnikov from circa 1850, the engraving and plate, kept in the Monastery of Simonopetra on the Mount Athos, from circa 1858, see *Treasures of Mount Athos...*, fig. 4.13. Numerous examples of Bulgarian prints are published by E. Tomov, *B'lgarski v'zroženski štampi*, Sofia 1975, figs. 116, 167, 211 and 219.





Fig. 9. *Saint George with the young mounted behind him kills the dragon*, Lebanese icon from the workshop of Mihâil Mhanna al-Qudsi in the Orthodox Monastery of the Saviour in Saida, second half of 19th century (after Căndea).

communities from which their origin was derived. This process can be observed in the painting of Christian Orthodox communities in Lebanon. The motif of the youth combined with the theme of the fight against the dragon appears on an icon from the beginning of the 19th century, painted by Michael the Cretan;<sup>155</sup> on an image from Ani Bourdai, currently adored in the Melkit Church of St. George in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (USA); as

<sup>155</sup> *Ícônes Melkites...*, p. 200, fig. 58.

well as on two icons from the second half of the 19th century, attributed to Mihâil Mhanna al-Qudsî (fig. 9).<sup>156</sup>

It seems, however, that during the process of combining the miracle with the youth and the legend of the princess, the figure of the boy was losing its original meaning, derived from the text of the legend. Simultaneously it acquired a new meaning, becoming the saint's attribute. This process can also be observed in images of St. Demetrius with Cyprianos, the bishop of Thenai (currently: Henchir Tina in Tunisia), later linked to the story of the miraculous healing of Tsar Kaloyan.<sup>157</sup> On a mid-eighteenth-century Greek icon from the collection of Georgios Tsakyroglou<sup>158</sup> are two Warrior-Saints depicted on horseback, spearing the dragon and the figure of a pagan ruler lying down. Behind them are small figures of accompanying riders. One of them is dressed in a priest's attire, the second has a towel or a scarf wrapped around his neck, and holds an ewer in his hand. The composition also includes the figure of the princess standing close to the dragon in the upper-right corner, the city surrounded by walls and a pair of city rulers with keys in their hands. The half-figure of Christ with both hands raised in a gesture of blessing is also shown, and two angels flying down towards the earth and holding diadems to crown the riders. Although none of the figures was provided with an inscription, the theme of the scene is clear. However, it cannot be said that any one of the four miracles, the elements of which appear on the icon, was shown here. The glory of Sts. George and Demetrius, transcending the limits of history, is rather the subject here. All "accessories" are shown not only to identify the saints, but also to recall and present their miracles.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> One of the icons is kept in Saida in the Orthodox Assembly of the Saviour, the second in the Beirut collection of Ivan Stchouthine; *ibid.*, pp. 217, 219, figs. 87, 92. In the background of one of them is a port with sailing ships calling at it. Maybe it is neither a genre theme, nor the representation of the port in Beirut (as the author of the catalogue suggests), but a reference to an older iconographic type, as in the case of Greek icons.

<sup>157</sup> For the iconography of the theme see N. Theotoka "O eikonografikos typos tou 'Agiou Dimitriou stratiotikou kai ef'hippou kai oi schetikes paradoseis ton thaumatou', [in:] *Pepragmena tou IX Diethnous Vyzantinologikou Synedriou (Thessaloniki 12-19 Aprilou 1953)*, I, Athina 1955, pp. 477-88, fig. 162, 2; and Ch. Walter, 'St. Demetrius: The Myroblytos of Thessalonika', *Eastern Churches Review*, V, 1973, p. 157-178, especially 177, fig. 15.

<sup>158</sup> A. Karakatsani, *op. cit.*, p. 124, fig. 174.

<sup>159</sup> This iconographic variant also became popular in 19th century graphics, see E. Tomov, *op. cit.*, figs. 255, 316-318. The same composition one can find e.g. on the exterior fresco in *catholicohn* of Vatopaidi monastery of Mount Athos (18th century).

To summarise the findings one can try to reconstruct the iconographic changes of the manner in which three versions of the legend of rescuing the youth from captivity were represented in art. The legend was depicted in the 11th century as a complex narrative scene in Georgian art. The key motif of the boy accompanying St. George occurred as a direct result of the interpretation of the text of *On the son of Leon* version, which was a literary source for painters. As opposed to D. Talbot Rice's view, this theme was not a borrowing from the iconography of the Iranian Bahrâm Gur.<sup>160</sup> That the image of St. George with a companion occurred so early may mean that it became a compositional pattern for the equestrian representations of the other saints rescuing prisoners from captivity.

One hundred years later a new variant of the theme was created in the Crusader countries. The boy's parents were not represented, but the patch of a sea with fish was introduced. If the inscription (dated four hundred years later) in the *trapeza* of the Dionisiou Monastery of Athos is to assist understanding of this theme, it can be concluded that the Syrian artists replaced the story of *On the son of Leon* with the "Mytilenian" version.

In the 14th century, thanks to their compositional similarity, the theme of the boy was merged together with the illustration of the story of the fight against the dragon and soon became the only manner in which the legend was represented in the Balkans and Asia Minor. On the other hand, in Georgia and the Levant, the "autonomous" types continued to exist beside the "combined" one for a long time. They were gradually replaced, partly due to the influence of graphics.

Interestingly it seems that representation of the legend was not customary in the Byzantine Empire, since no examples from there are preserved. A similar mechanism presumably worked in Rus', where a quite different formula of depicting St. George with the youth rescued by him was developed. Georgia remains a specific region, a cradle for the iconographic theme, and at the same time the only independent Orthodox country where this theme enjoyed such popularity. This fact may be explained by the constant threat of its Muslim neighbours. On the other hand, the subject under consideration was not popular in all Orthodox regions subjected to other

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<sup>160</sup> D. Talbot Rice, "The Accompanied Saint George...", p. 387; this thesis is already refuted by D. R. Howell, *op. cit.*, p. 45, as he points to the fact that until the 16th century a camel appeared in the Persian representations of Bahrâm Gur instead of a horse.

religions. For example, we have no examples from those parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth inhabited by Orthodox Christians (Belorussia, Ukraine).

Finally it should be mentioned that, despite the popularity of the image of St. George rescuing the youth among Crusaders, it did not spread in the art of the Western Europe and was confined to the art of the Eastern Churches.