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The role of Orthodox religious engravings in the Samokov painters' archive : visual prototypes?

The Role of Orthodox Religious Engravings in the Samokov Painters' Archive: Visual Prototypes?

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A little known group of Orthodox engravings directs attention to the deserving subject of painters' use of Orthodox religious prints.[1] These prints are an underestimated part of an archive acquired from a family of painters active in the 19th century and now in the National Art Gallery in Sofia.[2] The archive, consisting of miscellaneous prints and drawings, has not been comprehensively studied and it is principally known for a number of western prints.[3] Iconographically distinct from these, I have identified 11 prints with Orthodox religious imagery dispersed in the contents and surviving in a condition which evidently results from serving a practical function.

The group of Orthodox prints in the Samokov Archive includes prints of two Orthodox engravings which are known to have been influential in religious painting in Bulgaria. They are composite images, consisting of multiple panels of imagery. Both engravings are published in Dori Papastratos' magisterial catalogue *Greek Orthodox religious engravings 1665-1899*, published originally in 1986. One engraving is of the Theotokos inscribed *eleousa tou Kykkou* and dated 1778[4] (Fig. 1a). The other is of the Theotokos *Akathist*, published thirty years later in 1819[5] (Fig. 1b). The former is identified as the source for a

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[2] Sofia, National Art Gallery (НХГ), department of works on paper.

[3] A. Protic, 'Денацинализиране и Възраждане на нашето изкъство от 1393–1879 год', *Сборник 1000 Години България*, Sofia 1930, pp. 383–540; A. Vasiliev, *Български Възрожденски Маистори*, Sofia 1965, pp. 313–477.

[4] D. Papastratos, *Χάρτινες Εικόνες Ορθόδοχα Χαρακτικά 1660–1899*, vol. 1–2, Athens 1986; *eadem, Paper Icons. Greek Orthodox religious engravings 1665–1899*, vol. 1–2, Athens 1990, cat. no. 539.

[5] *Ibidem*, cat. no. 122.

Fig. 1a. Engraving Theotokos *eleousa tou Kykkou*, Venice, 1778

Fig. 1b. Engraving Theotokos *Akathist* Venice, 1819

scheme of mural painting at the important monastery at Rila, where three panels from the border cycle of the Theotokos *Kykkos* engraving of 1778 are copied in the chapel of the Bogoroditsa *Pokrov* at the Hermitage of St. Luke, one of the monastery's dependencies (Fig. 2).[6] This scheme of church decoration is attributed to the elder painter from Samokov, Christo Dimitrov, in 1799. The latter engraving is identified as the source for an icon at the Sokolovtsi Monastery dated 1836, where the border cycle is indebted to the Akathist imagery of the engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist* published in 1819[7] (Fig. 3a). In addition to the debt to the *Akathist* engraving, the central panel of the icon refers to the iconography the *Kykkou* engraving of 1778, because the Theotokos in the central panel is represented *kykkotissa* as in the earlier engraving instead of *hodigitria and Unfading Rose* featuring in the Akathist engraving. The icon is by Ioanniki Vitanov from Triavna, an artistic centre in Bulgaria comparable at the time with Samokov. On

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[6] E. Popova, 'Реинтерпретации на чудотворната икона на св. Богородица от Кикос в Българската живопис от края на 18–19 век', *Проблеми на Изкуството*, 4 (1998), pp. 32–41; *eadem*, *Зографът Христо Димитров от Самоков*, Sofia 2001, p. 183.

[7] A. Boshkov, *Българската икона*, Sofia 1984, fig. 332; Popova, 'Реинтерпретации...', fig. 8, 9.
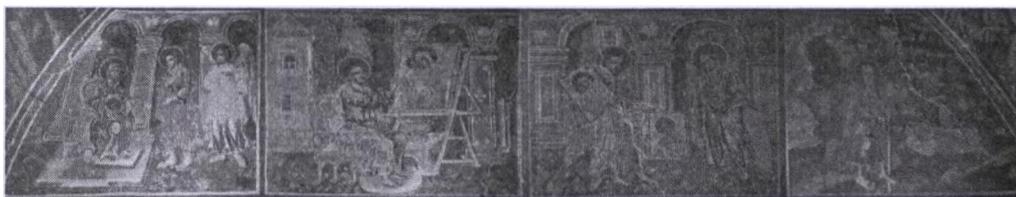
Fig. 2. Mural scheme – Chapel of Bogoroditsa *pokrov;* Rila Monastery, 1799

the strength of this evidence, prints of these two engravings can be seen to have had a predominant influence among prints as sources of imagery for painters.

I have found two more examples of the influence of these engravings in painting in Bulgaria. An ornamental feature in the earliest signed panel icon by Christo Dimiter's second son Zahari, dated 1830 and representing the Theotokos *kykkotissa* with saints, is arguably copied from the central panel of the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving of 1778, to which his father was indebted at Rila (Fig. 3b).[8] This icon is in the Crypt Collection of
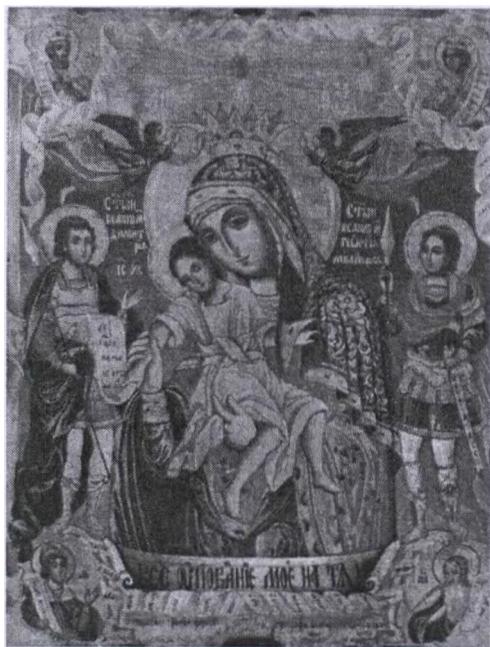

Fig. 3a. Icon Theotokos *kykkotissa*
with Sts. George & Demetrius
Zahari Zograph, 1830

Fig. 3b. Icon Theotokos *kykkotissa Akathistos*
Ioanniki Vitanov, 1836

[8] C. Brisby, 'An icon of the Bogoroditsa *kykkotissa* and Zahari's use of Orthodox engravings', *Проблеми на Изкъстбото*, 1 (2007) pp. 32–36.

the National Art Gallery in Sofia.[9] The Akathist imagery in the mural decoration of the *katholikon* undertaken by Zahari at the Troyan Monastery in 1847 reflects an awareness of the border cycle in the engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist,* which had served Vitanov as a model a decade earlier. The Akathist imagery at Troyan implies the print of this engraving preserved in the Samokov Archive was the model Zahari used. On the other hand, prints of this engraving surviving in Bulgaria present alternative or additional models potentially known to Zahari and an unrecorded print at the Troyan Monastery itself is particularly relevant.[10] The additional evidence of these two extra examples of influence substantiates the evaluation of the pre-eminent rank of these engravings and underlines the significance to the subject in hand of the surviving prints in the Samokov painters' archive. All but one of the four examples demonstrating the influence of these engravings in painting are found in the work of the Samokov painters, and two of them reflect the role of each of the engravings in the achievement of the most renowned Samokov painter, Zahari.

In this article, I seek to account for the exceptional influence of these two engravings. I examine how the prints in the Samokov painters' archive were used and discuss the idea that their function as prototypes of visual imagery was an integral part of the role assigned to them at their inception.

The evidence of the two influential engravings in the Samokov painters' archive exists in a condition which shows they were used. The prints of these composite engravings survive in fragments of individual scenes loosely dispersed in the archive (Fig. 4a, b).[11] This treatment of prints affects other prints in the archive, found to be exclusively Orthodox prints. This may account for the scholarly neglect of the Orthodox prints in the archive, in which the larger proportion of western prints has dominated attention.[12] Moreover, this method of treating prints is particular to prints with a composite format and these make up almost half the group of Orthodox prints in the Samokov painters' archive – comprising five of the total of eleven identified to date. The evidence of the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving in the Samokov painters' archive is acknowledged but the reconstruction here is the most complete to date.[13] Despite the evident influence of the other engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist* in Bulgarian painting, the existence of fragments of a print in the archive from Samokov is not, to this point, acknowledged in the literature.

One of the two prints of the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving in the Papastratos collection is known merely from one of the surviving border panels and the record of only a

[9] Sofia (HXΓ) Inv. 690. Cf. *National Art Collection Guide to the Crypt,* Sofia 1999, no. 32.

[10] Troyan Monastery museum, recognised in 2004.

[11] Sofia (HXΓ) Theotokos *eleousa tou Kykkou* Inv. II 905–911, II 913–917, II 949, II 954; Theotokos *Akathist* Inv. II 880, 930–942, 944–945; II 1190/59–62.

[12] A. Vasiliev, *op. cit.,* pp. 342–343, 356–358.

[13] Popova, *Зографът...,* 183, note 20; S. Moscova, *Зогафии Захариеви у Филиве,* City Art Gallery, Plovdiv 2002, p. 23. The three extra fragments are II 907, II 905, II 909.
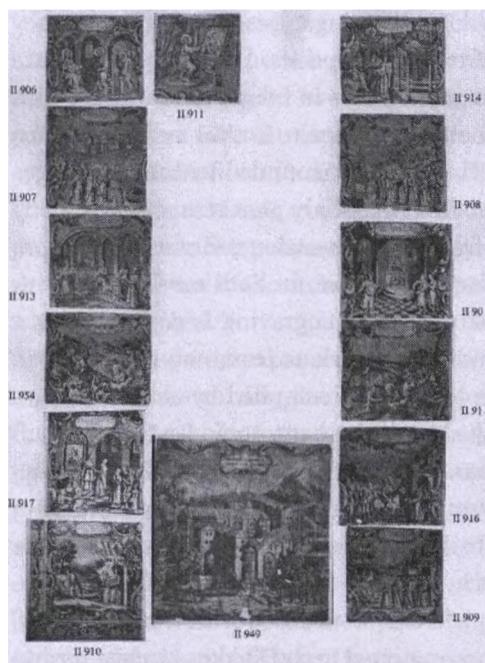
Fig. 4a. Engraving Theotokos *eleousa kykkou*,
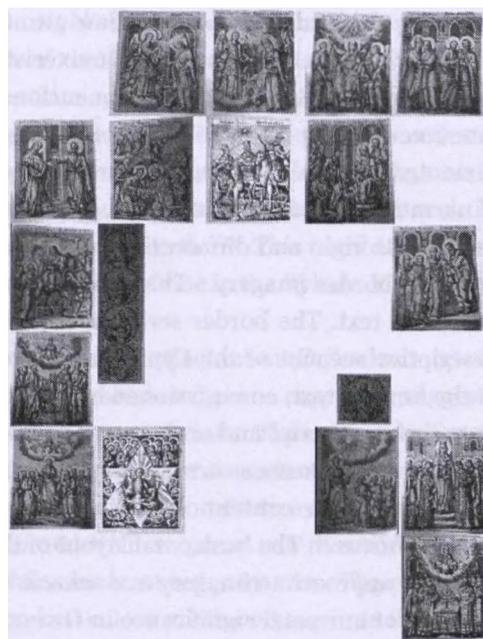1778, Samokov Archive,
reconstruction from fragments

Fig. 4b. Engraving Theotokos *Akathist*,
1819, Samokov Archive,
reconstruction from fragments

fragment of this print shows that that the fragmentary evidence of prints is not exclusive to the Samokov painters' archive.[14] This suggests that cutting up composite prints was a widespread practice.

The issue of painters' use of prints leads to the question of standard models and the evidence that print-makers were also indebted to the engravings in focus attests to the preeminent stature of these engravings. A later copy of the Theotokos *Akathist* engraving survives in what are believed to be the archives of the Karastoyanov family of print-makers.[15] This variant print of the engraving was published in 1836, made by Anthimos Alitzeridis on Athos, and its presence in another archive in Samokov illuminates the idea of common models and universal practices between artisan's workshops. The publishing house of Nicolai Karastoyanov was also in Samokov and historically significant as the first secular press in Bulgaria, active from 1828.[16]

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[14] Papastratos, *Paper Icons...*, cat. no. 539: the entry lists two in the Papastratos Collection, a significant proportion of which was bequeathed in 1993 to the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki.

[15] Papastratos, *Paper Icons...*, cat. no. 126; and *ibidem*, p. 27, note 35.

[16] E. Tomov, *Български Възрожденски щампи*, Sofia 1975, p. 61.

Given the evident impact of these two Orthodox engravings, I assess the factors they have in common to define the characteristics of exemplary prints. Both engravings are on an exceptional scale and the dimensions of nearly a metre in height endow them with monumental proportions.[17] Both engravings adopt the composite format and display the same design of a central panel representing the Theotokos surrounded by smaller images of narrative content. In both cases, the sequence of the subsidiary panels runs horizontally from left to right and differentiates these series from the conventional circular, clockwise cycles of border imagery. The series of subsidiary scenes are, in both cases, closely indebted to text. The border series of the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving is derived from a descriptive account of the Cypriot monastery and its miraculous icon, or *proskynetaria* in the form of text, commissioned by the Kykkos Monastery, compiled by monk Ephraim from the manuscript and oral sources and published in Venice by Antonio Bortoli in 1751.[18] The twenty four scenes surrounding the central panel of the Theotokos *Akathist* engraving closely reflect the content of the twenty four verses of the important liturgical canticle of the *Akathistos*.[19] The horizontal layout of the subsidiary series in these engravings directs a literary approach to imagery and acknowledges in form the type of source. The two subjects are of universal significance in Orthodox spirituality concerned with the Theotokos, one being the cult of the miraculous archetype icon venerated in the Kykkos Monastery and the other the liturgical worship of the *Akathistos kontakion*.

Both engravings have extensive inscriptions recording the respective commissions. The inscription on the engraving of the Theotokos *Kykkos* reads: 'This print with miraculous scenes around it has been made from one of the three venerable icons of the Theotokos and Child painted by Luke the Holy Apostle and now in the monastery of Kykkos in the island of Cyprus as testified by chrysobulls in the monastery issued by the then Komninos emperor [executed] through the efforts and at the expense of the wretched and least of hieromonks Kyr Meletios serving as procurator of this monastery. The composition of all the drawings by Michael of Thessaly son of the late Apostolis [and] the least of painters in the one thousandth and seven hundredth and seventy sixth year since the birth of Christ.'

An inscription in the centre of the outer lower border records the role of another patron: 'Do not forget O Virgin Kyprianos supervisor of the printing and pitiable Archimandrite of Cyprus.'[20]

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[17] Theotokos tou *Kykkou* (II 905 etc.) 93 x 63 cms.; Theotokos *Akathist* (II 880 etc.) 73 x 50 cms.

[18] *Η Περιγραφή της σεβασμίας και βασιλικής Μονής του Κύκκου ήτοι Διήγησις περί της εν Κύπρω αποκομίσεως της θαυματουργικης αγίας Εικόνος της Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου της λεγομένης Κυκκιότισσας (Description of the venerable and royal Monastery of Kykkos or else/that is A Narrative of the transfer in Cyprus of the miraculous holy Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God the so-called Kykkotissa)*, Venice 1751; Ephraim, later Patriarch of Jerusalem [1766–1771] is often referred to as Ephraim the Syrian. Also N. Christodoulou, ed., A. Jakovljević trans., *A Narrative of the Founding of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos and the History of the Miraculous Icon of the Mother of God*, Nicosia, Research Centre of the Kykkos Monstery 1996.

[19] D. Attwater & V. McNabb, *The Akathist Hymn: Ode in honour of the holy... Virgin Mary*, Oxford 1947.

[20] Papastratos, *Paper Icons...*, cat. no. 539.

Accordingly, the engraving of the Theotokou *Kykkou* was commissioned in 1776 from a Greek painter by the abbot and the treasurer of the foremost monastery on Cyprus. It was published in Venice two years later, as the date 1778 is inscribed under the printed frame together with the names of the engravers Innocente Alessandri and Pietro Scatt- aglia. The production of this engraving was carefully monitored, for a print run of 3,000 is documented and twenty of these were hand coloured by two painters.[21] Despite the scale of production, only five prints of this engraving are known to survive.[22] This number includes the mutilated one in the archive of the Samokov painters and one in the Kykkos Monastery, which is coloured.[23]

It is appropriate to pause here to assess the significance of colour on Orthodox engrav- ings. The evidence of applied colour on prints of the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving suggests that colour designated a particular function to monochrome prints. The coloured print at the Kykkos Monastery on Cyprus is one of the few known to survive intact. Another intact print of this engraving is illustrated at the Toplou Monastery on Crete and the published monochrome image suggests it also may be coloured.[24] These prints can therefore be rec- ognised as two of the twenty coloured prints of the documented print run. Their survival intact in monastic collections implies that the applied colour attributed to prints the status of icon and governed their reception and function in that capacity. This hypothesis illu- minates the spiritual function of Orthodox engravings, distributed to Greek monasteries on Mediterranean islands under Ottoman control. Offering an insight into the underesti- mated significance of coloured engravings, the case of colour on the Kykkos Monastery's engraving appears to be a differentiating indicator of status and function.[25] The notion of the role of colour attributing to engravings an iconic status is sustained by the evidence of the invariably monochrome prints handled by painters. The fragments of prints in the

[21] O. Gratziou, 'Μεταμορφοσεις μιας θαυματουργνς Εικονας. Σημειώσεις στις Όψιμες Παραλλαγές της Παναγίας του Κύκκου (Development of a miracle-working icon: notes on the later variants of the Mother of God of Kykkos)', ser. 4, 17, Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας, (1993–1994), p. 323, ftn. 31, from S. K. Perdikis, 'The Description of the holy monastery of Kykko in an engraving of 1778, *Annual of the Research Centre of the Kykkos Monastery*, 1, Nicosia 1990, p. 32, ftn. 4.

[22] Known prints of the Theotokos *Kykkos* engraving two from the fragmentary evidence in the Papas- tratos Collection (Cf. Papastratos, *Paper Icons*..., cat. no. 539); a third fragmented print, the one discussed in the Samokov Archive in Sofia (Cf. Popova, *Зографът*..., p. 183); a fourth at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Cape at Toplou on Crete (CF. T. Provataki, *Χαρακτικά Ελλίνων λαϊκών ςηιουργών 17-19 ος αιώνας Συλλογης Ιεράς Μονής Κυριας ακρωτνριανης (Toplou), Σιτειας Κρητης*, Athens 1993, cat. no. 209); and a fifth at the Kykkos Monastery on Cyprus (Cf. C. Constantinides, *Η Διήγησις της Θαυματουργής εικόνας της Θεότοκου Ελεούσας του Κύκκο* [*The diegesis (narrative) of the miraculous icon of the Theotokos Eleousa of Kykkos according to the Greek Codex, 2313, Vatican*], Nicosia 2002, p. 54).

[23] Constantinides, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

[24] Provataki, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 209.

[25] Papastratos, *Paper Icons*..., p. 21; W. Deluga, 'The influence of Dutch graphic archetypes on icon painting in the Ukraine, 1600–1750,' *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 34 (1996), nos. 1–2, p. 5; idem, 'Views of the Sinai from Leopolis,' *Print Quarterly*, 14 (1997), no. 4, p. 385 for a coloured print of St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

Samokov painters' archive suggest that without the discriminating feature of colour, prints were liable to practical use in secular contexts and vulnerable to damages.

Returning to the second of the influential engravings, the circumstances of the commission of the later engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist* are given in the donor's inscription read in a circular line of text inside the printed frame: 'These joyous and world-saving 24 Oikoi of the Theotokos have been engraved on copper at the expense of the Most Reverend Athonite fathers Kyrioi Stephanos and Neophytos, painters by whom they were delineated for the common weal of the Orthodox in Venice 1819'.[26]

The engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist* is one of five engravings with Athonite subjects the monks Neophytos and Stephanos commissioned in Venice between 1818 and 1820. Personally related with the family name of Skourtaios, the brothers Skourtaios travelled to Venice on behalf of the monastic community on Athos entrusted with the publication of the spiritual writings of an Athonite monk – and evidently also of prints. Amongst the total of five surviving prints of the Theotokos *Akathist* known to Papastratos, one in the Patriarchal collection in Alexandria epitomises the prestigious level of the distribution of these prints. The fragments of the print in the Samokov painters' archive is one of two additional prints encountered in this research, both of which are in Bulgaria. The other is the print at the Troyan Monastery. An inscription visible under the printed frame of the print at Troyan identifies the hitherto unknown engraver of the Theotokos *Akathist* as Giannantonio Zuliani, to whom the Skourtaios brothers entrusted four of the five engravings they commissioned in Venice.

As with the Kykkos Monastery's engraving, the patrons' concern for the circulation of the Theotokos *Akathist* engraving is also documented. In correspondence about religious texts sent by the Skourtaios brothers in 1819 to Greek teachers at a school at Kydonia in Asia Minor, there is reference to an engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist*.[27] There is also in their personal papers the evidence that the Skourtaios brothers supervised a later print-run of their original engravings in Venice in 1834 for distribution on Athos.[28] Not only does this establish the importance of the original commission as exemplary, the despatch of the original Venetian plates to Athos along with the consignment of prints also attests to the function of these images as workshop models. Vitanov's icon derived from the Skourtaios brothers' engraving and Zahari's treatment of the Akathist imagery at Troyan demonstrate the impact of these re-issued prints on the development of imagery in the Balkans. Vitanov's icon is inscribed with the date 1836, two years after these were republished in Venice in

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[26] Papastratos, *Paper Icons...*, cat. no. 122.

[27] *Ibidem.*

[28] G. Golobias, I. Simonopetritis, 'Paper icons: from Venice to Mount Athos', *La Stampa e l'illustrazione del libro greco a Venezia tra il Settecento e l'Ottocento, Atti della Giornata di Studio Convegni 3, Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia*, ed. Ch. Maltezou,Venice 2001, p. 61.

1834, and Zahari's work at Troyan in 1847 reflects the prevalence of this imagery, indebted to the collective body of original prints and reprints circulating in Bulgaria.[29]

In the case of these two composite engravings of the Theotokos, the attention given to documenting the donors, their official status and religious credentials reflects the significance of these engravings as products of institutional patronage concerned with the fundamental religious tenets of the Orthodox Church. The multilingual inscriptions on the Skourtaios brothers' engraving of the Akathist indicate the intended global dimension of its role addressing the diverse ethnic communities of the Orthodox spiritual realm. There are inscriptions in Greek, Cyrillic and Karaman, the Greek script used by the Turkish speaking Christian Karamanli communities of Asia Minor. In addition, an inscription in Italian observed under the printed frame of the print in the Troyan Monastery indicates that the engraving also addressed the Catholics of the Roman church: 'Inno detto da Greci Artiste divini Stanze in opera della Beata Vergine', (Hymn known by Greek artists as *The sacred salutations in honour of the Blessed Virgin*). However peripherally located, this phrase explicitly communicates to the Latin viewer the role of the Orthodox painter visualising liturgical text.

The universal scope envisaged in the donors' inscriptions enhances the designated exemplary role of the engravings. In celebrating a renowned miraculous icon, the Kykkos Monastery's engraving promotes a collective focus of Orthodox spirituality and the distribution of the prints of the Skourtaios brothers' engraving was clearly intended to cultivate common liturgical piety.

In addition, the Venetian manufacture of both engravings hints at the superior rank of these images amongst prints. The publication of the earlier of the two engravings in Venice is understandable, given the underdeveloped printing industry in the Orthodox domain in third quarter of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, the Venetian commission of the later engraving, published in 1819 when printing in monastic workshops on Athos was considerably well established, implies a conscious discernment for production in Venice, from which to infer the prestige associated with Venetian manufacture. The exceptional size of both engravings no doubt exploited the technical skills of Venetian expertise and the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving is made up of four sections, struck from separate plates.

The enduring influence of the two composite engravings substantiates the notion of status perceived in Orthodox prints by virtue of their production in Venice. The four examples of the influence of these two engravings in painting measure the pace of influence. Christo Dimitrov's debt in the murals at Rila in 1799 to the print of the Theotokos *Kykkos* was a decade after publication of the engraving. Vitanov's debt to the Akathist engraving was almost two decades after the original engraving was published and merely two years

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[29]   In Russia, a variant of the Theotokos *Akathist* engraving edited by V. V. Ribenzov and technically supervised by A. P. Kopilov was published in Moscow in 1847; O. R Khromov, N. Korneeva, *Prints of the Greek World in Moscow Collections*, Moscow 1997, cat. no. 35.

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after the engraving was reprinted in 1834 in Venice and despatched to Athos. Zahari's mural scheme representing the Akathist Hymn at Troyan in 1847 measures his debt to the original prints known to him in an interval of nearly three decades, a debt no doubt prompted by a heightened awareness of the Venetian engraving due to the reprints circulating a decade after they were republished. Zahari's acknowledgement of the Theotokos *Kykkou* engraving in the panel icon inscribed 1830 demonstrates his use of a print over fifty years old.

The notion of the engravings of the Theotokos *Kykkos* and Theotokos *Akathist* as exemplary models is also derived from the original approach to iconography. Both engravings transform the iconography of the Theotokos into images of spiritual reality and actualise aspects of piety. They achieve this by reforming traditional conventions of imagery and by formulating new religious images, most conspicuously in the treatment of narrative.

An inventive approach to religious imagery is seen in the treatment of the *kykkotissa* iconography displayed in the central panel of the Kykkos Monastery's engraving. The subject of scholar's attention, the central panel represents the Theotokos as purported to exist on the cult icon itself with the inscribed epithet *eleousa tou Kikkou* (*Eleousa of Kykkos*) explicitly identifying the icon as the subject.[30] The border panels representing episodes associated with the cult icon substantiate the material properties of the central panel's subject, by depicting the icon in an objective historical perspective. This cycle of imagery is unprecedented and inaugurates a narrative dimension to the iconography of the *kykkotissa*.

The source for Michael of Thessaly's extended narrative of Luke painting the Theotokos is unknown. There is indistinct reference to a visual precedent in Ephraim's *proskynetaria,* when he acknowledges a debt for the narrative of Luke the painter to a source in the Kykkos Monastery's *katholikon* and by inference a visual model.[31] Such a model is not found today, presumably lost in one of the fires ravaging the monastery repeatedly in 1365, 1542, 1751 (and 1813). It was unknown to Ephraim if it was damaged or destroyed prior to the devastating fire of 1751, the year his *proskynetaria* was published. As for the painter responsible for the extended cycle in the Kykkos Monastery's engraving, Michael's awareness of such a precedent was derivative if indebted to Ephraim's text. Michael from Thessaly was active in Cyprus painting icons at the monastery, amongst other commissions, from 1774–1799.[32] Accordingly, the *katholikon* Michael knew was after the fire of 1751, and as rebuilt in 1785.[33]

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[30] Gratziou , *op. cit.*, p. 323; A. Weyl-Carr, 'Reflections on the life of an icon: the Eleousa of Kykkos,' *Annual of the Research Centre of the Kykkos Monastery,* 6, Nicosia 2004, p. 122.

[31] Gratziou, *op. cit.*, p. 317, note 7; pp. 318–319, note 15.

[32] Papastratos, *Paper Icons ...*, cat. no. 539.

[33] Gratziou, *op. cit.*, p. 317, note 4.

The new narrative images of the monastery and its cult icon nevertheless hint at Michael's awareness of Ephraim's text, as the compositions reflect the concern for histori-cal veracity characterising Ephraim's account (Fig. 1a).[34] Individual scenes depict specific episodes, starting with the panel in the upper right corner dealing with the imperial gift of the archetype icon by the emperor Alexios I Comnenos (1081–1118) and founder of the monastery. The sequence then depicts the voyage of the icon by sea from Byzantium, its reception on Cyprus and the joyous procession of the icon to the monastery. The next six scenes treat miracles of healing and rescue attributed to the cult icon and the narrative concludes with the miraculous survival of the icon from destruction by the hazardous fires, in which other priceless possessions were lost including the chrysobull and typikon. The penultimate scenes no doubt allude to the then most recent conflagration at the monastery, the fire in 1751, causing devastation which is likely to have motivated the monastery's com-missions of Ephraim's *proskynetaria* and of its visual counterpart Michael's engraving, as vehicles of a campaign to solicit alms.

The development of narrative characterising the innovative approach to imagery in the Kykkos Monastery's engraving bears also on the treatment of the iconography of St. Luke. A notable feature introduced into the imagery of the Theotokos from the mid-18th century visualising the icon as a product of painting, the image of St. Luke typically consists of the figure of Luke holding a paint brush and placed in smaller scale close to the Theotokos.[35] In the Kykkos Monastery's engraving, the depiction of Luke the painter is re-conceived and expanded into a narrative of the apocryphal account of the evangelist's role as painter. The figure of Luke with a paint brush is removed from the conventional position close to the Theotokos in the central panel and relocated to the border panels, where it features in three consecutive scenes representing the successive episodes of the narrative. These depict the archangel's annunciation to Luke, Luke making the images and Luke presenting the images to the Theotokos. As the most extensive treatment of Luke creating archetype icons, this triptych sequence enhances the objective perception of the monastery's cult icon, so well termed by scholars as the apotheosis of the icon.[36] Moreover, the position of this triptych sequence at the beginning of the border cycle imparts to it the role of sanctioning the in-novative imagery of the historical narrative which then follows.[37]

Complementing the function of imagery visualising St. Luke at work in certifying inno-vation, the issue of painters and their models is articulated in the donors' inscription of the Kykkos Monastery's engraving. The credentials of the painter responsible for the composi-tion are specified in his personal identity, given as Michael from the Greek mainland, and in his professional identity as the son of Apostolis, by inference an icon-painter. The role of

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[34] Constantinides, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

[35] Gratziou, *op. cit.*, pp. 324–325.

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 323; A. Weyl-Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

[37] Weyl-Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–122.

the painter is again directly addressed in the donor's inscription of the Skourtaios brothers' engraving of the Theotokos *Akathist*. As well as commemorating their role as donors, the Skourtaios brothers' role as painters in the commission is explicitly stated in the clause attributing the composition of the engraving to them, even though their role as painters was implicit in their identity as monks, painting being an intrinsic part of a monk's tasks.

As shown in Michael's treatment of the *kykkotissa* in the Kykkos Monastery's engraving, the treatment of the Akathist imagery in the Skourtaios brothers' engraving also demonstrates a revisionist approach to Orthodox iconography, reinterpreting the long and rich tradition of Akathist imagery (Fig. 1).[38] The cycle depicts the content of each of the twenty four verses of the Akathist hymn structured in two equal sections. The first twelve verses, and corresponding scenes in the engraving, are concerned with the narrative of the Incarnation and the remaining twelve compositions represent theological implications of the Incarnation in themes of divine revelation. The approach to imagery in the cycle of the engraving reflects the representation of the Akathist as known in painters' manuals, having remarkable similarities to the treatment prescribed in Dionysius of Fourna's *hermeneia*.[39] This implies the Skourtaios brothers' debt to this text for their Venetian commission and enlarges on the significance of *hermeneiai* in developing iconography. The renown of the Skourtaios brothers' engraving suggests their use of Dionysius' text, circulating only in manuscript at the time, enhanced the exemplary stature of the prints produced from it.

At the same time, the Skourtaios brothers' engraving also demonstrates the scope for independent interpretation of the inherited tradition and topical invention. The composition of the 8th scene, representing the Journey of the Magi, reforms the standard iconography of the mounted Magi, conventionally represented in procession through moun-tainous terrain. The Magi are located on level ground and grouped around a central axis provided by the star placed centrally above them (Fig. 5a). Moreover, the Magi are depicted on prancing horses strongly reminiscent of the four Horses of St. Mark's (Fig. 5b). The engraving was pub-lished four years after the equestrian sculptures were restored to Venice in December 1815, after their removal in 1808 as trophies of conquest in the Napoleonic wars and controversial display on the Arche du Carrousel in Paris.[40] It is not unreasonable to assume that in the climate of the heightened awareness of Venice's acclaimed *palladia,* these sculptures were potent images to patrons and craftsmen alike. The demeanour of the group in the Skourtaios brothers' engraving and the prominent breastplates are features distinguishing the plates of the sculptures by Anton Maria di Gerolamo Zanetti & Anton Maria Alessandro Zanetti

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[38] T. Velmans, 'Une illustration inédite de l'Acathiste et l'iconographie des hymnes liturgiques à Byzance,' *Cahiers Archéologiques,* 22 (1972) pp. 131–165; J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, 'L'illustration de la première partie de l'hymne Akathiste et sa relation avec les mosaics de la Kariye Djami,' *Byzantion,* 54 (1984) pp. 648–702; A. Pätzold, *Der Akathistos-Hymnos. Die Bilderzyklen in der byzantinischen Wandmalerei des 14 Jahrhundert,* Stuttgart 1989.

[39] P. Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fourna,* Saggitarius Press 1978, pp. 51–52.

[40] C. Forman, *The Horses of St. Mark's,* London 2005, pp. 211–222.

published in Venice in 1740 (Fig. 5c).[41] This credits the Zanettis' series of engravings of Greek & Roman sculpture in Venice with a contribution in promoting the imagery of these horses.

A more fundamentally significant innovation in the Skourtaios brothers' treatment of Akathist imagery is in the composition of the scene representing the 24th verse. The composition departs from Dionysius' text and introduces an altar on which is a candelabrum with lit candles. This invented image actualises the performance of Paleologian liturgical ritual by representing the icon of the Theotokos illuminated by candles before which the Akathist is sung.[42]

As a final observation on the progressive aspects of imagery in these exemplary engravings, the narrative coherence of the subsidiary images is enhanced by a stylistic consistency. The repeated use of certain set-

Fig. 5a. Engraving Theotokos *Akathist*, 1819: detail of border scene representing 8th verse of Akathist, Journey of the Magi

tings orchestrates a modular regularity of standard compositions harmonising images of separate episodes often lacking consecutive narrative coherence. The formal and thematic integration of these images endows the subsidiary scenes of composite pints with autonomy to account for the interchangeable function of the central panel and subsidiary images of the two engravings displayed in Vitanov's icon of the Theotokos *Kykkotissa Akathist*. The independent roles of different parts of imagery can be recognised as a consequence of the development of narrative, expanding the scholarly notion of a hierarchy of imagery objectivising the icon.

A compelling factor for the case for the two Orthodox engravings designed as prototypes of innovative imagery is their reception by painters. Firstly, painters' acknowledgement of them as prototypes helps to account for the predominant influence of certain Orthodox engravings, and epitomised by these two. The characteristic division of prints into fragments of individual scenes shows the Samokov painters' organised method for handling these model prints. This systematic treatment demonstrates a methodical selection of pictorial compositions for, by inference, distribution of standard models in a workshop context. Fur-

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[41] *Ibidem*, pp. 172–173.

[42] Attwater, V. McNabb, *op. cit.*, notes; B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium*, Pensylvania 2006, p. 186.

Fig. 5b. The Horses of St. Mark's, Basilica Museum, Venice

Fig. 5c. From A.-M. G. Zanetti & A.-M. Zanetti series of engravings, Venice 1740

ther to this, the invariable loss of the central panel of composite prints which are divided up points to the segregation of parts and substantiates the academic notion of hierarchy. Zahari's acknowledgement of the central panel of the Kykkos Monastery's engraving in his icon of 1830 indicates, however, that central panels nonetheless functioned as painters' models but in different circumstances.

Zahari's interpretation of the central panel of the Kykkos Monastery's engraving demonstrates his perception of the model to sanction innovation in his icon. The addition of the figures of two military saints close to the Theotokos but on a smaller scale introduces a political dimension to the spiritual iconography, the saints George and Demetrius being foremost Slavonic saints typically represented as a pair (Fig. 3b). The transformation of the model image into an icon engaging with the topical issues of the period of national revival in Bulgaria illustrates the methods taken by Zahari to promote national consciousness in imagery and the scope of the increasingly interpretative role scholars perceive in the role of the painter.[43]

Earlier, Zahari's father's use of the border panels of the same engraving demonstrates an alternative regard for the model authorising innovation (Fig. 2). The three scenes on the theme of Luke painting icons copied by Christo Dimitrov from the engraving in his mural scheme at Rila are the first three panels in a register of four. The fourth panel at Rila adds an extra composition to the sequence with a thematically unrelated subject. It represents an episode in the narrative of the local saint, the hermit Ivan from Rila, concerned with the death of his nephew from snake bite. This image is unprecedented in the iconography of Ivan Rilski and its juxtaposition at Rila with the sequence copied from the Kykkos Monastery's engraving shows Christo Dimitrov's regard for the imagery of Luke to authorise the

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[43] Popova, *Реинтерпретации...*, p. 33; Weyl-Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

invention of iconography for the local saint. The interpretation of the model print at Rila not only demonstrates the Bulgarian painter copying the formal elements of the model but also imitating the function of imagery in the model print, namely the role attributed to the triptych narrative actualising Luke painting icons in validating the creation of images. These interpretations of the painters' printed model attests to the successful function of Orthodox engravings as examples of reform in Orthodox spiritual imagery from the period of the Enlightenment and after.

In conclusion, this discussion has identified the common features of two influential engravings to define the characteristics of exemplary engravings and has shown how the model role is integral to the commission. The status attributed to these engravings by means of their Venetian production, repeated distribution and extensive circulation is also explained. This sequence of production in a western centre and despatch to Orthodox monasteries common to both engravings is consistent with an existing pattern observed in prints published at the end of the 17th century in Leopolis (Lwów, Lemberg, currently L'viv in the Ukraine) commissioned for the Orthodox community in the east, and focussing on St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.[44] Moreover, the practice of colouring prints is shown to designate the spiritual function of Orthodox engravings to enhance their exemplary stature.

As exemplary images, the two engravings discussed promote innovative approaches to Orthodox religious imagery, reconciling iconography with narrative tending towards verisimilitude by resort to the composite format enabling clear demarcation of types of imagery. I have shown how extended narrative imagery may be subsidiary in size to the central panel but equal in function of the intended role of model. Promoting sources in text and a literary reception of imagery, the composite engravings offer versatile templates of validated innovative imagery. I discussed how the engravings exemplify an innovative approach to imagery and how their role as visual prototypes is explicit in the actualisation of painting and articulated in the role of painters addressed.

Lastly, I showed in the painters' achievement how their reception of these Orthodox engravings describes their regard for them as visual prototypes of innovation and invention. The division of composite prints characteristic of this archive illuminates a system of handling prints particular to the painters in Samokov and prompts the question of how far this was a universal workshop method. The material evidence of Orthodox prints in this painters' archive is an underestimated facet of the artistic achievement of painters in Samokov and of the rank commanded by painters from this family. More significantly, this article has illuminated the important role of Orthodox prints in icon-painters' working practice, clearly the most systematically used prints in this archive.

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44 Deluga, 'Views of the Sinai from Leopolis'..., pp. 383, 389.