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Series Byzantina 8, 133-158

2010

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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Defining the Byzantine Saint – – Creating a Message in Orthodox Art

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Literary evidence shows that the question of the resemblance between the icon and the prototype was a crucial issue for Byzantine artists. The ability to recognize the saint portrayed is often emphasized in hagiographical texts. Already in the Early Byzantine period a topos relating to this similarity appears in legends such as *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, where the saint incognito saves different people, who later recognize him as their rescuer on his icon¹. After Iconoclasm the accuracy of the image is often confirmed by a story about a miraculous appearance of the saint to the founder or to the painter. Alexander Kazhdan and Henry Maguire have collected numerous ninth- and tenth-century legends of this kind. According to one of them, *Vita* of Irene, the abbess of Chrysobalanton, Emperor Basil I had a dream of this saint. Envoys sent by him to the monastery brought an icon that corresponded to her appearance in the vision. Another story told in the *Description the Translation of the Relics of St. Theodora of Thessaloniki* records that a girl had a vision of two ladies, one of whom she recognized as Theodora, since the woman resembled a myrrh-gushing icon. Saints Theodore Teron, Nikon Metanoieite and Maria the Younger appear in a dream to the painters to allow them to paint their physiognomies properly.² The idea of the conjunction between the person and the image became so strong that emperor's confes-

¹ *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* I.8, 10, 15; II.6 (ed. P. Lemerle, p. 102, 115, 162, 239); CORMACK 1985, 67, 70, 74; MAGUIRE 1996, 42–43. As similar examples one can point out e.g.: the story about a saint liberating a monk recognized by the latter as familiar to him from the icon of St. Plato of Ancyra (see ST. NILUS OF ANCYRA, *Epistula* IV.62 [*Patrologia graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 79, col. 580–81]; MANSI, vol. 13, 31–33; LADNER 1953, 4; on authenticity of the letter see CAMERON 1976, 129–31; CAMERON 1976a, 189) and a seventh-century miracle, in which a young girl recognized St. Artemios due to his physical resemblance to an icon exposed in a church, see *Miracles of St. Artemios* XXXIV (ed. Crisafulli/Nesbitt, p. 180); JAMES 2003, 161.

² KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, 4–8; MAGUIRE 1996, 12–15, 19, 43–44, fig. 6.

sor Gregory Melissenos, a member of the Greek delegation to the Ferrara-Florence Council (1438), when he entered a Latin church, was not able to recognize any saints and refused to revere them. He did not even revere Christ himself because he *did not know in what terms he was inscribed*.³

Although written evidence proves that the Byzantines did not have any trouble in recognizing their saints⁴, the schematic way of depiction is confusing for modern scholars.⁵ In order to understand the divergence between written testimonies and surviving artefacts, several theories have been suggested. One of them states that the Byzantines, being unfamiliar with either the illusionistic style of Renaissance art or with photography, had lower expectations than modern viewers. The second explanation is similar to the first. According to it, the Byzantines were used to a more restricted semantic field and therefore more alert to small distinctions and iconographical nuances. Where a present-day viewer sees only uniformity and a lack of differentiation, the Byzantine viewer could see variety.⁶

In the light of the research conducted so far, there is no controversy about the fact that the principal task of the Byzantine artist was to depict a specific saint in such manner as to leave no doubt about his identity. In this text, I would like to revert to the most fundamental layer of interpretation and to scrutinize the methods used by the artist to achieve this aim. Therefore, I would like to focus on the simplest representations of motionless saints in a frontal attitude, depicted in half- or full figure. This type of image, popular since the beginning of Christian art, was used to stress the presence of the model rather than to narrate. Devoid of any redundant detail, it confronted the artist with the challenge to create a kind of saint's "portrait" recognizable to the beholder.

In order to analyse this problem, we should consider four significant elements: 1) inscription, 2) physiognomy, 3) attire and 4) the accompanying attribute.

Accompanying Inscription

The inscription is the most elementary method to denote the subject of a picture. Although words belong to a language different from that of images, the pictorial character of writing makes them easily applicable to visual representations. Explanatory inscriptions accompanying figures and clarifying the depicted scene were common in Hellenic painting, long before

³ A story reported in *Vera historia* by Patriarchal dignitary Sylvester Syropoulos, see MANGO 1972, 254. NELSON 2007, 102 interprets the expression *term* as related to the Greek inscription IC XC – the lack of which had to be noted by a pious orthodox priest.

⁴ DAGRON 1979, 144–49; GRIGG 1987, 3–4; KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, 5; MAGUIRE 1996, 15–16.

⁵ The problem is well illustrated by numerous unrecognized saints, especially when explanatory inscriptions were not preserved on damaged murals, see. e.g. GERSTEL 1998, 92, 99–100, and catalogue on p. 104–11.

⁶ Problem referred to by KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, 7; MAGUIRE 1996, 42. DAGRON 1991, 26 compares the practice of using general features on Byzantine icons with the police identikit technique.

Christianity. Since Dipylon inscription and Nestor cup found in Pithekoussai they are frequent on Greek vases and Roman floor mosaics. One example of the latter would be the Judgement of Paris in the villa in Kos, another the famous pavement showing the Birth of Dionysus in the villa in Nea Paphos, Cyprus or on the Judgement of Nereids in the Apamea Museum.⁷

In his monumental monograph on the iconography of Byzantine saints, Henry Maguire has put forward the hypothesis that – contrary to the mid-Byzantine art – the representation of the saint was rarely accompanied by explanatory inscriptions during the pre-iconoclastic period. According to Maguire, inscriptions became a standard practice only after the period of Iconoclasm.⁸ He recently extended this hypothesis, arguing that the reason for this intentional omission was the wish to call upon more than one précised heavenly protector against demons, especially in the case of private monuments.⁹

Although Maguire's theory sounds interesting, it nevertheless needs further study, and the analysis of the phenomena very often contradicts his statements, as Karen Boston has recently remarked.¹⁰ In Early Christian art, the number of inscriptions is limited, but today it is difficult to estimate whether this is the sign of their complete absence or rather the result of damage to the paintings' surface. Nevertheless, the surviving examples confirm that inscriptions were used for explanatory purposes. Belonging to the final stage of the process of the production of painted panels, inscriptions were particularly fragile and could easily be destroyed over the centuries. Therefore, they mostly survive in monumental art: for example, in the mosaics in the apse of the St. Catherine Monastery at Mt. Sinai, frescoes in Pharas cathedral and Bawit monastery chapels, Roman churches: San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, Santi Cosma e Damiano, Santo Stefano Rotondo, Santa Agnese, Santa Maria Antiqua, and in the chapel of San Marco (ninth century), in the Basilica Euphrasiana in Poreč, Panagia Kanakaria in Lythrangomi and Panagia Angeloktistos in Kiti on Cyprus, as well as in some churches in Ravenna¹¹ (fig. 1). However, we can give more examples of figures which can be identified by a text written on the artefact: Early Christian murals (ever since the catacomb

⁷ LEADER-NEWBY 2007, 180–81, fig. 7.1; OSBORNE, PAPPAS 2007. Whole volume containing these two essays is worth recalling as an excellent study devoted to the relationship between the image and the inscription in antiquity. Numerous examples of explanatory inscriptions written in vernacular languages (Greek, Latin, Syriac and Hebrew) on Roman pavements are given in e.g. DUNBABIN 1999, figs. 36, 44–45, 116, 118, 153–55, 174–77, 182–84, 194–95, 203, 212–14, 227–31, 240, 262, 285, 311, 313, 316 and colour pl. 25, 31, 34–35.

⁸ MAGUIRE 1996, 100–45.

⁹ MAGUIRE 2007, 139–45. The author makes an exception for official portraits like the votive mosaic of St. Demetrius on the north face of the north pier at his basilica in Thessaloniki.

¹⁰ BOSTON 2003, 38; on *nomina sacra* as an element of the iconography of Christ and the Holy Virgin in Byzantium cf. also NELSON 2007, 100–07.

¹¹ WEITZMANN 1966a; WEITZMANN 1990, figs. 1–7, 12–19, SOPHOCLEOUS 1994, figs. 2–3; DEICHMANN 1969, 295–99, 307–08, 334, 340, figs. 254, 257–60, 283, 289; TERRY, MAGUIRE, 2007, vol. 1, 117–21, 142–44, 177–78, vol. 2, figs. 2, 22–23, 29, 39, 67, 70–72, 74, *Faras*, 76, 84–85, 97, 187, 189–90, 248–49, 253, 256, 259, 261–62, 282–84, 286; BRANDERNBURG 2005, figs. 125–26, 134, 140–41, 144, 150–51; MAGUIRE 2007, 146–49; BOSTON 2003, 38–41.

paintings, e.g. the Virgin with the Child in the Coemeterium Maius, and Christ with SS. Peter and Paul and the Saints in the catacomb of Santi Pietro e Marcellino);¹² sixth century Greek and Egyptian icons, like Abbot Menas with Christ (now in the Louvre), Abbot Abraham (now in Berlin, Staatliche Museen), the *Antiquus Dierum* in a mandorla inscribed as Emmanuel, St. Basil and St. Theodore, prophet Elias, St. Athanasios and St. Basil (all from the Sinai Monastery);¹³ as well as minor objects, such as amulets with King Solomon or St. Sisinius, or ceramic icons discovered in Vinica (Macedonia) and dated before 711 AD (fig. 2).¹⁴ On the other hand, there are examples of post-iconoclastic works without (like in the case of the mosaic over the Imperial Doors in the Hagia Sophia, Constantinople)¹⁵ or with damaged inscriptions (like the frescoes in the St. Pantaleimon church at Nerezi).

The custom of identifying representations by means of an inscription intensified after 843 AD,¹⁶ but the above-mentioned earlier examples seem to prove the continuity between ancient and Byzantine art. Statistically, inscribed works of art significantly grew in number in the mid-Byzantine period. For mostly literate Greek society this was the most secure way to establish a connection between a “portrait” and the specified saint, or even to give depicted person a hallmark of sanctity.¹⁷ The text alone, though, did not suffice to create a relation of similarity between the icon and the proto-

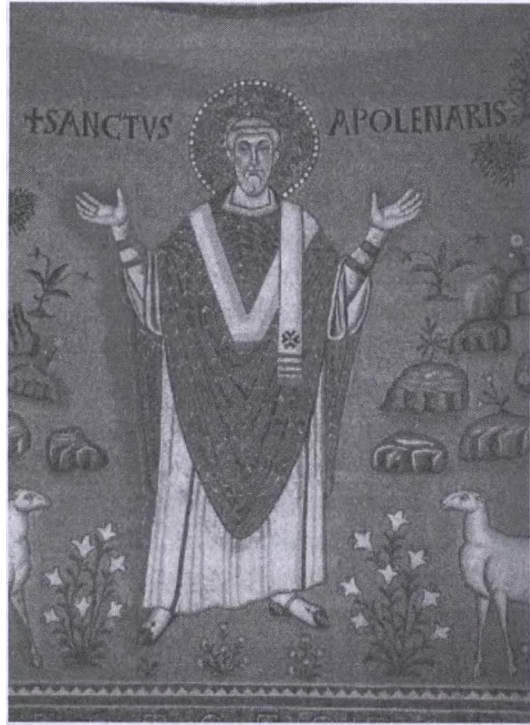


Fig. 1. Bishop Appollinare, mosaic in the apse of San Appollinare in Classe, Ravenna (Photo: Author)

¹² FIOCCHI NICOLAI, BISCONTI, MAZZOLENI 2002, figs. 144, 148.

¹³ KNIPP, fig. 18; POPOVA 2005, 46; figs. 6–7; WEITZMANN 1976, cat. B13, B16–B17, B24.

¹⁴ WALTER 1990; WALTER 1994; MAGUIRE 1996, 120–23, fig. 102, 106–07; BALABANOV, KRSTEVSKI 1993, cat. 44–68, 81–83.

¹⁵ This exception discusses BOSTON 2003, 46–47.

¹⁶ Greek inscriptions in the interior of St. Sophia in Kiev (eleventh century) can be mentioned as an example, see BELECKIJ 1960.

¹⁷ BARBER 2003, 28 quotes as an example story from the *Life of Symeon the New Theologian*. It tells about Symeon's efforts to recognise his spiritual father, Symeon Eulabes as a saint. Eventually petition was rejected, and an icon that was discussed during proceedings was damaged. One of the members of the Holy Synod, a *synkellos* Stephen of Nikomedia erased half of inscription that named the saint, and then returned desecrated object to Symeon the New Theologian.

type. In case of controversy, the text with the saint's name was, of course, always decisive. Nevertheless, artists had to create a more complicated system for the identification of saints without the help of words. In order to achieve this, they combined particular features of the saint's face and costume.

Physiognomic Features

In the late antique Rome, the physical appearance used to identify or to describe a particular person (*eikonismos*), and to create the collective imagination (*phantasia*) necessary to recognize visual features of the official images, was an important element of social life. The resemblance of the emperor's portrait to the real ruler granted the validity of the court sentence and the value of the coin, whereas a description of physiognomy could be helpful to identify a thief or fugitive slave¹⁸.

Hagiographical texts are, however, not very useful for the study of the physical appearance of Byzantine saints. Their faces are usually described in a conventional way and without detail. They are full of beauty, bright, sending out rays, and their cheeks are just blooming with down¹⁹. Descriptions of monks and Church Fathers stress disembodiment rather than physical appearance²⁰. The language of art, which aimed at precision, thus had to devise its own system. Pursuing the "representation" rather than the "imitation", Byzantine artists used a limited range of forms. Within these stylistic norms they changed the physical appearance by modelling the shape of the head and the outline of the cheeks. They used lighter or darker pigments to achieve different skin tones. A wider colour and variety of form was possible in depicting hair and beard. They could be dark, red or white, long or short, whereas the absence of beard and



Fig. 2. St. Theodore on horseback, ceramic icon, Vinica, before 711 (Photo: Author)

¹⁸ For the meaning of *phantasia* on the basis of Neoplatonist philosophy and *Souda* definitions see JAMES 2003, 60–62, 65 and note 8. For *eikonismos* see DAGRON 1991, 25–27; DAGRON 1994, 140. For the idea of the identity of the Emperor and his likeness in late antique theory and the use of this concept to explain Christ as the identical image of God the Father in writings of early Christian Fathers, cf. LADNER 1953, 3, 8, 18–22.

¹⁹ Physical beauty created by a painter that is in opposition to true virtue is criticized for example by GREGORY OF NYSSA in his homily *De hominis opificio* 5 (*Patrologia graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 44, col. 137A–B); see also KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, 1–2.

²⁰ MANUEL PHILES *Carmina*, LXXI–LXXII, (ed. E. Miller, vol. 1, p. 33); BROWNING 1963, 298, [No. 12] and examples further given by MAGUIRE 1990, 80–81; MAGUIRE 1996, 48–64, 78–80; KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, p. 2–3.

moustache was meant to suggest young age. This method allowed the creation of a very limited number of face-types. This is confirmed by monotonous descriptions in iconographic manuals and eikonismos collections (by Ulpian the Roman, dated to the ninth or tenth century, and by post-Byzantine *Hermeneia*)²¹.

The first attempts to define the physiognomy in these terms can be observed already in the Early Christian period, for example in the iconography of prominent Apostles Peter and Paul. Descriptions of their physical features appeared comparatively early²², but even earlier, they had been depicted in accordance with fixed types on the paintings in the catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus in Rome, on sarcophagi reliefs (such as the scenes of *Traditio Legis* and *Traditio clavis*) and on other minor objects²³. The Apostle Peter is represented with short white hair and a broad beard, while Paul is a bald man with a long pointed beard and black hair.

In the sixth century, the newly created “portrait” of St. Demetrius was used to establish his cult in Thessaloniki more firmly. The martyr’s relics had been abandoned in Sirmium. The local clergy spent some effort to compensate for this abandonment by the creation of a strong cult centre in the new bishopric seat. Thus they made a contribution not only to the new hagiography of Demetrius but also to his portrait in numerous intercessional compositions that covered the walls of his new sanctuary²⁴. Characteristic physiognomies of other popular saints, e.g. Theodore, George or Sergius and Bacchus, seem to have originated in the same period. Ernst Kitzinger’s hypothesis that in the late sixth century the saint’s image lost its portrait character in favour of an iconic linear layout seems to be based partly on a stylistic and not on an iconographical analysis²⁵. Nonetheless, the iconoclastic break caused numerous discontinuities within the “portrait” tradition.

At some point, possibly because they fell into oblivion, old formulas were abandoned in favour of newly created ones. An example of the change in physiognomy can be observed in representations of St. Menas of Egypt (fig. 3). This martyr was widely venerated and had appeared from the fifth century as a young beardless soldier wearing a breastplate

²¹ For the reconstruction of the earliest version of the text of Ulpian see WINKELMANN 1990, 109–13 (in German) and 114–27 (in Greek); and DAGRON 1994, 140–42 (in French); *Hermeneia*, tr. Hetherington, 52–63, 70–81).

²² *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, 3 (ed. Lipsius & Bonnet, vol. 1, p. 237) give a description of St. Paul as *a man of a small stature with meeting eyebrows, bald [or shaved] head, bow-legged, strongly built, hollow-eyed, with a large crooked nose*. The physical appearance of both apostles is described in MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 10. 35–37 (ed. Thurn, 193–194); see also: GRANT 1982; DAGRON 1991, 25–26; DAGRON 1994, 138–40.

²³ FIOCCINI NICOLAI, BISCONTI, MAZZOLENI 2002, fig. 144; *Pietro e Paolo*, cat. 47–54, 78, 80–82 (sarcophagi); 41, 55, 64, 73 (ivory); 44, 58–59, 74, 76–77 (minor bronze sculpture); 44, 84–90, 93–94 (gold-glass medallions); cf. also exceptions with beardless young physiognomies on gold-glass bottoms, *ibidem*, cat. 91–92.

²⁴ VICKERS 1974, 348; CORMACK 1985, 51–60, 86–94, figs. 14, 18–19, 22–23, 27–31; WALTER 2003, 69–76.

²⁵ KITZINGER 1954; KITZINGER 1955, 145; KITZINGER 1958, 45.

and a chlamys on various artefacts, such as pilgrim's ampoules²⁶. However, beginning with the tenth century, he is portrayed without exception as a middle-aged man with a white, curled beard and a moustache (fig. 4). His attire also changed to include a tunic and a chlamys with a *tablion*, which were typical for civilian officers. Interestingly, it was about the same time that the representation of another St. Menas – a Constantinopolitan (or Athenian) senator called Kallikelados (*Well speaking*) – must have originated. His portrait does not differ from the new image of the Egyptian saint²⁷.

The evolution of the portrait of John Chrysostom presents a more complex problem. The case was studied in detail by Otto Demus. A comparatively young man with an oval face fringed with a sparse beard, depicted on seventh and eighth century frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua, was replaced by a man of dark skin and short dark hair in the ninth century, and subsequently, by a more ascetic type – with pallid and withered cheeks, pointed chin and a short, two-pronged beard. The latter type was developed by the beginning of the eleventh century at the latest. It reveals numerous similarities to the physiognomy of the prophet Jonah and to that of St. Luke. As the iconography of the frequently portrayed Evangelist was developed as late as the ninth century, its influence on the appearance of John Chrysostom is disputable. Demus does not exclude the possibility of a reversed influence or the existence of a pattern associated with yet another image of the ascetic saint²⁸. It seems, though, that there is another possibility to be considered, namely the adjustment of John's physical appearance to his ascetic character, which was well known from written sources²⁹.

A similar adjustment can be noticed in the physiognomies of SS. Cosma and Damianos. Two independent traditions of the twins' portrait existed in the sixth century. The mosaic in the northern apse of the Basilica Euphrasiana (Poreč), executed by technically advanced artists after 553 AD, shows young men with pale faces and barely visible beards³⁰. A different type was used in the mosaic of the main apse in the church dedicated to these saints in Rome, founded in 530 AD by Pope Felix IV³¹, and in the sixth- or seventh-century fresco from the villa in Wadi Garga near Asyût (now in the British Museum)³². Here, the brothers are depicted as elderly men with long dark beards and olive carnations indicating their

²⁶ About the cult, iconography and translation of the relics of St. Menas the Egyptian see KISS 1989 (with further literature), and WALTER 2003, 181–86, who, however, could distinguish as many as four saints under this name. His thesis was criticized by WOODFIN 2006, 111–17.

²⁷ DELEHAYE 1910; CHATZIDAKIS-BACHARAS 1982, 71–73; MARKOVIĆ 1995, 612–14; WALTER 2003, 187; WOODFIN 2006, 117–23.

²⁸ DEMUS 1960, 112–19.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. poems attributed to MANUEL PIHLES, *Carmina*, 69, 72–73 (ed. E. Miller, vol. 1, p. 33–34) and their translation by MAGUIRE 1996, 78–79.

³⁰ TERRY, MAGUIRE 2007, vol. 1., 179–81, vol. 2. fig. 160, 164–78, 218.

³¹ BRANDENBURG 2005, 222–24, figs. 138–39; For the foundation of the church by Pope Felix IV see *Liber Pontificalis* 56. 1 (ed. Davis, 52).

³² *Recent Acquisitions*, 141–42; TERRY, MAGUIRE 2007, vol. 2, fig. 274.



Fig. 3. Ampoule with a representation of St. Menas, sixth century (Photo: Author)



Fig. 4. St. Menas with St. Victor and St. Vikentios, tenth-century icon from the bishopric of Kition, Larnaca, Cyprus (after SOPHOCLEOUS 1994)

Eastern origin. The contamination of both types, resulting in the image of young men with dark skin, can be observed after Iconoclasm.

Although this type dominated in the iconography of the middle and late Byzantine periods, attempts to distinguish between the twins' physiognomic features can be traced in Russian art. While Cosma is always depicted conventionally – with a beard and a moustache, Damianos appears clean-shaven in the eleventh-century fresco on the south-east pillar of St. Sophia in Kiev. The upper part of his head and the inscription were repainted in the nineteenth century, but the saint can be identified by the surgical box in his hand (fig. 5). This example is not unique, and the same distinction between the brothers' physiognomies appears on a Moscow school icon produced in the first half of fifteenth century (now in the Rublov Museum), as well as in a codex of the *Prolog* dated to the second quarter of the same century, now in the Public Library in St. Petersburg³³.

The Ruthenian experiments with the iconography of *anargyroi* find a parallel in Byzantium. The increasing number of portraits of the saints, widely venerated after Iconoclasm, has caused additional problems to scholarly endeavours. It often happened, as in the case

³³ POPOV 1975, fig. 1; LOGVYN 1974, ill. 30.

of St. Theodores Teron and Stratelates (the latter created probably in the ninth century)³⁴, that a new hagiography (based on the older version of St. Theodore Teron's hagiography) entailed the imitation of the old pattern in the physical depiction of a new personality. The risk of misunderstanding increased through the similarity between the old and the new legends. To avoid misinterpretation, artists attempted to differentiate the physical appearance of both saints. This different pattern in the portraits of both Theodores can be noticed in many works from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. According to Liliana Mavrodinova, Teron is more eagerly represented with short hair adjacent to the head and a broad pointed beard, whereas Stratelates has curly hair and a curly beard split in the end. The Bulgarian scholar distinguishes the *Egyptian* type, characteristic for St. Theodore Teron, and the *Oriental* one, typical for Stratelates³⁵. Although Christopher Walter criticized her theory³⁶, the majority of Byzantine art historians agree that in some cases, as in the mosaics in the main church of Hosios Loukas and in the frescoes at Nerezi, this distinction is clearly visible³⁷.

Hugo Buchtal points out another example of differentiated physiognomies of Holy Fathers. Between the tenth and the eleventh centuries, a new portrait type of St. Gregory of Nazianzus with short, broad beard and a bulbous forehead was introduced. It replaced the old variant with a long white beard, which resembled that of St. Basil the Great. Possible reason for introducing such a variant could be to make a distinction between similar



Fig. 5. St. Damianos, fresco in Kiev St. Sophia Cathedral, second half of the eleventh century (Photo: Author)

³⁴ OIKONOMIDES 1986.

³⁵ MAVRODINOVA 1969, 40–45.

³⁶ WALTER 1999, 186; WALTER 2003, 59–62, 65, where the author put forward a new hypothesis bringing the new physical appearance of St. Theodore into a relationship with a third saint bearing the same name – Theodore *Anatolikos* (Orientalis).

³⁷ KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, 8; MIRZOYAN 1987, 446; MAGUIRE 1990, 75–76; MAGUIRE 1996, 21–22; DAVIES 1991, 100 and MARKOVIĆ 1995, 596, who, however, thinks that the two types originated no earlier than the twelfth century.

physiognomies of the two Cappadocian Church Fathers³⁸. It is worth mentioning that early examples of the new appearance include the representations on ivory triptychs in the Louvre (Harbaville), Palazzo Venezia and Museo Sacro of the Vatican Library. In spite of the custom of colouring Byzantine ivory, we may assume that the physiognomies of the saints, carved beside one another, could be left unpainted. In case the shape of their beards had been the same, it would have caused problems with proper recognition³⁹.

Despite all the efforts described, the number of physical types available to Byzantine artists was still insufficient to match the sudden growth in the number of venerated saints. The fact that painters tried to reflect the character of the saints in the features of the face, for example the Holy Fools, should also be taken into account. Andrew the Fool, St. Nikon, St. Simeon and St. Mary of Egypt follow the iconography of John the Baptist, with disheveled long hair and sunken cheeks, meant to stress their ascetic way of life. A simple comparison of the faces of St. George and St. Pantaleimon shows that the same physiognomy could occur in the portraits of different saints. In order to make them unmistakably recognizable, it was necessary to introduce an additional element – the costume.

Garments

The analysis of the *Book of Ceremonies* and *Court Tactics* shows that the Byzantine society inherited its strict dress-code from the Roman Empire and that it made ample use of it to convey information⁴⁰. Imperial, clerical or military dress indicate the wearer's belonging to a specific profession or even ethnic group. On a more subtle level, this was – as Maguire pointed out – extended to the modelling of the folds: clear and linear in the case of monks' gowns and rich in detail and splendour for Warrior Saints. By means of a simple visual code it indicated the character of the saint at first sight.⁴¹

The introduction of the costume as an indication of a specific group of saints can be traced back to the sixth century⁴². It was connected with the emergence of new elements in the official vestments. As Ch. Walter already noted, at that time, the *phelonion* and the

³⁸ BUCHTAL 1963, 86–88; see also an example from the church of St. Nicholas on the Roof in Kakopetria (Cyprus), MAGUIRE 1996, fig. 37.

³⁹ On the polychromy of Byzantine ivory see CONNOR 1998. The text of the Ulpian collected *eikonismoi* is ambiguous mentioning a short but luxuriant beard, flat nose and straight eyebrows; see WINKELMANN 1990, p. 122.

⁴⁰ PILTZ 1985; PILTZ 1997; PARANI 2003, 11–100; GROTOŃSKI 2007.

⁴¹ MAGUIRE 1990, 75–83; to illustrate this process, he compares vital appearance of Warrior Saints with incorporeal images of monks. The significance of the vestments in defining saints' visual representations was already noted in DAGRON 1991, 26.

⁴² As an early example, we can quote the mosaics in the nave of San Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. While the group of martyrs still wears timeless mantles, their female counterparts on the neighbouring wall are shown in the costume of a Roman matron, DEICHMANN 1969, 308, fig. 258.

omophorion became permanent elements in the iconography of bishops (fig. 1).⁴³ This phenomenon can be observed more clearly in a group of icons with representations of Warrior Saints (e.g. St. Theodore Teron from the St. Catherine Monastery on Mt. Sinai; St. Theodore on horseback on a ceramic icon from Vinica (fig. 2); St. Theodore killing the dragon from Pharas)⁴⁴. At the same time, Warrior Saints appear in military costume, alongside with the older type, which included a court mantle and a tunic. The holy stylites have been represented as monks from the outset (fig. 6)⁴⁵.

In post-iconoclastic art this process was intensified⁴⁶, but the costume still referred only to the category and did not create individuality. In the tenth century, both St. Theodoros wear officer's belts on their chest, for example on ivory triptychs: *Harbaville* in the Louvre, in the Vatican Collection and on the triptych of the *Forty Martyrs* in the Hermitage. This means that Macedonian sculptors did not treat this distinction in terms of military costume as an indication of the general's rank. Kazhdan and Maguire, however, noted that in some later works, e.g. on the frescoes in the SS. Anargyroi church in Kastoria and in the Parekklesion of Chora in Constantinople, Stratelates is depicted in richer armour than Teron in order to underline his higher military rank⁴⁷. This distinction seems to be very subtle and needs further investigation. Undoubtedly, the tendency to render all details very precisely – which was characteristic for the Comnenian period – made the variety of vestments more visible.

Such nuances cannot be observed in the iconography of female saints. Their images present a more limited range of costumes, which are usually divided into two categories. The imperial robe, the crown and uncovered hair are connected with high social background of such saints as Helena, Theodora, Irene, Eudoxia, Barbara, Katherine, Glykeria, Kalliope and others. St. Kyriake often wears the *loros*, the crown and the *thorakion* of the empress in order to underline her “festival” status⁴⁸, while her “friend” Paraskeve is usually depicted in a simple *maphorion* and a mantle.

⁴³ WALTER 1982, 9–16; WALTER 1991, 356–57 also notes an unusual element for the bishops – dark, plain mantle (*mandyas*). Early examples are published in: *Faras*, cat. 3; DEICHMANN 1969, 340, fig. 289.

⁴⁴ WEITZMANN 1976, cat. B13; BALABANOV, KRSTEVSKI 1993, cat. 44–48; *Faras*, cat. 4.

⁴⁵ See also e.g. silver plaque with St. Simeon Stylites in the Louvre, *Byzance*, cat. 61. Tenth-century representations from Cappadocia were analysed in JOLIVET-LÉVY 1993.

⁴⁶ An interesting example of the practice of ascribing special meanings to the image by means of costume can be the introduction of the imperial *loros* to the iconography of archangels after Iconoclasm. As MANGO 1984, 39–44, figs. 1–4, and MAGUIRE 1995, 65–66, 68 have observed, in historical context, Archangels Gabriel and Michael are depicted in antique tunics and mantles or armours; on the other hand, when represented as celestial courtiers, they usually wear garments appropriate for high court officials.

⁴⁷ KAZHDAN, MAGUIRE 1991, 13 have noted, in the light of a *Homily* by John Mauropous stressing the poverty of Theodore Teron, the distinction between military representations of both Theodoros – e. g. at Nerezi and in Chora.

⁴⁸ See e.g. MAGURE 1996, 28 figs. 24, 29; GERSTEL 1998, 1, 3–6, 8–9, 17; on empresses' costume see RUDT DE COLLENBERG 1971, 268–73, 276–86. On the *loros* and often depicted *clipea* with portraits of the Days of the week, see GAVRILOVIĆ 2007, 70–71, figs. 3–4; WALTER 1995, fig. 3.

This second type of female costume follows the iconography of the Holy Virgin. It recalls a poor monastic garb and is further reserved for other martyrs and nuns, such as Thecla, Marina, Juliana, Agatha and Polychronia⁴⁹. The limited variation in the attire of female saints mirrors the woman's status in patriarchal Byzantine culture⁵⁰. At the same time, it makes the recognition of a member of this group more difficult. Only occasionally permanent principles facilitate the recognition, as in the case of St. Marina's bright red *maphorion*. Another exception is the image of St. Mary of Egypt. Being an anchoress, she is usually shown half-naked in the simple *melota* of her male counterparts⁵¹.

These observations corroborate the hypothesis already formulated by Henry Maguire – that it was only the systematic method applied by the artists that allowed the spectator to identify the depicted saint⁵². A limited number of different physiognomies make a saint distinguishable only within a professional group defined by the costume. The repetition of identical faces became possible, as in the case of St. George and St. Pantaleimon, through the introduction of different categories. Only in the case of female saints, the variety of costume types was insufficient and caused problems. Otherwise the pictorial definition of a personage strictly followed the Aristotelian definition: *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam* formulated in the *Topics* (VI 3) and in *Categories*⁵³. In a saint's portrait, the *genus* would be defined by his costume, which would ascribe him to a particular group of bishops, monks, hermits, warriors or physicians, whereas his physiognomy would distinguish him from the

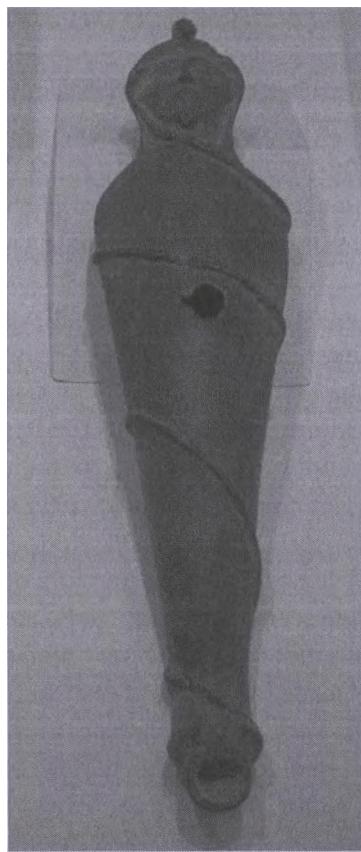


Fig. 6. Cooper oil lamp in the shape of a Holy Stylite (Simeon?), Archaeological Museum of Hatay (Antioch), 6–7 cent. (Photo: Author)

⁴⁹ See e.g. NAUERTH, WARNS 1981; MAGUIRE 1996, figs. 24, 28–31; GERSTEL 1998, figs. 1, 7, 17, 19–20.

⁵⁰ On the image of the woman in the Byzantine hagiographical literature see KAZHDAN 1990.

⁵¹ MAGUIRE 1996, 28, 30 listed Mary, together with Barbara, among few female saints recognizable owing to their “physical portrait”.

⁵² MAGUIRE 1996, 46–47 states *For the Byzantines, therefore, portraiture was a matter of definition, not of illusion. As an example of the vitality of the Aristotelian definition of the definition he pointed out Dialectica by John of Damascus.*

⁵³ An extensive analysis of the system of categorization and definition based on Aristotle's *Organon* is given in GRANGER, 1984, 3–8; BERG 1983.

other member of his category. This method allowed artists to produce portraits of numerous saints using only a limited number of features.

The significance of the Aristotelian philosophical system in Byzantium was for a long time depreciated by modern scholars in favour of Platonism and Neo-Platonism. Studies on Aristotelian *Commentaries*, however, have brought to light the uninterrupted tradition of reading and use of Aristotelian concepts. Even if only indirectly, the main thesis and the basic tools were familiar to Byzantines from earlier works and *Commentaries* on the *Categories* written by Porphyry, Ammonius and Elias⁵⁴. Probably due to sixth century commentaries, Aristotelian logic was familiar to iconophile theologians in the final stage of Iconoclasm. Theodore of Studios opens his *Third Antirrheticus* recalling *Aristoteliki technologia* and uses the concept of homonym in the discussion with John the Grammmarian, while Patriarch Nicephorus, according to his *Vitae*, excelled in logic and studied a wide range of philosophical definitions. The *Categories* were also explained and commented upon by Photius in his *Questiones Amphiloichianae*, by his pupil Arethas of Caesarea and by other scholars, like John Italos⁵⁵.

Therefore, the borrowings from Aristotle in the mid-Byzantine period were by no means a surprise. The influence of rhetoric upon iconography and the existence of oratory figures in art have been studied extensively⁵⁶. As Maguire has pointed out, this does not mean that artists used them knowingly, but rather some ideas were present in the society, which was saturated with Hellenistic knowledge. We should also be aware of the fact that the difference between philosophy and the theory of oratory, which numbered among sciences, was comparatively lesser than in our times.

In order to strengthen the identification reached by means of categorization, some additional features were added, known to us as attributes.

Attribute

Describing the scene of the Transfiguration in his *Sermo de Cruce et Transfiguratio*, Timothy of Antioch asks: *From where it is known who is Moses and Elias?* and responds:

⁵⁴ Positive results of the research into Aristotle's influence on Byzantine philosophy and theology, expressed mainly in *Commentaries* to the philosopher's works (also on *Logic*), are referred to in OEHLER 1964. More sceptical is T. M. Conley. He quotes negative opinions of Byzantine orators about the philosopher's style, described as obscure and unclear. However, he also gives examples of Aristotelian definitions used in the Byzantine theory of rhetoric (mainly in codices dating from the period between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries), see CONLEY 1990, 31–33; CONLEY 2004 (where he compares John Italos' theory of rhetoric with the Aristotelian tradition). The list of Byzantine manuscripts with Aristotle's works in contemporary libraries was published by MORAUX 1976.

⁵⁵ OEHLER 1964, 137–39. On the influence of *Categories* on the theological discussion of the late Iconoclasm and its role in shaping the theoretical explanation of the cult of icons, see PARRY 1996, 52–57. Cf. also BOSTON 2003, 44. On Aristotelian homonyms and their reception during the Middle Ages: ANTON 1968; ANTON 1969.

⁵⁶ MAGUIRE 1981.

by signs (τεκμηρία). *Elias namely is flying on chariot; Moses carries Tablets of the Law*⁵⁷. Judging by this fragment, we may presume that attributes were widely used in Byzantine art to identify saints. However, this was not the case. Objects such as the caduceus of Hermes, the bow and the quiver of Arthemis, or the rod of Asclepius had been well known in ancient art, but lost their function with the arrival of Christianity and, therefore, could not be transferred to the new iconography.

We can find singular examples of connecting attributes to saints in Early Byzantine art (e.g. sheep accompanying St. Agnes on the San Apollinare Nuovo parade⁵⁸) and in post-iconoclastic art. There are also some examples of specific objects permanently tied to particular saints, which should be mentioned – e.g. the keys of St. Peter on an icon in the Sinai Monastery, or the oar of St. Phocas in the south gallery of St. Sophia in Kiev (fig. 7)⁵⁹. However, they appear inconsequently and as such isolated artefacts that we cannot treat them as a comprehensive system of defining⁶⁰. Moreover, the last example shows a combination of the bishop of Sinope with his namesake martyr, the patron of sailors⁶¹. Few exceptions can be mentioned. One of them is a medallion with the bust of Christ carried by St. Menas the Egyptian in artefacts dated to the period between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries. This mysterious element – initially erroneously explained through the vision of the imprisoned Kallikelados – was most likely introduced with the purpose to distinguish the saint from his namesake (fig. 4)⁶². Other examples include an *omophorion* and a Gospels codex offered by Christ and the Virgin Mary to St. Nicholas. This motif is related to a miraculous dream dreamt,



Fig. 7. St. Phocas, fresco in Kiev St. Sophia Cathedral, second half of the eleventh cent. (after LOGWYN 1971)

⁵⁷ See *Patrologia graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 86a, col. 261C. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Dirk Krausmüller of Cardiff University, for turning my attention on this *Homily*.

⁵⁸ DEICHMANN 1969, 308, fig. 258.

⁵⁹ WEITZMANN 1976, cat. B5; LOGWYN 1971, fig. 212.

⁶⁰ The absence of a coherent system of attribution in Byzantine art was already observed by MAGUIRE 1996, 17.

⁶¹ About confused hagiographic traditions and iconography of three saints bearing name Phocas (the Bishop of Sinope, a saint from Antioch and the gardener), see A. Kazhdan, N. P. Ševčenko, "Phocas", [in:] *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, New York 1991, vol. 3, p. 1666–67.

⁶² CHATZIDAKIS-BACHARAS 1982, 73–74 suggests an improbable explanation connecting the medallion with the vision of the saint in prison; a recent analysis of the problem in WOODFIN 2006, 129–43.

according to the legend, by the young saint or, according to a later version, by several bishops of the First Nicene Council (325 AD) after St. Nicholas had been expelled from the proceedings and imprisoned. The image of the saint with a bald head and a trimmed, round beard, was not fully developed before the tenth century. Soon afterwards, the Holy Virgin and Christ with symbols of the bishop's office were introduced into his portrait, but these attributes were never treated as an obligatory part of St. Nicholas' iconography⁶³.

The relationship between Byzantine attributes and early medieval Western iconography still awaits a broader comparative analysis and goes far beyond the frame of this paper.

It was probably under the influence of Gothic iconography that Paleologian artists began to reintroduce objects tightly connected with a specific person in hagiographical texts. St. Merkurios, who usually appears with three arrows referring to the Syrian legend about the death of Julian the Apostate, is an example from Late Byzantine art. According to the text, the saint appeared to a certain Jovian in a dream and foretold that he would kill the emperor within three weeks with one of the three arrows he was holding in his hand⁶⁴. In a similar way, St. Demetrius, who previously had not been distinguished from other Warrior Saints by his weapon, appears with a bow and a quiver starting from the thirteenth century⁶⁵. St. Marina of Pisidian Antioch is often shown grasping by the hair and beating with a hammer a small figure of Satan in order to distinguish her from her namesake of Tripoli. This scene refers to a legend concerning the temptation of the imprisoned saint⁶⁶.

At the same time, the process of the transmission of attributes, which were tightly connected with one saint until now, to another, is sometimes observed. The *Passio antiquor* of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus relates how the saints were, in an act of degradation preceding the execution, deprived of the officers' insignia, golden collars called *maniakia* (fig. 8)⁶⁷. Thus these attributes were a part of the brothers' iconography until the thirteenth century⁶⁸. Since then, however, the *manakion* also appears on the dress of other military saints – for example that of St. Procopius on the icon painted by Master Peter at the court of Jerusalem

⁶³ ANRICH 1917, 392–94; ŠEVČENKO 1981, 79–80 and cat. 3, 14, 37, 41–42; MAGUIRE 1996, fig. 44.

⁶⁴ For the Latin version of the legend see PEETERS 1921, 79–80; about a Syriac redaction written between 502 and 532 AD see DELEHAYE 1909, 98.

⁶⁵ ZACHARIADOU 1998, 689, put forward the hypothesis that a steatite icon ordered by a Turk converted to Christianity could have acted as the pattern for such kind of iconography. Her opinion was accepted by WALTER 2003, 92.

⁶⁶ LAFONTAINE-DOSOGNE 1962, 252; MAGUIRE 1996, fig. 31. The Greek *Vita* describes the weapon as a copper hammer; *Acta S. Marinae et S. Christophori*, fol. 136r (ed. II. Usener, p. 30).

⁶⁷ *Passio antiquor ss. Sergii et Bacchi*, 7 (ed. van den Gheyn, p. 380); WALTER 2003, 154 notes, that the motif of the deprivation of the *maniakia* disappears already in Metaphrastes' redaction of the *Martyrdom*); FOWDEN 1999, 31–32 and note. 81 thinks that the *manakion*, mentioned already in the early *Armenian Synaxarion* was introduced under the influence of iconography. A similar example of garment-attribute can be a special pointed bonnet worn by Cyril of Alexandria. The bonnet, being the prerogative of the patriarch of Alexandria, is often decorated with crosses.

⁶⁸ See e.g. a seventh century icon from Sinai (now in Kiev) and mosaics in St. Demetrius basilica in Thessaloniki, WEITZMANN 1976, cat. B9; FOWDEN 1999, figs. 1–5.



Fig. 8. St. Sergius and Bacchus, sixth-century icon from Sinai, National Gallery, Kiev, (after WEITZMANN 1976)

Patriarch Euthymios II (now in the Sinai Monastery)⁶⁹. The wide circulation of this motif can be explained by the artists' wish to ennoble the depicted figures by adding a sign otherwise typical for a high commander of the army.

Some objects, which at first sight seem to be attributes, have to be understood as symbols in a wider sense, or even as allegories conveying a message which is not connected with a particular saint; an example is the oldest known representation of St. Paraskeve, which appears on fol. 285 of the Paris *Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (*Par. gr. 510*). Depicted in the right bottom corner of the full-page miniature, the saint appears with a lance, a reed and a sponge. Together with Helena, the prophet Habakkuk and the Hill of Golgotha, she acts as an illustration to the text of Gregory's *Second Easter Homily*. According to Ch. Walter's interpretation, St. Paraskeve was introduced here as a personification of the Passion of Christ⁷⁰ and the instruments displayed should therefore be related to this event. The explanation is confirmed by the fact that Paraskeve was never depicted with the *Arma Passionis* again⁷¹.

⁶⁹ GROTOWSKI 2007, 15, fig. 9. According to WALTER 2003, 154, only Sergius and Bacchus were depicted wearing a *maniakion*.

⁷⁰ DER NERSESSIAN 1962, 202, fig. 3; WALTER 1995, 753–54, fig. 1; GERSTEL 1998, 100. Different interpretation of the neighbouring saint as Kyriake was recently proposed by GAVRILOVIĆ 2007.

⁷¹ The icon of the Man of Sorrows held by St. Paraskeve on some Cypriot representations (on a fourteenth century icon in the Collection Phaneromeni in Nicosia and on a fresco in St. Sozomenos church) seems to have a similar meaning; WALTER 1995, fig. 2 and note 13; SOPHIOCLEOUS 1994, cat. 42.

This by no means implies that early- and mid-Byzantine saints were depicted without any object in their hands. We can distinguish different groups of saints holding various kinds of belongings connected with the type of their sanctity or with their occupation. Apart from the martyrs holding crosses, there were also the *iconophoroi*: St. Theodosia, Patriarch Nicephorus I, Empress Theodora and St. Stephan the Younger⁷². The icons in their hands indicate that the saints belong to the defenders of images. Yet another group, appearing only in the post-Byzantine epoch, are the *kephalophoroi*⁷³. The iconography of martyrs like Dionysius Areopagite, George, Zosimos and Paraskeve, carrying their own heads as a sign of their cruel suffering, is derived from the iconography of St. John the Baptist⁷⁴.

Attributes referring to the saint's occupation can be found in representations of Holy Doctors. They appear initially with scrolls (e.g. on the leaves of a seventh century triptych at Sinai) or with medical bags – usually given by the Hand of God⁷⁵. In mid-Byzantine iconography this attribute is gradually transformed into more elegant surgeon's boxes and scalpels. It is worth noticing that the shape of this tool strictly corresponds to the real object known from archaeological excavations⁷⁶.

The attributes in Byzantine art can therefore be usually understood as signs defining the affiliation with a social or professional group. Their function is similar to that of professional garments, signaling a category rather than personality⁷⁷. This observation confirms the phenomenon of double attributes, like in the case of saints Mamas, Blasios and Tryphon. As the saints of poverty and protectors of peasants, they appear in the chapel of St. Pantaleimon church at Nerezi with shepherd's crooks defining them as a group. However the first in the group also holds in his hands an ox symbolizing his protection over cattle-breeders⁷⁸. In addition, in illustrations of *Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus*, St. Mamas is frequently accompanied by a shepherd boy, kneeling to milk a doe or merely seated among animals on a hillside. Since the sixth century, he is also often depicted sitting on a lion⁷⁹.

Context

The practice of doubling saints' lives, known from Early Christian times, has caused some difficulty to hagiographers. Many saints had namesakes who were very often dif-

⁷² RUDT DE COLLENBERG 1971, fig. 11; MAGUIRE 1996, 17.

⁷³ E.g. Christopher and George, see MEINARDUS 1987; WALTER 1991a.

⁷⁴ WALTER 1995, 755–56, figs. 6–8; WALTER 2003, 143–44; WALTER 1990a, 268–74, figs. 6, 8, 10–12.

⁷⁵ They are depicted with scrolls in the Chapel of Physicians at Santa Maria Antiqua, KNIPP 2002, 10–11 (and 18, figs. 8, 12–15 on scalpel in hand of St. Abbakyros). Examples with boxes and lancets are given by MAGUIRE 1996, figs. 39–40.

⁷⁶ KNIPP 2002, figs. 16–17.

⁷⁷ On the classes of Byzantine saints distinguished by the costume and usual attributes ascribed to a group see MAGUIRE 1996, 16–17, 33–34.

⁷⁸ SINKEVIĆ 2000, 73, figs. 72, LXV–LXVI.

⁷⁹ GABELIĆ 1986; GALAVARIS 1969, 100–03; MARAVA-CHATZENIKOLAOU 1961; SOPHOCLEOUS 1994, fig. 14; cat. 27.

ficult to distinguish – for example the double St. Polychronius⁸⁰. St. Paraskeve the Elder (known also as St. Paraskeve of Chalkis) is a similar example. The name itself (in Greek – Friday) indicates (just as the saint's martyrdom) that she was originally a personification of the Passion. Her popularity resulted in the production of at least two subsequent martyrs – Paraskeve of Epibathai (known also as Paraskeve of Turnovo) and Paraskeve of Ikonion⁸¹ – venerated especially in Rus'. Their lives present similar events based on a common prototype. None of them had an independent iconography and only the inscriptions and local traditions could indicate who of the saints was depicted⁸². In such extreme situations, the artists had to locate saints within a particular context in order to avoid confusion between duplicated figures. As the artistic convention of frontal attitude left no place for narration or additional details, the contextualization could be reached only by means of a proper surrounding. Accompanied by relatives, a saint became recognizable to the beholder, but only on condition that the spectator was familiar with his or her biography. This technique was applied to one of the three pairs of physician saints known under the same name Cosma and Damianos. The oriental pair was sometimes depicted with their mother, Theodote. They appear together on an eleventh-century Sinai icon, as well as on numerous frescoes in Greek churches of St. Demetrius in Servia (late twelfth or early thirteenth century), of the Episcopi in Eurytania (late twelfth or early thirteenth century) and St. Peter Kalyvia-Kouvara in Attica (1232)⁸³.

The connections between characters depicted together could also be very simple, as in the case of St. Menas. Since the tenth century both saints known under that name were distinguished by the introduction of accompanying martyrs, who were venerated on the same day (on November 11 in the case of St. Menas the Egyptian; on December 10 in the case of Kallikelados). St. Victor and St. Vikentios accompanied St. Menas the Egyptian (fig. 4; Tokali Kilise – New Church; St. Barbara and Karabaş Kilkise in Sohanli; Hosios Loukas; *Cod. sinaitus. gr. 500*, fol. 129v; St. Pantaleimon at Nerezi; Capella Pallatina and Martorana in Palermo; Agios Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki; Chora; Kučevište; Poganovo), whereas St. Hermogenes and St. Eugraphos were depicted together with Kallikelados (Tokali-New Church; Staro Naogoričino; Gračanica; Chora; Lesnovo; Rudenica)⁸⁴.

⁸⁰ CRABBE 1981.

⁸¹ On various saints known under this name see WALTER 1995, 754 and entries: A. Kazhdan, "Paraskeve of Epibatai", "Paraskeve of Ikonion", (with N. P. Ševčenko), "Paraskeve the Elder", *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, New York 1991, vol. 3, 1585–86 (with further bibliography).

⁸² The problem analyses recently SULIKOWSKA-GAŠKA 2008, 178–82.

⁸³ GERSTEL 1998, 92, 94, 97, 105–07, 110; for more examples like St. Eustace of Rome, Cyricus and Julita and others see DREWER 1992.

⁸⁴ MARKOVIĆ 1995, 613–14 and note 364; SOPHOCLEOUS 1994, fig. 3; WOODFIN 2006, 127–28; WEITZMANN 1966, 79, fig. 63.

Although the origin of this custom can be dated to a period before the Iconoclasm, most examples are of a later date. An intensification of this process can be observed during the thirteenth century and within the Paleologian period.

Conclusion

As a conclusion one can assume that the recognition of saints was not the effect of a particular visual sensitivity of the Byzantine beholder, but of a very complex identification system. This system encompassed the inscription, face shape and garments, the last defining a particular group rather than acting as a specified attribute. In order to be understandable, this system had to be familiar, possibly only on a subconscious level, both to the artist and the viewer. With the time, however, an increasing number of saints caused difficulties in the use of the system. One solution was to depict the saint in a specific context.

Of course, as with many generalizing statements concerning humanities and their mechanisms, one could point out numerous exceptions. Therefore, the above-mentioned regularities should be regarded as a preliminary investigation aimed at establishing the presence of such mechanisms and an introduction to a broader discussion of the problem rather than an attempt to create secure, universal rules.

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