

## THE PLACE AND THE FUNCTIONS OF TEXT INCORPORATIONS ON THE MULTIFACETED ICONS IN THE CRETAN AND RUSSIAN BAROQUE TRADITION

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The present paper deals with the relationship between the visual image and the poetic text in the emblematic message of the hagiographic art of baroque. Specifically two different traditions of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, namely the Cretan and the Russian, were studied by the typical examples of the icon “Μέγας εἰ, Κύριε” (“Great Art Thou, O Lord”) by Ioannis Kornaros and the iconographic type of the “Living cross”. The comparative analyses of the function of the poetic text – the homonymous prayer of St. Sophronius of Jerusalem and the religious poem of Silvestre Medvedev – on these icons revealed that in spite of the obvious differences there are certain common features which correspond to the general trends of the changing role of the icons in the European spiritual and social context.

**Keywords:** talking icons, emblem, Baroque, Cretan school, Ioannis Kornaros, Silvestre Medvedev, Living Cross, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem.

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## РОЛЬ И ФУНКЦИИ ТЕКСТОВЫХ ВСТАВОК В КОМПОЗИЦИЯХ МНОГОФИГУРНЫХ ИКОН КРИТСКОГО И РУССКОГО БАРОККО

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Данная статья посвящена специфике отношений живописного образа и поэтического текста в эмблематических произведениях иконописи стиля барокко. В статье проанализированы две различные иконописные традиции XVII–XVIII веков – критская и русская – на материале двух характерных сюжетов: иконы «Велий еси, Господи» критского иконописца Иоанниса Корнароса и распространённой в русской живописи композиции «Крест живой». Сравнительный анализ функций поэтических текстов – одноимённой молитвы патриарха Софрония Иерусалимского и религиозных виршей Сильвестра Медведева – в пространстве данных икон выявил наряду с различиями и несомненные сходные черты, связанные с общими тенденциями изменения роли иконы в европейском духовном и культурном контекстах.

**Ключевые слова:** «говорящие» иконы, эмблема, барокко, Критская иконописная школа, Иоаннис Корнарос, Сильвестр Медведев, «Крест живой», патриарх Софроний Иерусалимский.

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This contribution focuses on the relationship between the icon and the poetic text within a hagiographical work, especially in the traditions of Cretan and Russian baroque. Specifically, two different hagiographic types representing the Cretan and the Russian schools correspondingly, namely the icon “Μέγας εἰ, Κύριε” (“Great Art Thou, O Lord”) by Ioannis Kornaros and the hagiographic type of the “Living Cross,” are discussed.

Both examples represent the new trends in the orthodox hagiography which incorporates the concept of what the holy icon is and which functions it should have in the spiritual and social life. In the new cultural style of Baroque which originates in Western Europe and reaches the orthodox countries in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, a new concept of the sacred icon began to form, which became not only an object of worship, but also a complex catechetical and didactical message with composite, multifaceted symbolic images accompanied by text.

The medieval notion of the symbol thus came to the fore again, although, in the new cultural context and aesthetics, the symbol is transformed into an emblem [Морозов, Софронова 1979, 13–38; Иванов 2002, 123]. Unlike the medieval symbol, the emblem is more tangible and focused on the superficial aspect of the icon, while, at the same time, it is also more complex and has no obvious interpretation [Михайлов 2007]. The medieval worshiping of the icon only requires faith, and its agogical sacred meaning couldn't be verbalized in principle. Thus the interpretation of the icon couldn't be included in the icon itself. On the other hand, in regard to the icon-emblem of Baroque, both the images and the interpretations become more complex and require that the interpreter is familiar with the specific subject of the icon, while exhibiting a predisposition to “play” a kind of symbolic game with its author, which, through complex emblematic imagery, will lead to a symbolic meaning. During this process, the interpreter will need the help of the author in order to avoid following the wrong path of interpretation that would lead him to heresy. That is the reason for the existence of the written text, which began to play a very important role in hagiography and was thenceforth considered as a sort of guarantee of the sanctity of the icon.

Once again, many differences are observed when comparing medieval aesthetics, where the painted icon is the symbol, with Baroque aesthetics, where the word becomes a painted image. Therefore, within the context of a hagiographical work, the text and the image are combined “in one body and soul” in order to communicate the message of the icon, which cannot be correctly interpreted without the contribution of both sides [Морозов, Сафонова 1979, 18]. Moreover, the icon acquires its sacred meaning only when interpreted through the scope of the Bible or of the holy prayers, which act as universal metatexts for an entire religious culture, and with the help of which, the “earthly” images and words acquire sacred significance [Аверинцев 1977, 141].

The well-known orthodox prayer – namely the eponymous blessing for the Great Sanctification of the Water of Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem [Δετοράκης 2003, 226] becomes the main metatext for the icon “Μέγας εἰ, Κύριε” (“Great Art Thou, O Lord”) painted by the outstanding Cretan iconographer Ioannis Kornaros (fig. 1). The certain icon seems to be the second work of the painter on the same topic, with the first one which was created for the Cretan monastery of Savvathianon not having been saved [Κυριακάκη-Σφακάκη 2013, 56]. The icon we study according to the inscription was painted by Kornaros in 1770 at the age of 25 for the famous Cretan monastery Toplou where it remains until today [Προβατάκης 1982, 10]. The Kornaros style of painting follows the style of the great masters of the Cretan iconography school: Michail Damaskinos, Emmanuel Tzanes and others which enriched the Byzantine tradition with Western loans [Χατζηδάκης 1998, 110–130]. The hagiography style of Kornaros was also influenced to a great extent by his teachers – the Cretan icon painters brothers Kastrofilakas [Σπυριδάκης 1971, 285–292; Fayad 2013, 43–48]. However the certain composition as well as the idea to include the poetic text of the prayer in the space of the hagiographic work certainly belongs to Kornaros himself.

The icon consists of 61 separate scenes some of which were inspired by the Old and New Testaments while the others represent different symbolic meanings [Προβατάκης 1982, 17–43; Κυριακάκη-Σφακάκη 2013, 9–17]. In the central part of the icon four relatively large scenes are depicted: the Holy Trinity, the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, The Holy Virgin with the Infant Jesus sitting on the throne surrounded by the figures of Adam and Eve and the Harrowing of Hell. The central compositions illustrate the central theme of the icon dedicated to the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus when the certain pray is read. Around the central scenes, the small scenes are placed, with each one illustrating the certain fragment of the pray written next to it starting with the number which

indicates its order in the text and helps an interpreter to reconstruct the sequence of pieces. Let us stress however that it is not an easy task the illustrations of sequences according to the text fragments since they are not placed together on the icon and sometimes they can be found in opposite places. Typical examples of the illustrations can be:

1. The phrase “Σὺ ἐκ τεσσάρων στοιχείων τὴν κτίσιν συναρμόσας” (4. Σὺ ἐκ τεσσάρων 5. στοιχείων 6. τὴν κτίσιν 7. συναρμόσας) placed in the lower right and left corners of the icon, illustrated with the symbolic figures of the four classical elements (*stoicheion*) according to the Ancient Greek cosmology: the man in the scarlet chiton which blows out the flame symbolizes fire, the other man in the transparent white chiton with the vapor cloud coming out of his mouth – the air, the woman in white – the earth and finally the old man with the crown sitting in the middle of the sea symbolizes the water. The creation is depicted as a beautiful half-naked blonde woman [Κυριακάκη-Σφακάκη 2013, 24–25].

2. The text fragment σὲ φρίττουσιν ἄβυσσοι (Thy tremble the tempests) divided into 2 pieces with numbers 16–17 correspondingly (16. σὲ φρίττουσιν 17. ἄβυσσοι) is illustrated with three symbolic pictures. In the lower right corner of the icon the ship with Jesus on board refers to the New Testament miracle of calming the storm (Matt. 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25) and the God’s power over the waters. On the opposite end in the left upper corner there are two Old Testament symbolic scenes, which also show the power of God to exercise control over nature and save the humans from its rage: the Noah’s Ark (Genesis, chapter 6–9) and the Prophet Jonah with the whale that spews him out (Jonah 2:10). The name of the prophet is written near his head with white letters. In front of Jonah a symbolic picture of a town – probably the Nineveh – is placed [Κυριακάκη-Σφακάκη 2013, 28–29, 47–48].

Besides the text of the pray of Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem some other text fragments are incorporated by Kornaros in the certain hagiographical work. These are:

1. The Old and New Testament citations, for example:
  - The phrase συναχθήτω τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑποκάτω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς συναγωγὴν μίαν (Gen. 1:9) is written near the lips of the Christ Pantocrator (just like in the modern comics) with the hands crossed on His chest, illustrating the fragment σὺ ἐστερέωσας τὴν γῆν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων (number 22).
  - The fragment τὰς τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν γονὰς ἡλευθέρωσας (number 42) is illustrated by the Apostles’ figures. The kneeling Mark is depicted with the open book looking towards the Baptism of Jesus in the central scene with the citation from his Gospel written in

front of his lips: καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον ἐπ' αὐτόν (Mark 1:10).

- The continuation of the same Gospel citation σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ ἠυδόκησα (Mark 1:11) is placed near the central composition of the Baptism illustrating the words Σὺ καὶ τὰ Ἰορδάνια ῥεῖθρα ἡγίασας, οὐρανόθεν καταπέμψας τὸ Πανάγιον σοῦ Πνεῦμα (numbers 48–49).
- The same words are illustrated with the composition of John the Baptist baptizing the Jews, pointing with one hand on the baptizing Jesus and saying the words from the Gospel of John ἴδε ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἰρὼν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (John 1:29).
- On the other adjacent composition John the Baptist preaches another group of Jews with the words from the Gospel of Luke coming from his lips γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὁργῆς ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας (Luke 3:7–8).
- Finally the fragment of the prayer Σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ δι' ὕδατος καὶ Πνεύματος ἀνακαινίσας τὴν παλαιωθεῖσαν φύσιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας (numbers 51–54) is illustrated with Noah's Ark, the animals which are leaving the Ark, the offering of Noah and the rainbow with the words of God written over it: τοῦτο τὸ σημεῖον τῆς διαθήκης, ὃ ἐγὼ δίδωμι ἀνὰ μέσον ἐμοῦ καὶ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον πάσης ψυχῆς ζώσης, ἥ ἐστι μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰς γενεὰς αἰωνίους (Gen. 9:12).

2. The phrases from the other prayers and church hymns, for example:

- Near the Nativity crèche that illustrates the phrase ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος (number 36) [Κυριακάκη-Σφακάκη 2013, 38] and the Angels' figures over it the citation of the Angelic hymn (Gloria in excelsis Deo) is placed: Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία.
- Near the Holy Virgin on the Throne with the figures of Adam and Eve on either side which illustrates the fragment παρθενικὴν ἡγίασας μήτραν τῷ τόκῳ σου (number 43) there is the citation from the Akathist Hymn: Χαῖρε, τοῦ πεσόντος Ἀδάμ ἡ ἀνάκλησις, χαῖρε, τῶν δακρύων τῆς Εὐας ἡ λύτρωσις.

3. The clearings written by Kornaros himself. These could be:

- the single words as the names of the months which are placed near the corresponding Zodiacal signs which form a circle around the central composition of the Holy Trinity illustrating the phrase τέτταρσι καιροῖς τὸν κύκλον τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐστεφάνωσας (numbers 8 and 9);

- the whole phrases as in the illustrations of the words Σὺ γὰρ Θεὸς ὢν ἀπερίγραπτος, ἀναρχός τε καὶ ἀνέκφραστος, ἦλθες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν (numbers 34–35) with two New Testament scenes: the Last Supper with the inscription Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΣΥΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΜΑΘΗΤΑΙΣ ΔΕΙΠΝΩΝ ΜΥΣΤΙΚΟΝ ΕΣΘΙΕΙ (the Christ is here with His disciples eating the Last Supper) and the Christ washing the feet of the Apostles with the inscription ΝΙΠΤΕΙ ΜΑΘΗΤΩΝ ΕΣΠΕΡΑΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΠΟΔΑΣ (the Christ is washing the Disciples' feet in the evening) [Κυριακάκη-Σφακάκη 2013, 37–38].

All the above mentioned text fragments either borrowed from the sacred metatexts of the Christianity or written by the painter himself help in the interpretation of the separate scenes as well as the whole message of the certain hagiographic work. The latter seems not to be just an illustration of the text of blessing of Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem, though the scenes in the composition are not placed according to the order of the text fragments they illustrate. It is more accurate to say that the text of the pray together with the images and the other text fragments, are used to illustrate in combination the common message of the icon – the idea of Greatness and Glory of the Creator reflected in His creation.

Another example of the so-called “talking icons” (i. e. icons with text incorporations) [Boycheva et al. 2014; Borisova 2016] of the Baroque presents a Russian tradition. However the origin of the certain hagiographic type known as “Плоды страданий Христовых” (*The fruits of the passion of Christ*) or “Процветшее древо страданий Христовых” (*The flowering Cross of the passion of Christ*), the first scientific description of which is attributed to N. Pokrovsky [Покровский 1910, 388–390], is found in the western European tradition of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Although it is undoubtedly of western European origin, it is not a simple copy of the German and French models but rather a different version that sought to incorporate the Orthodox tradition. It thus includes substantive changes to the images depicted as well as to the original Russian text that accompanies them. The Russian frescoes and icons pertaining to this style were well-recognized and widespread from the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries [Постернак 1999, 284–297; Кузнецова 2008]. According to research conducted on the matter, the entire Russian tradition originates from a copperplate by Vasily Andreev, edited by D. Rovinsky [Ровинский 1910, 361–363]. A. Lavrov [Лавров 1997, 519–525], a Russian researcher, discovered in a seventeenth-century handwritten collection by Efthimios Tsudovsky (BAN 16.14.24), the texts of the etchings of this copperplate, which he correctly attributed to





Fig. 1. Ioannis Kornaros. “Μέγας εἶ, Κύριε” (“Great Art Thou, O Lord”), 1770.  
Tempera on wood. Monastery Toplou, Crete



Fig. 2. *The Living Cross*. First half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Russia. Egg-tempera on wood. Byzantine and Christian museum, Athens, BXM 10613 [Boycheva et al. 2014]



Silvestre Medvedev (otherwise known as Simeon), the student and the follower of Simeon Polotsky [Сазонова 1985, 87–96] and a prominent, although somewhat controversial, seventeenth-century figure known for his large and diverse range of activities and his significant contribution to Russian culture [Козловский 1895, 1–49]. He was an enlightener, scholar, poet, founder of monasteries and educational institutions, proof-reader and an editor of ecclesiastical books, a philosopher and staunch ideologue of the new intellectual and cultural currents. After the false accusations of his opponents for heresy and conspiracy against Moscow Patriarch Joachim, he was executed [Козловский 1895, 30–49]. Even his opponents, however, recognized Silvestre's personality, style, and vast encyclopedic knowledge in their testimonies. Both Simeon and Silvestre belonged to the extended circle of “латинствующие” (latino-philes), as they are known in the history of Russian intellectual life [Панченко 1973, 116; Диянов 2012, 172–174]. The representatives of this intellectual current originated from the western regions of Russia – nowadays Ukraine and Belarus – which, due to their geographical position, maintained a closer relationship with the western European Catholic world – were strong and dedicated supporters on the new ideological and cultural European trends among which was the cultural style of Baroque [Богданов 2001, 214–224]. One of the typical examples of the Baroque “application” to the Russian hagiography could be the icon under investigation (fig. 2).

The text on the icon is proved to be the original text of the scholar, conveying an original message. However this lyrics features almost verbatim references to Simeon Polotski's 1670 theological work *Венец веры* (*The crown of faith*), which in turn was another version of the Orthodox theological work *Hortus pastorum* by Jacques Marchant, a theologian from the Low Countries [Корзо 2009, 59–84]. The text displays significant differences when compared to his other poems written in hendecasyllabic syllabic verse (“*вирши*”), as this poem is characterized by rhyming octosyllabic lyrics. It is not clear also why the lyrics of an executed heretic became so widespread after his death by appearing on a sacred object – an icon. It must be emphasized that, as evidenced by the handwritten text, the lyrics were always intended to be used in combination with copperplate representations [Богданов 2001, 520]. Therefore, Medvedev created not only the lyrics, but also the entire set of poetic text and imagery himself, with obvious loans from the western European tradition.

Besides the original Silvestre's text the composition includes one Bible citation – a passage from Apostle Paul's First Letter to the

Corinthians – placed in the centre of the icon of the Living Cross; **НЕ СОУДИХЪ БО ВИДЕТИ ЧТО В ВАСЪ ТОЧНЮ ИСА ХРИСТА И СЕГО РАСПЯТА** – οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινα τοῦ εἰδέναι τι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον (1 Cor. 2:2).

This passage from the apostolic book was probably selected, inter alia, due to the personal preferences of Silvestre himself, who, for many years, used to serve as an editor for the Printshop of Moscow [Богданов 2001, 360–362] and whose largest project was the correction of the Apostolic Acts and Epistles for the new edition published in 1679. The revised publication, which was based on Slavic manuscripts and the Greek original text, required an editor with a very deep knowledge of the text and all the complex concepts that had to be communicated properly in the translation [Бобрик 1990, 73–75]. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Silvestre's poetic text is based on references to these scriptural books. This particular reference cited above conveys the concise message of the icon – the equality of the whole world and the entirety of human knowledge with the crucified Christ. Another peculiarity of this passage is that, as dictated by liturgical practice, it is recited during the matins on Holy Saturday, which, according to A. Schmemmann [Шмеман 2009, 708–714], constitutes a link between Good Friday (the day of the passion of Christ on the Cross and his death) and Easter Sunday (the day of his resurrection and the victory of life over death). All the images and texts of the icon are focused on this central idea. The Cross represents the world, as evidenced by the inscriptions: **ШИРОТА – ДΟΛΓΟΤА – ВИСОТА – ГЛУБИНА** (*Length – breadth – height – depth*).

These inscriptions can also be interpreted through the Apostolic Epistles, and particularly through Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians “ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρῶντες καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι ἵνα ἐξιχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσι τοῖς ἁγίοις: τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ βάθος καὶ ὕψος” (Eph. 3:17–18). This comment has been interpreted numerous times in the patristic tradition. Let us mention here the interpretation of *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* by St. John of Damascus: ὥσπερ τὰ τέσσαρα ἄκρα τοῦ σταυροῦ διὰ τοῦ μέσου κέντρου κρατοῦνται καὶ συσφίγγονται, οὕτω διὰ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως τό τε ὕψος καὶ τὸ βάθος, μῆκος τε καὶ πλάτος, ἥτοι πᾶσα ὁρατὴ τε καὶ ἀόρατος κτίσις συνέχεται<sup>1</sup>.

The central image of the icon is based on the symbolic identification of the Cross with the tree of life in Eden, which is mentioned in the Book of Genesis: καὶ ἐξανέτειλεν ὁ Θεὸς ἔτι ἐκ τῆς γῆς πᾶν ξύλον ὠραῖον εἰς ὄρασιν καὶ καλὸν εἰς βρώσιν καὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παραδείσου (Gen. 2:9). This identification between the instrument of

<sup>1</sup> Ἰωάννης Δαμασκηνός. Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως, κεφ. 84.

death and the source of life frequently appears in the hymnographic and theological tradition. The following words by John Damascene constitute a prime example: Τοῦτον τὸν τίμιον σταυρὸν προετύπωσε τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς τὸ ἐν παραδείσῳ ὑπὸ Θεοῦ πεφυτευμένον· ἐπεὶ γὰρ διὰ ξύλου ὁ θάνατος, ἔδει διὰ ξύλου δωρηθῆναι τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν<sup>2</sup>. The same fundamental message about the contrast between life and death can be given to the symbol of the Holy Cross based on the prophecy of Isaiah: καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ράβδος ἐκ τῆς ρίζης Ἰεσσαί, καὶ ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ρίζης ἀναβήσεται (Isa. 11:1).

The symbolic identification of Christ with the fruit (see the prophecy from the Book of Hosea (Hosea 10:1): Ἄμπελος εὐκληματοῦσα Ἰσραήλ, ὁ καρπὸς εὐθηνῶν αὐτῆς) is depicted by the poetic text under the cross:

ДРЕВО ИЗРАСТЕ МИРОВИ СПАСЕНО  
И НА КРАНИЕВЕ МЕСТЕ ОУТВЕРЖАЕНО  
НА НЕМЪ ХРИСТОСЪ ПЛОДЪ РАСПИ(ТЪ)  
(О)УМЕРТВИСА С НАРОДОМЪ АДАМЪ  
ВНЫМЪ ЖИВИСА

*(The Cross sprouted for the salvation of man rooted in calvary. Resembling a fruit, Our Lord Jesus is crucified on it. He died with the people to give life to Adam).*

The same basic idea of equality between the cross and the entire world, the contrast between life and death and their connection through the sacrifice of Christ, is exhibited both in the images and the texts that surround the central theme of the icon. Two of the four hands that spring from the Cross symbolize eternal life: the upper hand holds the key that opens the gates of heaven (the inscription reads **ДРЕВО ДВЕРИ НЕБА ОУТВЕРЖАЕТЪ** – *The Gates of Heaven are opened by the Tree*) and can be interpreted through the Gospel quote καὶ δώσω σοι τὰς κλεῖς τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt. 16:19) and the left hand holds a wreath over the Church with the following verse:

ИЗ ДРЕВА КРЕСТНА  
ВЕНЕЦЪ ИЗРАСТАЕТЪ  
ТЕРПИЩИМЪ В ЦЕРКВИ  
ОНЫЙ ПОДАВАЕТЪ  
И КТО ЗДЕ В СТРАСТИ  
РАЗМЫШЛЯЕТЪ КРЕСТНЕИ  
ПРИИМЕТЪ ВЕНЕЦЪ  
ЖИЗНИ НЕПРЕЛЕСТНѦ

<sup>2</sup> Ἰωάννης Δαμασκηνός. Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως, κεφ. 84.

*(A wreath sprouts from the Sacred Tree of the Cross intended for all persons that suffer in the Church, and whoever wishes to find death upon the Cross will receive the wreath of eternal life).*

By contrast, the other two hands symbolize the death of death – the right hand holds the sword that kills death, which is symbolically represented by the skeleton on the white horse. The inscription reads:

ГРЕХОВНАЯ СМЕРТЬ  
НЫНЕ ОУПРАЗДНИСА  
ПРОЗІВШИМ ДРЕВОМ  
В КОНЕЦЪ ПОГ҃УБИСА  
ДОБРОДЕТЕЛЯ ТЩІТЕСЯ ТВОРИТИ  
ЗЛОБНЫ БО ВАМЪ ГРЕХ ВРЕДИТИ

*(The death in sin was defeated today, its end caused by the Flowering Tree, you should always try to be virtuous lest the evil of sin brings you harm).*

The fourth hand – pointing down – holds a hammer that seals Hades, closing its jaws. The image is complemented by the form of the devil captured and held by a chain at the base of the cross. The inscription reads:

п ДРЕВА КР҃СТНА ДІАВОЛЪ СВАЗАСА  
ЛЮТА ЗЛОБА И ПРЕЛЕСТЬ ПОПРАСА  
ДРЕВОМ ЧЕЛЮСТИ ВЗН҃УДАШАСЯ АДА  
ЧЕЛОВЕКОМ БЫТЬ НЕХИЩІНА ОТРАДА

*(The devil was captured by the Cross Tree and the evil and deception were defeated. The jaws of the hade were closed by the Tree for the salvation of the human).*

According to the Bible, the victory over death constitutes the most important victory of Christ, when ο ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος (1 Cor. 15:26).

To the left of the cross, one can notice an angel that collects the blood of Christ in a vessel. Blood – another symbol of death – simultaneously becomes a symbol of eternal life during the mystery of the Holy Communion, in accordance with the following words from the Gospel of Mark: τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ αἷμά μου τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυνόμενον (Mark 14:24). The inscription hanging by the left hand of Christ reads:

ИЗЪ РАНѢ ЛІСТЬСА КРОВЬ І ІАКО РЕКИ ѿ ГРЕХОВЪ МЫЕТЪ ВЕР҃НЫ  
ЧЛВКИ



*(The blood flows like a river from the wounds to cleanse the believers of their sins).*

The culmination of the idea of life is symbolized on the icon by the most beautiful flower of the flowering Cross – the symbolic image of the church with the figures of the four evangelists among the columns and their personal symbols above them. The inscription praises the church:

БЛАГОВЕСТВУЕТЪ ЦЕРКОВЬ ХРИСТОВА ВЕСЕЛАГА  
ХРИСТОВА БО КРОВЬ НА НЮ ИЗЛИЛАСА  
В НИ СПАСОШАСЯ ПРЕМНОГИ НАРОДЫ  
ПРИИША ВСЮДУ БЛАЖЕНЫ СВОБОДЫ

*(The Church of Christ relishes the wonderful news for the Blood of Christ was spilt upon her. Many nations were saved in her those that fully accepted the blissful liberties).*

Finally, two poems are written on top of the icon over the symbolic images of the sun and moon.

БГ ѿЦЪ ПРЕМИЛОСЕРДЫИ ЗАЛОГЪ  
ДАДЕ ЛЮДЕМЪ ТВЕРДЫ  
В ЛЮБВИ ПОСЛА В МИР НАМЪ СЫНА  
ХРИСТА ЗА БЛАГОСТЬ ЕДИНА  
НА КРЕСТЕ СЫН ТЕРПЕ СТРАСТИ  
СВОБОДИ МИРЪ СЕИ НАПАСТИ

*(God, the Merciful Father, like a faithful pledge sent His Son with love, Jesus Christ unique in His Virtue. The Son endured the Passion on the Cross and saved the world from temptation).*

СНЪ ИИСЪ ИСТОЩИСА  
БГЪ И ЧЕЛОВЕКЪ НАМЪ ЯВИСА  
В ЛЮБВИ ЕГО ВСЯКЪ СПАСЕТЬСА  
ВЕРНЫ В НЕБО ВОЗЪНЕСЕТЬСА  
ХРИСТОС ѿВЕРЗЪ РАИ СОБОЮ  
ИДИТЕ ВОНЪ ПРАВОТОЮ

*(Jesus Christ exhausted himself. Both God and Man, He appeared before us. We will all be saved in His Love. The believers will ascend into Heaven. Jesus Himself opened the Gates of Paradise where everyone should go).*

Many other symbolic images encircle the Cross. Among them, the traditional Christian symbols can be easily identified – the symbols of the Evangelists on the roof of the church and the walls of the heavenly city, the scale in the hands of the angel as a symbol of the ascent from

earth into heaven, etc. These symbols contribute to the composition of the message of the icon but the creator does not interpret them, as their symbolic significance is already established in Christian tradition and is known to all Christians. In other words, they become signals – “words” of a message that can be read only based on the interpretation of the three symbolic systems: the painted imagery, the poetic text, and the Bible, which constitutes the origin of the first two systems.

Let us conclude the main results of our study. Comparing these two typical representatives of the Baroque “talking icons” in the Cretan and Russian traditions one can observe the certain differences which have to do with the role of the poetic text in the whole message of the hagiographical work. The main of these are:

1. While in the case of Cretan icon the poetic text of the prayer existed before the creation of the complex hagiographical work and has its own independent sacred sense and role being part of the Church service, the lyrics on the Russian icon were originally composed in combination with copperplate representations and were never used without them. Moreover the creator of the pray “Μέγας εἰ, Κύριε” (“Great Art Thou, O Lord”) Sophronius of Jerusalem has the status and the authority of a holy person in the orthodox tradition, while the lyrics of the “Living Cross” were written by the executed by the official Church heretic.

2. The different relations between the poetic text and the image: while in the Cretan icon the image interprets the poetic text of the pray, in the “Living Cross” icon, on the contrary, the poetic text of Silvestre interprets the image.

3. Ioannis Kornaros added to the poetic text his own prosaic inscriptions which clarify the literal (and not the allegorical) meaning of the scenes depicted. Such inscriptions do not appear on the Russian icon.

4. The different use of metatexts: while on the Cretan icon a lot of Biblical metatexts appear together with the texts of other prayers and hymns are verbalized and placed in the complex “ensemble” of verbal and visual images, on the “Living Cross” icon only one Bible citation is verbalized, while the others are implied in the indirect references of the poetic texts and the visual images and can be properly interpreted only by the person with the necessary “background” knowledge of the Orthodox literature.

In spite of the obvious differences mentioned above one can easily observe the common features between these two works of art which allow us to consider them as manifestations of the same spiritual and cultural processes. In particular:

1. The emblematic (and not the symbolic) role of the visual image which requires the presence of the text as an obligatory comment which helps in the proper interpretation of an image.

2. In spite of the different relation of the image and the text in both hagiographical works, neither of them can be regarded as visual illustrations of the text or as the textual clarification of the image. It is more correct to say that both text and image in their unity formed the whole message of the work – the message of Greatness of the Creator and His creation in the first case and the message of equality of life and death and of the whole knowledge with the Sacrifice of the Christ in the second.

3. The certain common visual symbols such as the Sun and the Moon images which are included into the composition of both icons.

4. The hagiographical work itself, besides the sacred object of worship, acquires another role and becomes an instrument of the didactical and catechetical mission of the Church – in other words some sort of “visual materials” in the educational work of the enlightened clergy.

Let us stress that the different destiny of these two particular icon types in the Greek and Russian hagiography can serve as evidence of the differences in the social demand for the certain educational function of the holy icons. While in Greece only a unique work of the certain hagiographical type is saved which seems to have no continuation in the Cretan art, in Russia the copperplate of Vasili Andreev started an extremely fruitful and well-spread tradition with hundreds of copies of different sizes, techniques and quality, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. One masterful piece of the certain type (fig. 2) even managed to reach Greece and is currently kept at the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens (cat. 106–13) [Boycheva et al. 2014].

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