

A Cretan Icon of St George*

The Benaki Museum in Athens has recently acquired through the generosity of the A. Leventis Foundation an icon of St George slaying the dragon (Fig. 7.1). The panel measures 41 by 37 cm and bears the inscription in Greek in the lower left-hand corner *Χεῖρ Ἀγγέλου* [The Hand of Angelos], showing it to be the work of the Cretan painter recently identified as Angelos Akotantos. There is no date on the picture, but the painter's signature helps to date it to the first half of the fifteenth century. The work is significant both because of the importance of its painter and for the light it sheds on fifteenth-century painting in Crete.¹

More than 20 icons signed by Angelos have been located up to now and the fact that he used only his first name in his signature presumably indicates the extent of his fame.² Apart from the signed works, approximately 20 more icons are attributable to Angelos on iconographic and stylistic grounds. This impressive oeuvre clearly indicates the existence of a large workshop. Few of his icons are located in Crete itself, most of them being found in Sinai, Patmos, the Cyclades, the Ionian Islands, Athens (in the Byzantine and the Benaki museums) and in private collections in Greece and abroad.³ Some

* I am grateful to the Director of the Benaki Museum, Dr Angelos Delivorrias, and the Curator of its Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Collection, Mrs Laskarina Bouras, for having offered me the chance to study this icon. Mrs Bouras also helped me by discussing various aspects of the work with me. The photographs of the icon were taken by Mr M. Skiadaressis and Mr S. Stassinopoulos, to whom I am very grateful. The photographs in Figs 6.8, 6.9, 6.10 were kindly lent by Dr S. Maderakis.

¹ A short notice on the icon was published by L. Bouras in the *Bulletin of the Friends of the Benaki Museum* (July–Sept. 1986), 26–7, and a short article by P.L. Vokotopoulos has appeared: 'Δύο εικόνες του ζωγράφου Ἀγγέλου', *Φίλεια Ἔπη* 2 (1987), 410–14, Pls 66a, 66c, 69c.

² M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, 114. Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) also signed three of his Cretan icons by using his first name only (*Χεῖρ Δομηνίκου*), namely *St Luke painting the Virgin*, the *Adoration of the Magi* – both in the Benaki Museum – and the *Modena Triptych*; see M. Chatzidakis, 'Παρατηρήσεις στις υπογραφές του Δομηνίκου Θεοτοκόπουλου', *Zygos* (1964), nos 104–5, 79, Figs 1–3.

³ The most complete list of his signed and unsigned icons is given in M. Chatzidakis, *Ἑλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Ἄλωση*, 147–54.



Fig. 7.1. Athens, Benaki Museum. St George slaying the Dragon, icon (inv. no. 28129).

were shown in the exhibition *From Byzantium to El Greco*, held at the Royal Academy, London, in 1987.⁴

Until recently Angelos was thought to have been active in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries. This was because an icon of the Virgin Hodegetria bearing the signature *Χείρ κυρ-Αγγέλου τοῦ Κρητός* [The Hand of kyr-Angelos the Cretan] and the date *ΑΧΔ'* [1604] was described in a book published in 1888 on the collection of icons in the monastery of

⁴ *From Byzantium to El Greco*, nos 32–7, 49, 55–6, 167–72, Pls 100–105.

St George in Cairo,⁵ and again, 13 years later, in an article on the collection of icons of the Greek Patriarchate in Cairo.⁶ Since then all trace of this work has been lost. Its recorded inscription was for some time a source of puzzlement to art historians for the style of the group of icons signed by Angelos is of a kind not current in the seventeenth century and, as has been pointed out by Xyngopoulos and Chatzidakis, more closely resembles that of Cretan painting of the fifteenth century. Xyngopoulos noted stylistic affinities between Angelos' icon of St John the Baptist in a private collection in Athens and the wall paintings of St Constantine at Avdou, Crete, executed in 1445 by the Phokades.⁷ Chatzidakis emphasized that the iconographic types used by Angelos were those prevalent in the second half of the fifteenth century and that, had it not been for the Cairo icon, Angelos would certainly have been placed in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁸ However, they did not question the authenticity of the inscription on the Cairo icon.

In a recent article I was able to demonstrate that both the signature and the date on the lost icon must have been fake.⁹ It now seems certain that the late eighteenth-century Cretan painter Ioannis Kornaros¹⁰ was responsible, for he is known to have added forged inscriptions of this form to other works including one by Angelos in Mount Sinai.¹¹ By contrast, the genuine icons signed by Angelos all bear the simple inscription *Χεῖρ Ἀγγέλου*. Thus there is no longer any obstacle to placing Angelos in the fifteenth century as the stylistic evidence suggests. In fact, I was able to show that he is almost certainly the Cretan Angelos Akotantos,¹² whose name is known from the will he wrote on the occasion of a journey to Constantinople in 1436.¹³ That Angelos and Angelos Akotantos were one and the same was made evident by the correspondences between the known icons of Angelos and the contents of the testament. For example, references in the will imply a close relationship between Angelos Akotantos and the monastery of St Phanourios at Varsamonero, Crete, where icons by Angelos are found. The final clue to this identification was given by an icon in tondo form of St Catherine, a

⁵ G. Mazarakis, *Σημείωσις περί των εν τη κατά το παλαιόν Κάιρον ιερά μονή του αγίου Γεωργίου ευρεθεισών ιερών εικόνων* (Cairo, 1888), 272.

⁶ J. Strzygowski, 'Die Gemäldesammlung des griechischen Patriarcats in Kairo', *BZ* 4 (1895), 590–91.

⁷ Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιάσμα*, 170.

⁸ See M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, 114.

⁹ Vassilaki-Mavrakaki, 'Ο ζωγράφος Ἀγγελος'.

¹⁰ N.B. Tomadakis, 'Ιωάννης Κορνάρος, Κρης ζωγράφος (1745–1796?)', *KretChron* 2 (1948), 253–64. G.K. Spyridakis, 'Συμπληρωματικά εις τον ζωγράφον Ιωάννην Κορνάρου τον Κρήτα', in *Πεπραγμένα του Γ' Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Rethymnon 1971* 1 (Athens, 1975), 285–92. A. Papageorgiou, 'Δύο εικόνες του Μελετίου του Κρητός', in *Πεπραγμένα του Δ' Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Ηρακλειον 1976* 2 (Athens, 1981), 398–9. M. Chatzidakis, *Icones de Saint-Georges*, 196.2. Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιάσμα*, 226.3.

¹¹ Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιάσμα*, 169, Pl. 46.3. Vassilaki-Mavrakaki, 'Ο ζωγράφος Ἀγγελος', 292.

¹² Vassilaki-Mavrakaki, 'Ο ζωγράφος Ἀγγελος', 296–8.

¹³ Manoussakas, 'Η διαθήκη'.

painting documented in the testament. When this was located in Skradin, Dalmatia, it was obvious that it was the work of Angelos.¹⁴ It is now generally accepted that Angelos is a painter of the first half of the fifteenth century who lived in Candia (Herakleion), where he had established his workshop.¹⁵ He also held the office of *protopsalta* [first cantor] of Candia,¹⁶ and this helps to give a possible *terminus ante quem* for his death, since his successor to the office of *protopsalta* was appointed on 17 June 1450.¹⁷

The surviving material evidence indicates that the icons of Angelos were in great demand with Orthodox monastic centres (Sinai) and Orthodox monasteries and churches in Crete and outside (the monasteries of St Phanourios at Varsamonero and of the Virgin Hodegetria, both in Crete; the monastery of St John in Patmos and so on) and this probably dictated his iconographic vocabulary. He appears to be associated with an impressive range of subjects, such as the Embrace of Peter and Paul, the Deesis, the Virgin Kardiotissa, the Christ Pantokrator enthroned, St John the Baptist, St Catherine, the Virgin Zoodochos Pege (i.e., the Fountain of Life), which he either created or revived, or transferred from monumental art to icon-painting. From his surviving work we may conclude that Angelos specialized in military saints and established as an iconographic type the dragon-slaying military saint on foot, which he adopted for depictions of Sts Phanourios and Theodore.¹⁸ The icon in the Benaki Museum is the first to have appeared in which he is associated with the type of the dragon-slayer on horseback.

St George is here dressed in military uniform: a short tunic with long sleeves and a cuirass with gold ornamentation which has a single row of leather 'wings' on the saint's upper arms and a double row in the area of the

¹⁴ Vassilaki-Mavrakaki, 'Ο ζωγράφος 'Αγγελος', 297, Pl. IH.

¹⁵ N. Chatzidakis, *Icons of the Cretan School*, 17. Vokotopoulos, 'Δύο εικόνες του ζωγράφου 'Αγγέλου', 410. M. Chatzidakis, 'Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση', 147.

¹⁶ The *protopsaltes* were appointed by the Venetian authorities and paid from the public purse. Initially their duties were limited to those of chanter and teacher of music but later on they were given further duties similar to those of the *protopapades* [first priests], who held the highest position in the Greek hierarchy of Crete. Though this was not invariably the rule, the *protopsaltes* were normally characterized by their pro-Venetian or more often their pro-Catholic attitude. They did not officially serve for life but usually did so, unless there were serious reasons why not. T. Detorakis, *History of Crete* (Athens, 1986), 200. M. Manoussakas, 'Βενετικά έγγραφα αναφερόμενα εις την εκκλησιαστικήν ιστορίαν της Κρήτης του 14^{ου}-16^{ου} αιώνας (Πρωτοπαπάδες και πρωτοψάλται Χάνδακος)', *DIEE* 15 (1961), 149-233.

¹⁷ This unpublished document was found in the Registers of the *Duca di Candia* in the State Archives of Venice, A.D.C. B.26, fol. 160v, by the late Reverend Father Mario Cattapan, who very generously put this information at my disposal. It is dated 17 June 1450 and reads as follows: *Per Dominium constitutus fuit protopsalta grecorum Candide Petrus Gavala, Emmanuelis, loco Angeli Cotanti, cum modis et condicionibus quibus erat ipse Angelus.*

¹⁸ M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, 116-17, Pl. 27. N. Chatzidakis, *Icons of the Cretan School*, nos 6, 7, 8, 12, 22-4, 26-7. C. Baltoyanni in *Affreschi e Icone dalla Grecia*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 16 September - 16 November 1986 (Athens, 1986), no. 55, 96, Pl. 97. *From Byzantium to El Greco*, cited at n. 4 above, no. 32, 167-8. Vassilakes-Mavrakakes, 'Saint Phanourios', Pls 52, 57-8.

pelvis. He is wearing hose or tightly fitting pantaloons and boots resembling bandages tied around his legs. A red chlamys knotted at chest level extends behind him as he rides forward. St George has a round shield on his left arm and in his right hand holds a spear which he is plunging into the mouth of the dragon, a three-headed monster with red wings. The dragon's tail is wound around the hind legs of the horse, which rears up backwards in fear; its tail is knotted. In two quadrants on the upper right corner of the icon the hand of God is shown blessing the saint. The landscape setting of the composition consists of two diametrically opposed triangular rocks.

The theme of St George on horseback slaying the dragon¹⁹ was popular among Byzantine artists, but Angelos' composition differs from most Byzantine representations in some of its main iconographic features. For example, the only elements it shares with a contemporary fifteenth-century icon in the monastery of St Catherine at Sinai (Fig. 7.2)²⁰ are the knotted tail of the horse and the triangular rocks in the background. The Sinai composition – a typical Late Byzantine representation – is much more static: the movement of St George and the horse are restrained, the saint's uniform and the horse's harness are different and, as always in Byzantine depictions, the dragon assumes a snake-like form. There is no blessing hand of God in this icon, but this feature is to be found in other Byzantine representations of the subject.²¹

The depiction of St George in the icon of Angelos seems to be closer to an Italian representation of St George included among others in the polyptych of San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna (Fig. 7.3), attributed to Paolo Veneziano and dated to the mid fourteenth century.²² The similarities between the two compositions are mostly to be found in the type and movement of the horse, its harness and the type of dragon, rather than in St George himself – though his cuirass resembles that used by Angelos. This and St George's knotted chlamys may also be found in another saint from the same polyptych, St Michael slaying the dragon.²³ This is not the only case in

¹⁹ We should distinguish at the outset the iconographic type of the mounted St George slaying the dragon, represented in the Benaki Museum icon, from that of the mounted St George with the boy on the rump of the horse in which the saint is not slaying the dragon. Moreover, in the latter St George is shown in a more frontal and static pose. This type is undeniably older than that of the Benaki Museum icon and is to be found in many icons of the Crusader period. R. Cormack and S. Michalarias, 'A Crusader Painting of St George: "maniera greca" or "lingua franca"?', *BurlMag* (March 1984), 132–41, Figs 2, 8. Here the previous bibliography is to be found.

²⁰ G. and M. Soteriou, *Icons du Mont Sinai* (in Greek with French summary) (Athens, 1956–58), I, Fig. 233; II, 203–4.

²¹ See, for example, the wall painting of St George in the church of the Panagia at Moutoullas, Cyprus of 1280. D. Mouriki, 'The Wall Paintings of the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas, Cyprus', in *Byzanz und der Westen. Studien zur Kunst des Europäischen Mittelalters* (Vienna, 1984), 193–5, Fig. 20.

²² M. Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia* (University Park, PA, and London, 1970), 101–2, Figs 96–7.

²³ *Ibid.*, Pl. 100.

Fig. 7.2. Sinai,
monastery of
St Catherine.
St George slaying
the Dragon, icon.



which it appears that the Cretan painter may have been acquainted with the work of Paolo Veneziano. Angelos' military saints wear uniforms similar to those used by Paolo,²⁴ and the type of crown adopted for representations of St Catherine attributed to Angelos is common in depictions of the Virgin and female saints by the Venetian.²⁵ The incised haloes used by Angelos are

²⁴ Compare, for example, the military uniforms in *ibid.*, Figs 44, 91, 105, with those worn by the military saints Phanourios and Theodore in the icons by Angelos.

²⁵ The depiction of St Catherine in a tondo icon now in Skradin, Dalmatia (Vassilaki-Mavrakaki, 'Ο ζωγράφος 'Αγγελος', Pl. IH) and in a bilateral icon in the Museum of



Fig. 7.3. Bologna, San Giacomo Maggiore. Painter Paolo Veneziano, St George, panel from a polyptych.

also an extremely common feature in most of Paolo Veneziano's paintings.²⁶ The tondo form, a rare shape for icons, almost exclusively associated with Angelos, had also been used by Paolo Veneziano.²⁷ Finally, the iconographic subject of the dragon-slaying military saint on foot, which Angelos adopted for depictions of Sts Phanourios and Theodore had already been used by Paolo Veneziano.²⁸

This familiarity with the work of an Italian artist is by no means unique in the history of Cretan painting. In fact, the paintings of Paolo Veneziano also influenced the work of other fifteenth-century Cretan painters (Andreas

Recklinghausen (T. Chatzidakis, *L'art des icônes*, Fig. 4), both attributed to Angelos, borrows iconographic features (the type of the saint's crown, the palm branch in her left hand) from representations of female saints to be found in the work of Veneziano. See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, Figs 28, 34, 74, 79, 104, 105, 107–8, 109–10.

²⁶ Incised haloes were employed by Angelos in the icon depicting the Deesis in the Kanellopoulos Collection. See N. Chatzidakis, *Icons of the Cretan School*, no. 5, 19, 22, Fig. 5.

²⁷ Angelos adopted the tondo shape for his representation of St Catherine (see above n. 14) and of the Embrace of Peter and Paul in a series of icons. See M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, no. 74, 122–3, Pl. 45. N. Chatzidakis, *Icons of the Cretan School*, no. 15, 28, Pl. 15. Paolo Veneziano used the tondo shape of icon for the representation the Veil of St Veronica in the John Pope-Hennessy Collection. See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, Fig. 103.

²⁸ In the representation of the archangel St Michael in a polyptych located in the Art Museum of Worcester, MA. Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, Fig. 105.

Ritzos, Nikolaos Tzafouris),²⁹ and Cretan artists, such as Andreas Pavius and Nikolaos Tzafouris, clearly had a deep knowledge of Late Gothic art.³⁰ This was a natural consequence of the Venetian occupation of the island, dating back to 1210. The coexistence of the Greek and the Venetian populations, especially in the urban centres of the island, brought about a confluence of Byzantine and Western culture at every level of cultured life. It is documented that as early as the fourteenth century a number of Venetian painters were living in Candia.³¹ Cretan artists also travelled to Venice, either settling there or staying as long as it took to execute their commissions.³² The Latin monasteries and churches of Crete were decorated with works of Western religious art, wall paintings, altarpieces, crucifixes and other portable works of art.³³ Cretan painters undertook commissions for both Greek and Venetian clients. Eventually they became able to operate within both artistic traditions, either *alla maniera greca* or *alla maniera italiana*, depending on the nationality and taste of their clients.³⁴

²⁹ For example, the type of throne used by Andreas Ritzos (c.1421–92) for the icon of the Virgin Pantanassa at Patmos (M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, no.10, 60–61, Pl. 12) shows elements included in panel paintings by Paolo Veneziano (cf. Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, Figs 34, 39, 68, 74). In the icon of the Pietà from the Benaki Museum, which is attributed to Nikolaos Tzafouris (second half of the 15th c.; *From Byzantium to El Greco*, cited at n. 4 above, no. 45, 178, Pl. 45), a number of iconographic details have been borrowed from Venetian painting of the 14th c. and especially from the work of Paolo Veneziano (cf. Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, Fig. 25).

³⁰ This is shown, for example, in the Crucifixion by Andreas Pavius (c.1440–1504) in the National Gallery of Athens (N. Chatzidakis, *Icons of the Cretan School*, 31–2, Pl. 20) and a series of icons with Christ as the Man of Sorrows by Nikolaos Tzafouris, which are located in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; the Byzantine Museum, Athens; the Kanellopoulos Museum, Athens; and the island of Patmos. See Weitzmann *et al.*, *The Icon*, Pl. on 322–3. M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, no. 40, 88–9, Pls 33, 101. N. Chatzidakis, *Icons of the Cretan School*, no. 46, 52. *From Byzantium to El Greco*, cited at n. 4 above, no. 44, 177–8.

³¹ Among the painters documented as living and working in Candia during the 14th c., we find Tedaldo Giacchino di Venezia (1324–47) and Gradenigo Benedetto di Venezia (1392–1400). See Cattapan, 'Nuovi elenchi', 201.

³² Information about Cretan artists who lived and worked in Venice from the 16th c. onwards is found in the Archives of the Greek Community of Venice. The lack of evidence about previous centuries is due to the fact that the Greek Community of Venice was officially established only by the end of the 15th c. Manoussakas, 'Έλληνες ζωγράφοι', 212–16. However, we do know that in 1453 the Constantinopolitan painter Nikolaos Philanthropenos, an inhabitant of Candia, was working on the mosaic decoration of San Marco in Venice. See Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, 'A Fifteenth-century'.

³³ G. Gerola, 'Gli oggetti sacri di Candia salvati a Venezia', *Atti dell'I.R. Accademia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti degli Agiati* IX, 3rd series, III–IV (1903), 7–8.

³⁴ M. Chatzidakis, 'La peinture'. T. Gouma-Peterson, 'Crete, Venice, the "Madonneri" and a Cretan-Venetian Icon in the Allen Art Museum', *Bulletin, Oberlin College* (Winter 1968), 53–86. To my knowledge, the first commissions for paintings *in forma a la latina* are recorded in 1499 (Cattapan, 'Nuovi elenchi', 211–13, doc. nos 6–8). See also M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, 'Icons, the Public, and Taste in Venetian Crete in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries' (unpublished MA report, Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 1986), and by the same author 'Οι κρητικοί ζωγράφοι'.

Cretan painting of this period is, of course, characterized not only by the penetration of Western elements but also by its Late Byzantine quality. Compositions are idealized, with a high degree of ordered organization, and characterized by a refined treatment of every detail and the use of thin white lines in a net or a parallel arrangement. These features derived from Late Byzantine Palaiologan painting of the fourteenth century as found in churches in Constantinople (the Chora Monastery (Kariye Çamii), the Pammakaristos-Fethiye Çamii)³⁵ or in areas outside where there was a strong Constantinopolitan influence or artists from that city were at work (e.g. the Perivleptos at Mystras).³⁶ The presence of Constantinopolitan painters in Candia, already documented by the end of the fourteenth century, was presumably instrumental in making Cretan painters familiar with current stylistic trends in the capital of Byzantium.³⁷ The influence of Byzantium is equally obvious in Cretan wall painting of the period. Late Byzantine stylistic features are to be found in the churches painted by the Phokades (St George at Embaros, 1436; St Constantine at Avdou, 1445; and St George at Apano Symi, in two phases c.1436–78), as well as the churches of the Virgin at Sklaverochori, St Athanasios and St Paraskeve at Episkopi.³⁸

Such Palaiologan features are present in the Benaki Museum icon. Since the face of St George has suffered some damage it is mainly the rendering of the drapery and horse and the hand of God that offer themselves up to stylistic analysis. The design is clear-cut and sharply modelled, but coldness is avoided through the painterly use of refined brushwork. Every detail is carefully designed, modelled and executed – the flesh of God's hand modelled with white highlights, the folds in the sleeve of God's hand rendered with golden lines, the flowing red chlamys of the saint, the eye and the nostril of the horse (Fig. 7.4) and so on.

The popularity of St George and Angelos' high reputation resulted in this composition being widely adopted in detail by following generations of painters. Only the feature of the three-headed dragon was abandoned in favour of the more common one-headed creature. Thus Angelos' treatment of the subject became definitive: icons now in Crete (Fig. 7.5), Kérkyra, Sifnos, Cyprus, Patmos, Venice (Fig. 7.6), the Vatican, in a private collection

³⁵ M. Chatzidakis, 'Classicisme et tendances populaires au XIVe siècle. Les recherches sur l'évolution du style', in *Actes du XIVe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines* 1 (1971), (Bucharest, 1974), 164–6, 177–82. P.A. Underwood, ed., *The Kariye Djami* 1–3 (New York, 1966), 4 (Princeton, 1975). H. Belting, C. Mango and D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul* (Washington, DC, 1978).

³⁶ G. Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra* (Paris, 1910), Pls 108–31. M. Chatzidakis, *Mystras. The Medieval City and the Castle: A Complete Guide to the Churches, Palaces and the Castle* (Athens, 1981), Figs 46–57.

³⁷ M. Chatzidakis, 'Recherches sur le peintre Théophane le Crèteois', *DOP* 23–4 (1969–70), 335.

³⁸ *Byzantinisches Kreta*, 456–8, 410–11, 447–50, Figs 429–32, 421–5, Pls 130–34, 124, 135–9. (St Athanasios and St Paraskeve). *Ibid.*, 131, 395–7, Figs 364–7. M. Chatzidakis, 'Recherches sur le peintre Théophane le Crèteois', 336.

Fig. 7.4. Detail
of Fig. 7.1.



in London, and one sold at auction in 1981 (Fig. 7.7)³⁹ repeat its iconographic type. The impressive number of these icons – at least 12 have either survived or are known to us out of a much larger production – and their chronology – which ranges from the second half of the fifteenth to the late seventeenth century – reflect the importance this composition by Angelos acquired.

The impact of Angelos' composition is also evident in the work of wall painters. There are close iconographical and stylistic parallels to the icon of St George in representations of the same subject in two churches in

³⁹ (Crete) M. Borboudakis, *Εικόνες του νομού Χανίων* (Athens, 1975), no. 32, 93–4, Fig. 32. (Kérkyra) P.L. Vokotopoulos, in *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, no. 31, 128, Pl. 131. (Sifnos) T.C. Aliprantis, *Θησαυροί της Σίφνου. Εικόνες των ναών και των μονών* (Athens, 1979), 31, Pls IZ, IH, 14. (Cyprus) *Byzantine Museum* (Nicosia, 1983), no. 124, Fig. 24. (Patmos) M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, no. 135, 75, 159, Pls 64, 92. (Venice) M. Chatzidakis, *Icones de Saint-Georges*, no. 100, 119, Pl. 58. M. Manoussakas and A. Paliouras, *Guide to the Museum of Icons and the Church of St George* (Venice, 1976), 41, Pl. XXIV and frontispiece. Weitzmann *et al.*, *The Icon*, 312, Fig. on 328. Initially the icon was dated to the early 17th c.; now a date to the last quarter of the 15th c. is accepted. (Vatican) A. Muñoz, *I quadri bizantini della Pinacoteca Vaticana* (Rome, 1928), Pl. XX.3. The signature of the Cretan painter Angelos Bitzamanos (late 15th c.) was read on the icon. See M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos*, 76, no. 6 and Bianco-Fiorin, 'L'attività', 90–91, Figs 6–7 (private collection, London). L. Bouras in *From Byzantium to El Greco*, cited at n. 4 above, no. 59, 187–8, Pl. 59. (Sotheby's) *Catalogue of Fine Icons – Sotheby's* (London, 7 December 1981), nos 29 and 48, 20–21, 29, Figs on 21, 29. In the first icon the iconographic feature of the Princess of Lassia (standing on a mountain on the right-hand side) has been added to the composition but apart from this the iconographic scheme is a faithful copy of the composition by Angelos.

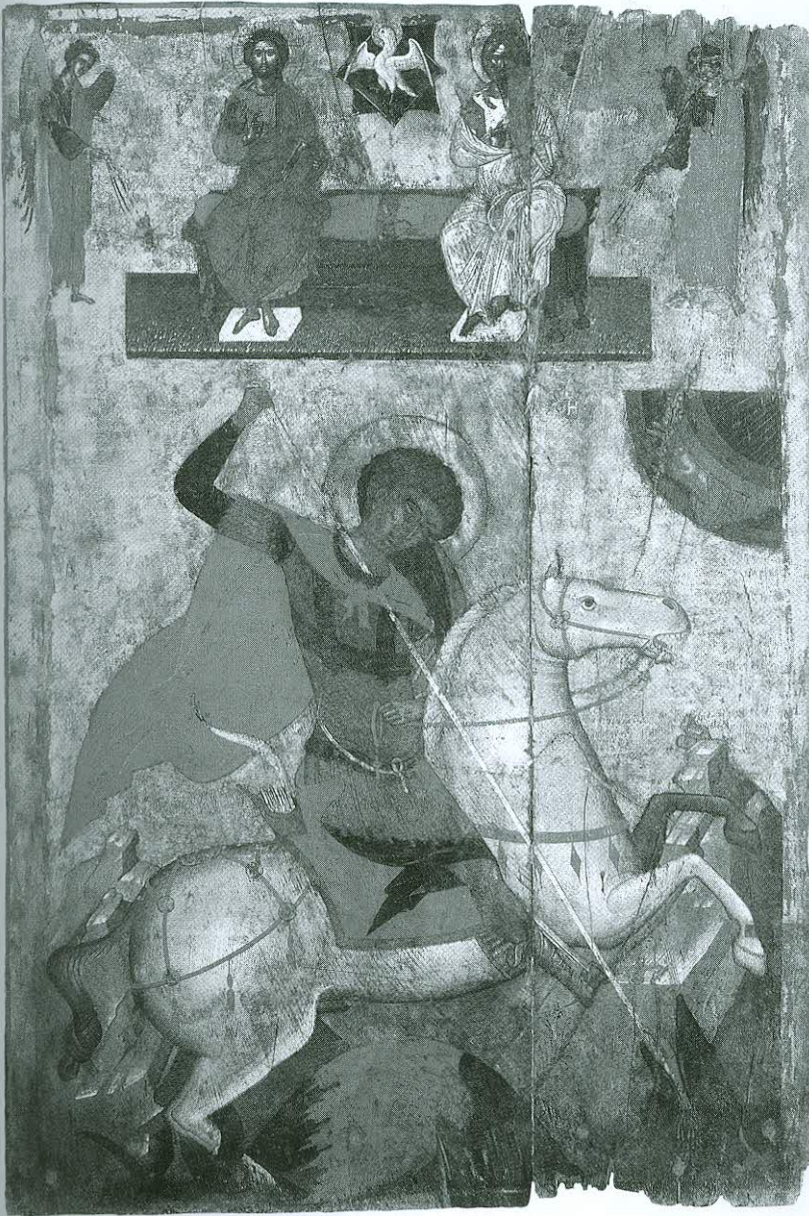


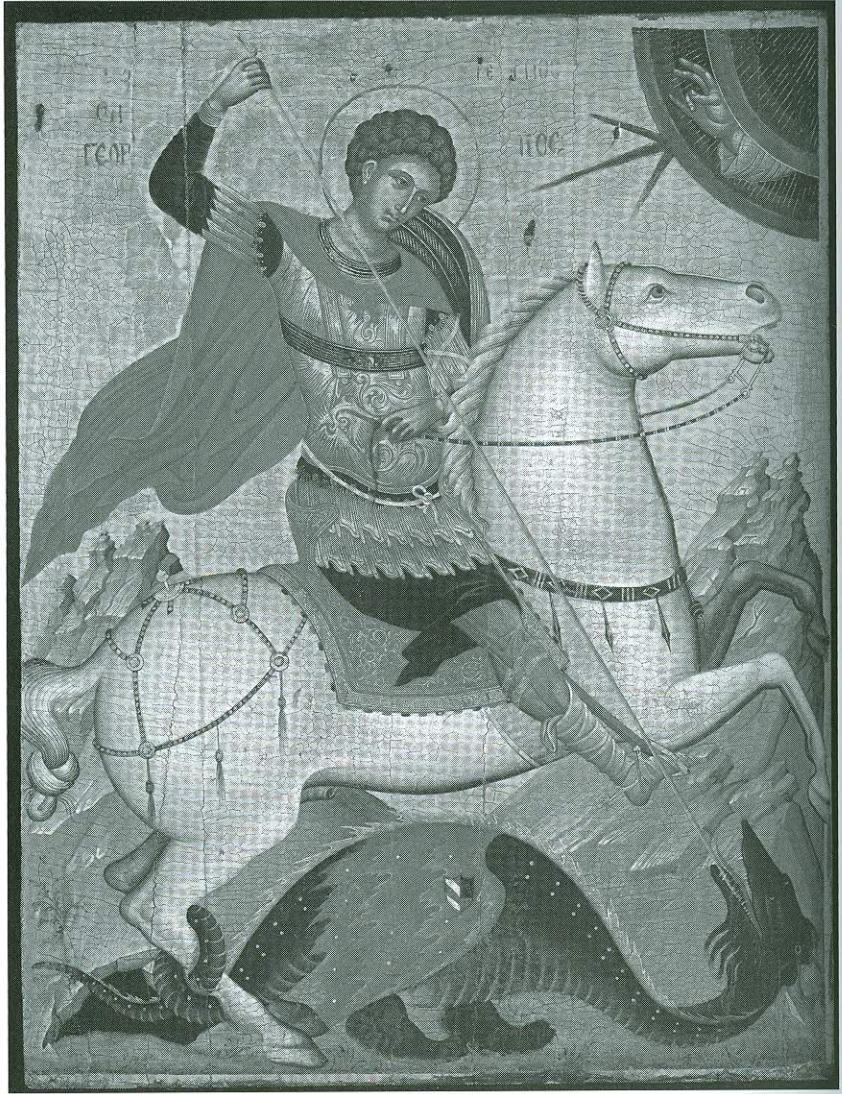
Fig. 7.5. Crete, Archaeological Museum Chania. The Holy Trinity and St George, icon.

western Crete, St Isidore at Kakodiki, dated 1421 (Fig. 7.8),⁴⁰ and St Nicholas at Prasses, datable to the first half of the fifteenth century (Fig. 7.9).⁴¹ In a third mural depiction of St George the iconographic influence of Angelos is still more evident – the wall decoration of the church of St Panteleimon at

⁴⁰ *Byzantinisches Kreta*, 218, Fig. 167.

⁴¹ K.E. Lassithiotakis, 'Εκκλησίες της Δυτικής Κρήτης', *KretChron* 21. II (1969), 461–2, Figs 104–7.

Fig. 7.6. Venice,
The Hellenic
Institute,
Museum of Icons.
St George, icon.



Prodromi also in western Crete, which may be dated on stylistic grounds to the early fifteenth century (Fig. 7.10).⁴² The type of horse, its harness and knotted tail, the shape of the dragon, the saint's red chlamys and the hand of God are features quite similar to those employed by Angelos, though the quality of execution is very poor.

This type of St George became current outside Crete, in the provinces of Byzantium, and its influence can be felt on artists working in other media. For example, the metal cross of Tchekhari in Georgia dated to the end of the

⁴² S. Maderakis, 'Η κόλαση και οι ποινές των κολαζομένων σαν θέματα της Δευτέρας παρουσίας στις εκκλησίες της Κρήτης', *Ύδωρ εκ Πέτρας* 2 (1978), 230, no. 73.



Fig. 7.7. Sold at Sotheby's, London, 1981. St George, icon.

fifteenth century includes a representation of St George in which the horse and dragon and the hand of God are similar in detail to those in Angelos' composition (Fig. 7.11).⁴³ It is perhaps difficult to imagine how a Georgian artist could have become aware of a composition established by a Cretan painter, but Angelos' trip to Constantinople in 1436 may provide the link which explains how the type reached Georgia.

The historical interest of the Benaki Museum icon derives from the fact that it shows that what subsequently came to be an archetype for the treatment of St George on horseback killing the dragon in Post-Byzantine art derived many of its features from Venetian art. In this we can see something of how Post-Byzantine art was affected by the cross-fertilization of Cretan painting with Italian art.

⁴³ C. Amiranachvili, *L'art des ciseleurs géorgiens* (Paris, 1971), 152, 154, Fig. 97.

Fig. 7.8. Crete,
church of
St Isidore at
Kakodiki.
St George, wall
painting.





Fig. 7.9. Crete, Kydonia, church of St Nicholas at Prasses. St George, wall painting.

Fig. 7.10. Crete, Selino, church of St Panteleimon at Prodromi. St George, wall painting.

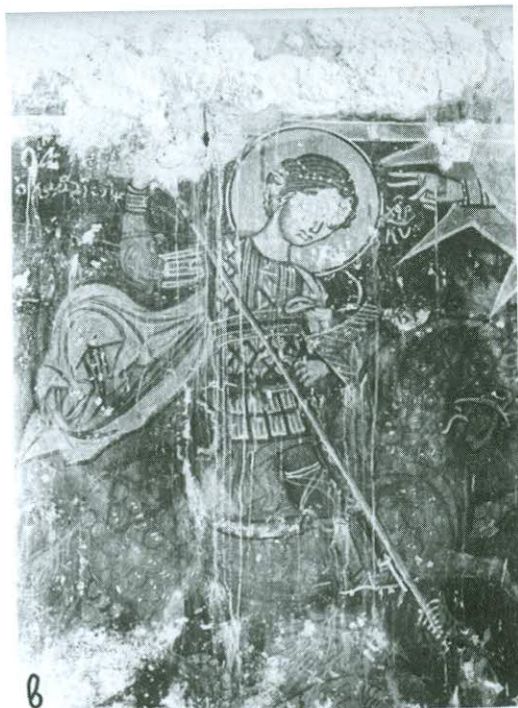


Fig. 7.11 Georgia, Tchekhari. St George, detail from a metal cross.

