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DE GRUYTER

STEATITE ICON WITH SAINT JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN

YANNIS D. VARALIS/VOLOS

With 6 figures on plates VI-VII

In memory of Professor Blaga Aleksova

Objects of minor arts are so rare in the archaeological record that their discovery in the course of an excavation is already in itself worth noticing. Of great importance in such cases is that the archaeological context can offer us information on the origin and date of these artefacts, which is far more secure and precise than the results of any stylistic analysis, no matter how painstaking this is. A precious example of such an object is the steatite icon discovered in 1952 at Demir Kapija, at a site near the byzantine castle of Prosakos, today kept at the Collection of Archaeology of the "Museum of Macedonia" in Skopje (inv. no. 84). This icon was first published by Konstantin Petrov in 1964,¹ it was later included in the first book of Blaga Aleksova on Prosakos² and has consequently appeared in the bibliography concerning the byzantine sculpted icons of the region.³ Nevertheless, rarely have a

I would like to thank wholeheartedly the former Director of the Museum of Macedonia, Meri Anicin Pejaska, for granting me permission to study this steatite icon, and the archaeologists of the Museum Lidija Blaževska and Kiril Traikovski, who have facilitated my research at the Museum in December 2009, as well as Prof. Carolyn Snively for her support and guidance. I also wish to thank Christina Mitsopoulou and Alexandros Gounaris for the preparation of plate VII73. This study was presented at the Thirtieth Symposium of Byzantine and Post-byzantine Archaeology and Art, organized by the Christian Archaeological Society, Athens, Greece (May 14-16, 2010), cf.: Πρόγραμμα και περίληψεις Εισηγήσεων και Ανακοινώσεων. Athens 2010, 17. My thanks go also to Prof. Elizabeta Dimitrova, for her kindness to read a draft of my study, to Olga Karagiorgou who checked the final version of this paper, and to the anonymous readers of this article for their precious suggestions.

¹ K. PETROV, Dva srednovekovni figuralni reljefi od Makedonija. *Godišen Zbornik na Filozofskiot Fakultet na Universitetot vo Skopje* 16 (1964) 103-116.

² B. ALEKSOVA, Prosek - Demir Kapija. Slovenska nekropola i slovenske nekropole u Makedoniji. Skopje and Beograd 1966, pl. VII, fig. 33.

³ P. MILJKOVIĆ-PEPEK, Medieval Decorative Sculpture in Stone and Metal, in K. Bojadžievski (ed.), *Macedonian National Treasures*. Ljubljana and Skopje 1989, 204; K. TOTEV, Kamenni ikoni ot srednovekovna Bălgarija. *Arheologija Sofija* 35/1 (1993) 11-12, fig. 2; B. ALEKSOVA, *Loca Sanctorum Macedoniae. The Cult of Martyrs in Macedonia from the 4th to the 9th Centuries*. Skopje 1997, colour pl. 36; S. FILIPOVA, Arhitektonska dekorativna skulptura vo Makedonija, 5-6 i 11-12 vek. Skopje / Melbourne 1997, 74, pls CVIII.1, CXXIV.3. The icon has

specific place of origin and a precise date been ascribed to it. In this paper, I shall argue that the steatite icon has very close similarities with products of minor arts originating from Thessalonike and that it can be dated to the late thirteenth or the early fourteenth century.

I. The Context

Prosakos, recorded as “φρούριον” and “ἔρουμα” (i. e. a castle, a fortified settlement) in Nicetas Choniates’ *Historia*, is located by modern scholarship to the East-Southeast of the modern village of Demir Kapija, the Turkish name for the “Iron Gates” of the Vardar river (Axios).⁴ Choniates’ description of the steep, up to 220 m, precipices of the abrupt rocks that border the Vardar to the East of its confluence with the river Bošava is quite accurate.⁵ The site has been identified (although not unanimously) with *Stenae*, the Roman station mentioned in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.⁶

been exhibited on several occasions: cf. V. SANEV/V. SOKOLOVSKA/B. BABIĆ (eds.), *Od arheološkoto bogatstvo na S.R. Makedonija*, exhibition catalogue, Muzei na Makedonija. Skopje 1980, 140 no. 818; K. BALABANOV/V. POPOVSKA-KOROBAR (eds.), *Ikone iz Makedonije*, exhibition catalogue, Muzejski proctor. Zagreb 1987, 11, 44, 99 no. 16; *Trésors médiévaux de la République de Macédoine*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Musée national du moyen âge, Thermes de Cluny. Paris 1999, 54–55 no. 15 (V. POPOVSKA-KOROBAR).

⁴ Nicetae Choniatae *Historia*, ed. I. A. VAN DIETEN. *CFHB*, 11. Berlin / New York 1975, 502–508 and 533–534. For an English translation of Choniates’ text, see H. J. MAGOULIAS, *O City of Byzantium*, *Annals of Niketas Choniates*. Detroit, Michigan 1984, 277–280, 292–293, respectively. For the synonyms of “kastron” in Choniates’ text, see A. KAZHDAN, *Byzantine Town and Trade as Seen by Niceta Choniates*. *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995) 213. For a comprehensive history of the site, cf. V. KRAVARI, *Villes et villages de Macédoine occidentale*. Paris 1989, 41–48 *passim*, 149–150.

⁵ Nicetae Choniatae *Historia* (as footnote 4 above) 502; MAGOULIAS (as footnote 4 above) 277.

⁶ Cf. F. PAPAIOGLOU, *Les villes de Macédoine à l’époque romaine*, *BCH, Suppl.* XVI. Paris 1988, 177, 324–326, with further bibliography; I. MIKULČIĆ, *Topografija na Stenae–Prosek–Demir Kapija*, *Godišen Zbornik na Filozofskiot Fakultet na Universitetot vo Skopje* 41–42 (1988–89) 65–67; ALEKSOVA (as footnote 3 above) 245–246. Recently, K. RISTOV (DelniCata Stenae–Tauriana na *Tabula Peutingeriana*. *Macedoniae Acta Archeologica* 16, 1997–99, 136–141) suggested that *Stenae* should be identified with Budur Ćiflik, to the South of Demir Kapija.

The castle was deserted from the beginning of the eleventh century until the end of the twelfth, as attested by Choniates and Skylitzes.⁷ Prosakos was under the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Moglena probably until the end of the twelfth century.⁸ The political and military instability of the period around 1200 was the probable reason for the region’s transfer under the bishopric of Strumitza, according to Demetrios Chomatenos († c. 1236).⁹ In fact, several powers claimed Prosakos and its region in this period: from 1197, it seems to have served as the base of the troops under Dobromir Hrs (Chrysos) a Bulgarian prince or, according to other scholars, a magnate of Vlach origin, who successfully led an attack against the troops of Emperor Alexios III around 1200.¹⁰ The castle and its surrounding area seem to have been ceded to the Bulgarian tsar Kalojan by 1201¹¹ and, subsequently, to his nephew, the rebellious magnate Strež.¹² The site was briefly occupied by the forces of the Despotate of Epirus around 1219 and was later included in the Second Bulgarian Kingdom under John Asen II, following the battle of Klokotnica (1230).¹³ It then became part of the Empire of Nicaea and was, thus, under Byzantine rule in the aftermath of the battle of

⁷ Nicetae Choniatae *Historia* (as footnote 4 above) 502; MAGOULIAS (as footnote 4 above) 277; Ioannis Scylitzae *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. I. THURN. *CFHB*, 5. Berlin / New York 1973, 358 line 88.

⁸ *ODB* 3 (1991) 1738, s.v. ‘Prosek’ (R. BROWNING).

⁹ Demetrii Chomateni *Ponemata Diaphora*, letter no. 131, ed. G. PRINZING. *CFHB*, 38. Berlin / New York 2002, 248*–249*, 403–405, esp. 404 lines 44–45; H. GELZER, *Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistümerverzeichnisse der orientalischen Kirche*. *BZ* 2 (1893) 50. D. SIMON, *Die Bußbescheide des Erzbischofs Chomatian von Ohrid*. *JÖB* 37 (1987) 254–255 no. 8.

¹⁰ N. RADOJČIĆ, *O nekim gospodarima grada Proseka na Vardaru*. *Letopis Matice Srpske* 159 (1909) 1–19; 160 (1909) 32–40; P. MUTAČIEV, *Vladetelitē na Prosēk*. *Zbornik na Bālgarskata Akademija na naukite* 1/2 (1913) 1–85; R. LEE WOLFF, *The ‘Second Bulgarian Empire’. Its Origin and History to 1204*. *Speculum* 24 (1949) 188 and note 53. Cf. also ALEKSOVA (as footnote 2 above) 17–18. For a possible Vlach origin of Chrysos, cf. P. S. NASTUREL, *Les Valaques balkaniques aux Xe–XIIIe siècles (Mouvements de population et colonisation dans la Roumanie grecque et latine)*. *ByzF* 7 (1979) 110.

¹¹ Nicetae Choniatae *Historia* (as footnote 4 above) 619; MAGOULIAS (as footnote 4 above) 339. Cf. F. DÖLGER, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des öströmischen Reiches*, 2. Teil, 3. Munich 1995 (2nd ed.), 331, no. 1653 and 335, no. 1661b.

¹² C. ASDRACHA, *La région des Rhodopes aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles. Étude de géographie historique*. Athens 1976, 240–241.

¹³ I. KARAYANNOPOULOS, *Πολιτική ιστορία*, in M. Sakellariou (ed.), *Μακεδονία. 4000 χρόνια Ελληνικής ιστορίας και πολιτισμού*. Athens 1994, 307–309.

Pelagonia (1259). Finally, around 1328 (or slightly earlier) it became part of the Serbian State of Stephen Dušan.¹⁴

The archaeological investigation in the area of Demir Kapija has brought to light various vestiges dating from the prehistoric to the medieval period.¹⁵ A number of fortresses and building remains have been located and identified by Ivan Mikulčić on the peaks of the gigantic rocks that border the bed of the Axios river.¹⁶ Blaga Aleksova's excavations uncovered an Early Christian basilica and a medieval cemetery at the site of Crkvište, on the eastern outskirts of the modern village.¹⁷ A second, possibly also Late Antique, basilica and two medieval buildings of secular use have been unearthed by Nevenka Petrović at the top plateau of a steep hill, called Manastir, situated at the West edge of the Iron Gates' canyon.¹⁸ Although the steatite icon has been presented on several occasions as originating from Crkvište, it is entirely certain that it belonged to the excavation finds from the site

¹⁴ ALEKSOVA (as footnote 2 above) 18. As early as 1308 the Treaty of Lys, prepared by Uroš Miljutin and Charles of Vallois, stipulated that the region would be delivered to the Serbs. Cf. A. LAIOU, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II (1282–1328)*. Cambridge, Massachusetts 1972, 209–211.

¹⁵ A. STANOJEVIĆ, *Preistorijski i arheološki ostaci na Srednjem Vardaru*. *Starinar* 1 (1922) 295–297; J. KOROŠEĆ, *Zaštitno istraživanje u Demir Kapiji 1948 god. (preistorija)*. *Izdanija na Arheološkiot Muzej Skopje, Zbornik* 1 (1955–56) 90–107; D. VUČKOVIĆ-TODOROVIĆ, *Grčki grob iz Demir Kapije*. *Starinar* 9–10 (1958–59) 281–286; eadem, *Antička Demir Kapija*. *Starinar* 12 (1961) 229–269; ALEKSOVA (as footnote 2 above); V. SOKOLOVSKA, *Novija arheološka iskopavanja u Demir Kapiji*. *Starinar* 24–25 (1973–74) 183–192; eadem, *Arheološki iskopavanja vo Demir Kapija*. *Macedoniae Acta Archeologica* 4 (1978) 93–111.

¹⁶ MIKULČIĆ (as footnote 6 above) 67–87; idem, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien, Städte – Vici – Refugien – Kastelle*. Munich 2002, 332–335, nos 263–264, topographic plan no. 5. For a comprehensive history of the archaeological investigations in the region, cf. D. KOCO/C. GROZDANOV/B. ALEKSOVA/V. BITRAKOVA-GROZDANOVA/V. SANEV (eds.), *Arheološka karta na Republika Makedonija, II. Skopje* 1996, 226–230.

¹⁷ ALEKSOVA (as footnote 2 above) 19–102; KOCO et al. (as footnote 16 above) 229–230 (s.v. 'Crkvište'; B. ALEKSOVA).

¹⁸ N. PETROVIĆ, *Demir Kapija. Arhitektonski nalazi na sektoru 'Manastir'*. *Starinar* 12 (1961) 217–227. The basilica was recognized by MIKULČIĆ (as footnote 16 above) 69–70 and note 16, and a restituted plan was given by V. LILČIĆ, *Tragi na ranohristijanski baziliki vo srednoto Povardarie*. *Lihnid* 7 (1989) 75–76 no. 25, figs 24–26. Cf. also idem, *Makedonskiot kamen za bogovite hristijanite i za život po životot. Anticka kamena arhitektonska plastika vo Republika Makedonija, II. Skopje* 2002, 921 no. 136, and ALEKSOVA (as footnote 3 above) 248. I am not convinced, as yet, that this basilica is an Early Christian one, unless the still unpublished finds in the layers at the foundations of the church corroborate such a date.

of Manastir, which included also a number of twelfth- and thirteenth-century coins, unfortunately still unpublished.¹⁹

II. The Icon

The icon is made of a dark green soft stone with slightly reddish veins near the lower left corner (**pl. VI/1**). It is 6.7 cm long and 5.6 cm wide; the overall thickness is about 0.9 cm. The rectangular plaque is broken along the rim. The icon's surface is damaged, especially on the shoulder of the saint. John is identified by an incised inscription in two columns on either side of the halo: 'Ο ἄγ(ι)ος | 'Ιω(άννης) – ὁ Θε|ο|λό|γ(ος). The left part of the inscription has been engraved on an already flaked background.

The evangelist is depicted in half-length bust, turned to the right and holding his Gospel book slightly open, so that the edges of the pages are shown as parallel lines. He wears a chiton, partly visible at the base of the neck over the chest, and a himation that covers quite tightly his back and right arm. The carving of the garment is rather schematic and all folds are shallow, except from the main one, whose high relief makes it look like a strip of cloth coming from the backside and passing under the saint's wrist in order to round firmly his right hand. The head projects against a circular halo, defined by a slightly bulged line between two circular incisions. The face is elongated, the forehead enlarged and the hairline stops at the temples; the beard is long with straight hair made of vertical and slightly oblique incisions at the edge (**pl. VI/2**). The two horizontal wrinkles on the saint's forehead can be seen only when the icon is viewed from the side. A few other wrinkles are incised near the right eye and on the bulged right cheekbone. The face is rendered with surprisingly realistic features, such as the almond-shaped eyes with carefully pronounced lids and the faintly crooked nose with outstretching nostrils. All facial features, the high forehead, the slanting sad eyes,

¹⁹ PETROVIĆ (as footnote 18 above) 221: "Među ostalima je jedna kamena pločica ca reljefno obrađenim likom Jovana Teologa." The same is stated by VUČKOVIĆ-TODOROVIĆ (as footnote 15 above) 237. The origin of the piece from Manastir is also explicitly mentioned in the inventory book of the Museum of Macedonia. The monetary finds are referred to by PETROVIĆ, *Antička Demir Kapija* (as footnote 18 above) 221 (who mentions coins of the Komnenian period), by PETROV (as footnote 1 above) 103, note 3, who dates them to the tenth–twelfth centuries, and by M. IVANOVSKI in KOCO et al. (as footnote 16 above) 229 (s.v. 'Manastir-Varnici'), who attributes them to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries.

the hooked nose, the bulging cheeks, the small mouth, contribute in rendering the portrait of an old author who meditates over the text of his open Gospel.

The relief is quite high, reaching 0.4 cm at certain points, such as the forehead, the cheekbone, and the right elbow. We may discern at least three main planes of carving with few gradually carved surfaces in-between: the background and the halo constitute the first plane; the second is formed by the apostle's face, forehead and chest; and the third consists of the projecting covered parts, like the saint's rear and elbow. Thus, the evangelist's curved back looks almost hunched, while the sloping narrow shoulders emphasize the volume of his body (pl. VI/3). The weak hair locks at the back of the head and the linear beard intensifies the impression of an overaged man, represented with a great sense of three-dimensionality against a flat background.

Saint John the Theologian appears very rarely in works of byzantine carving.²⁰ Apart from Christ, the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist, other saints enjoying a certain popularity on steatite icons, cameos and ivory panels, include hierarchs (e.g. Saint Nicholas), military saints (e.g. Saints Theodore and Demetrios), or the Archangel Michael.²¹ On middle byzantine cameos, Saint John is depicted frontally or turned slightly to the left, holding a closed Gospel book usually in the left hand. This iconographic type can be seen on various examples of byzantine micro-glyptic: a tenth-century cameo adorning the sumptuous cover of the Lectionary of Otto III (Bavarian State Library, Munich, inv. no. 4453),²² a almost identical cameo of the same date at the Hessisches

²⁰ For the iconography of Saint John in general, cf. W. BRAUNFELS (ed.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* 7 (1974) 108–130, s.v. 'Johannes der Evangelist (der Theologe)' (M. LECHNER) and C.P. CHARALAMPIDIS, *Tipologia della rappresentazione iconografica di Giovanni il Teologo*, in L. Padovese (ed.), *Atti del IV Simposio di Efeso su S. Giovanni apostolo*. Roma 1994, 217–228.

²¹ Compare, for example, my observations on the depictions of various saints on metal icons, in D. PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZIS (ed.), *Everyday Life in Byzantium*, exhibition catalogue, Thessalonike, White Tower, October 2001 – January 2002. Athens 2002, 161–162 no. 182. The low popularity of Saint John the Theologian on steatite icons is manifest in the critical corpus of byzantine steatites, where within a vast group of steatite icons dated to the Palaiologan era, only two depict Saint John, cf. I. KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite*. Wien 1985, 215–216, no. 146, pl. 68, and 244 no. A43b, pl. 89, and also below, notes 40–41.

²² The cameo is 3,2 cm high: H. WENTZEL, *Datierte und datierbare byzantinische Kameen*, in: *Festschrift Friedrich Winkler*. Berlin 1959, 19 fig. 10; R. BAUMSTARK (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz. Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen*, exhibition catalogue, Munich, National Museum of Bavaria, October 20,

Landesmuseum, Kassel,²³ and a steatite icon inserted in a sumptuous cross at the Great Lavra monastery, Mount Athos, dated to the end of the twelfth century.²⁴ This iconography seems to have survived until the Palaiologan period, as attested by a small bilateral steatite icon, dated to the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century, which was set in a late sixteenth-century pectoral, today kept at the Vatopedi monastery.²⁵

The iconographic type of the saint shown from the waist up and turned to the right, holding an open or semi-closed Gospel book, is hardly encountered before the later part of the Komnenian era.²⁶ Indeed, an icon from a private collection in Athens with Saint John posing in a similar way, has been dated to the middle or the third quarter of the twelfth century.²⁷ The Lectionary Sin. gr. 208, dated to the second half of the twelfth century,²⁸ includes a miniature on fol. 1v, which shows the saint wearing a tight himation similar to that on the Prosakos steatite icon. The same iconographic type has also been adopted in the portraits of all the evangelists who surround the central figures of Christ, the Virgin and the Baptist, forming the theme of the

1998–February 14, 1999. Munich 1998, 154–159, no. 41, esp. 158–159 (M. DENNERT).

²³ H. WENTZEL, *Die byzantinischen Kameen in Kassel. Zur Problematik der Datierung byzantinischer Gemmen*, in: *Museion. Studien aus Kunst und Geschichte für Otto H. Förster*. Cologne 1960, 90–91, fig. 85.

²⁴ K. LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA, *Βυζαντινός σταυρός με καμέους στη Μονή της Μεγίστης Λαύρας*, in Ch. Μανρουλίου-Tsioumi/E. Kyriakoudis (eds.), *Αφιέρωμα στη Μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα*. Thessalonike 2001, 252, fig. 1.

²⁵ G. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΑΚΙ-ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ/B. ΠΙΤΑΡΑΚΙΣ/ K. LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA, *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου. Εγκόλλια*. Mount Athos 2000, 118–119, no. 40 (K. LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA).

²⁶ The ivory panel with Saint John holding a closed Gospel book, *olim* at the collection of Georges J. Demotte in Paris, either has been dated too early (ninth century) or is a forgery. Cf. A. GOLDSCHMIDT/K. WEITZMANN, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, I. Kästen. Berlin 1930 (repr. Berlin 1979), 57 no. 102, pl. LIX. The panel (dimensions: 5.8 × 4.4 cm) is actually kept at the Princeton Art Museum; cf. S. ČURČIĆ/A. ST. CLAIR (eds.), *Byzantium at Princeton, Byzantine Art and Archaeology at Princeton University*, exhibition catalogue, Princeton, August 1–October 26, 1986. Princeton, New Jersey 1986, 67, no. 39 (M. J. JOHNSON).

²⁷ A. ΧΥΝΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Une icône du temps des Comnènes*, in: *Παγκαρπεία, Mélanges Henri Grégoire. Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'histoire orientales* 10 (1950) 659–665.

²⁸ K. WEITZMANN/G. GALAVARIS, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Illuminated Greek Manuscripts, I: From the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*. Princeton, New Jersey 1990, 168–169, no. 60, figs 645, 647, pl. XXVII.

Great Deesis.²⁹ Evangelists and apostles (like Peter and Paul), depicted in a similar manner and holding books or scrolls, turn to the centre of the horizontally extended composition of the Deesis in order to deliver reverently their writings to the central figure of the blessing Christ, as is also the case on iconostasis beams.³⁰ Apostles and evangelists are depicted in similar fashion also in icon painting, as for example, Saint John on the icon-sets of the Great Deesis at the Vatopedi and the Iviron monasteries on Mount Athos, dated to the third quarter of the fourteenth century, and at the Ubisi monastery, Imereti district, Georgia, dated to the later part of the century.³¹ This iconography of author saints could have ultimately derived from the manuscript illuminations showing evangelists' portraits – in full length or in bust – writing their Gospels. Saint John is depicted in an analogous pose from the tenth century onwards (e.g. the Four Gospels no. 56, fol. 217v, at the Athens National Library)³² but similar depictions of the saint

²⁹ For the iconographic theme of the Deesis, cf. A. CUTLER, *Under the Sign of the Deesis: On the Question of Representativeness in Medieval Art and Literature*. *DOP* 41 (1987) 145–154 (repr. in idem, *Byzantium, Italy and the North: Papers on Cultural Relations*. London 2000, 46–64).

³⁰ Cf. the observations of G. PEERS in R.S. NELSON/K.M. COLLINS (eds.), *Holy Image – Hallowed Ground, Icons from Sinai*, exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, November 14, 2006–March 4, 2007. Los Angeles, California 2006, 208–209, no. 34. For an iconostasis beam with the Deesis from Veroia, dated to c. 1360, cf. Th. PAPAZOTOS, *Βυζαντινές εικόνες της Βερόιας*. Athens 1995, 55–56, pls 48–52; A.S. PETKOS/Ph. KARAGIANNE, *Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Βερόιας*. Veroia 2007, figs on 110, 112–113.

³¹ For the icon with Saint John from the Great Deesis icon-set at the Chilandar monastery, cf. S. ΠΕΤΚΟΒΙĆ, *The Icons of Monastery Chilandar*. Mount Athos 1997, 27–28, figs 94–95. For the icon with Saint John from the Great Deesis icon-set at the Vatopedi monastery, cf. E. TSIGARIDAS, *Φορητές εικόνες*, in: *Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου*. Mount Athos 1996, 384–386, fig. 326; *Treasures of Mount Athos*, exhibition catalogue, Thessalonike, Museum of Byzantine Civilization. Thessalonike 1997, 2nd ed., 90–91 no. 2.24 (E. TSIGARIDAS). For the icon with Saint John from the Great Deesis icon-set at the Ubisi monastery, cf. G. ABRAMICHVILI/N. BOURTCHOULADGE et al. (eds.), *Au pays de la toison d'or*. *Art ancien de Géorgie soviétique*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 17 April–26 July 1982. Paris 1982, 186–193, nos 98–104, esp. no. 103.

³² A. ΜΑΡΑΒΑ-ΧΑΤΖΙΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ/Ch. ΤΟΥΦΕΞΙ-ΡΑΣΧΟΥ, *Κατάλογος μικρογραφιών βυζαντινών χειρογράφων της Έθνικης Βιβλιοθήκης της Ελλάδος*, 1. Athens 1978, 21, fig. 6.

become more frequent only after the first decades of the thirteenth century.³³

The only portable icon, whose iconography looks almost identical to that of the Prosakos steatite is that from the small church of Hagioi Anargyroi at Veroia (Beroea), today kept at the city's Byzantine Museum. Its small dimensions suggest that it could have also belonged to a Great Deesis icon-set.³⁴ Athanassios Papazotos has proposed that this icon is stylistically close to the frescoes in the churches of Saint Paraskevi and Saint George of the magnate Grammatikos at Veroia.³⁵ However, the rather schematic rendering of the volumes in the drapery and the diligence in the features of the saint's face on the Veroia icon are completely different to the nervous draperies and the stressful dark faces of the saints in the frescoes of the afore-mentioned churches.³⁶ The use of fair olive-green paint for the under-layer on Saint John's face and the skilful manner in which the few white brushstrokes designate calmly

³³ Some examples of manuscript illuminations with Saint John in thirteenth-century Gospel books are indicative. Athen. 77, fol. 178v (eaedem, *ibid.* (as footnote 32 above), 2. Athens 1985, 19–20, fig. 12); Gregoriou no. 2, fol. 164v (S. PELEKANIDES/A. CHRESTOU/Ch. ΜΑΥΡΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ-ΤΣΙΟΥΜΕ/S.N. ΚΑΔΑΣ, *Οί θησαυροί του Άγίου Όρους. Εικονογραφημένα χειρόγραφα*, A. Athens 1973, 484, fig. 464); Dionysiou no. 23, fol. 172r (*ibid.*, 404, fig. 60); Dionysiou no. 12, fol. 171v (*ibid.*, 398, fig. 35); Iveron no. 5, fol. 357v (*ibid.*, 3. Athens 1975, 302 fig. 33); Great Lavra no. A46, fol. 276v (*ibid.*, *ibid.*, C. Athens 1979, 228 fig. 34); Jerusalem, New Collection no. 28, fol. 178v (P.L. VOCOTΟΡΟΥΛΟΣ, *Μικρογραφίες των βυζαντινών χειρογράφων του Πατριαρχείου Ιεροσολύμων*. Athens/Jerusalem 2002, 52 fig. 18); Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, W.530g verso (H.C. EVANS, ed., *Byzantium. Faith and Power [1261–1557]*, exhibition catalogue, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 23–July 4, 2004. New York 2004, 289–290, no. 170, J. LOWDEN). Among the earliest manuscripts are the codices at the Russian State Library f. 181, no. 9, fol. 212v and the Kiev Vernadsky Scientific Library of Ukraine f. 72, no. 1 (known as the Levitsky Gospels), fol. 179v (I.P. ΜΟΚΡΕΤΣΟΒΑ/M.M. ΝΑΥΜΟΒΑ/V.N. ΚΙΡΕΥΕΒΑ et al., *Materials and Techniques of Byzantine Manuscripts*. Moscow 2003, 155–158, 279–280, no. 16 and 163–165, 281–282, no. 18, pls XVI.3 and XVIII.2, respectively). Compare also Vat. gr. 756, fols 11v–12r (G. GALAVARIS, *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels*. Vienna 1979, 106, figs 83–84, and in general, 74 ff).

³⁴ Cf. PAPAZOTOS (as footnote 30 above) 52, pls 37–38. J. ALBANI/A. NICOLAIDÈS (eds.), *Saints de Byzance, Icônes grecques de Veroia, XIIIe–XVIIe siècle*, exhibition catalogue, Avignon, Palace of the Popes, December 3, 2004–April 3, 2005. Athens 2004, 134–135, no. 16 (Ch. ΜΑΥΡΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ-ΤΣΙΟΥΜΙ).

³⁵ PAPAZOTOS (as footnote 30 above) 52.

³⁶ Compare Th. PAPAZOTOS, *Η Βερόια και οι ναοί της (11^{ος}–18^{ος} αι.)*. *Ιστορική και αρχαιολογική σπουδή των μνημείων της πόλης*. Athens 1994, 169–170, 182–184, 265–267, pls 17–19, 53–58.

the lightened volumes and the hair are quite typical of the painting practices in Thessalonike during the first decades of the fourteenth century.³⁷ Thus, in my opinion, it would be preferable to assign this icon to the artistic production of Thessalonike than to consider it as the work of a local artist.

The carving technique of the Prosakos steatite icon is far more refined, the style is considerably more elaborate and the relief is fairly higher than on other steatite icons of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries depicting the saint. For example, the steatite plaque with the saint in the well-known reliquary diptych at the Cathedral Museum of Mdina is iconographically related – but not identical.³⁸ The differences in technique are more than obvious: Saint John is rendered in low relief incised with lines, according to the carving standards of the late-Komnenian art, which does not emphasize the corporeality of the figures.³⁹ The steatite icon at the Louvre Museum (inv. no. AC868)⁴⁰ bears the portrait of the evangelist in relief without any clear distinction between the two main levels of the carving. The outline of the figure has been cut vertically and abruptly over the plain background and the facial features, as well as the garments' folds are incised, with no subtle bulged or rounded surfaces.

³⁷ Cf. similarly rendered aged saints in the frescoes of Saint Euthymios chapel, dated to 1303, and in the church of Saint Nicholas Orphanos, dated to the second decade of the fourteenth century. Cf. E. TSIGARIDAS, Οι τοιχογραφίες του παρεκκλησίου του Αγίου Ευθυμίου (1302/3) στον ναό του Αγίου Δημητρίου, έργο του Μανουήλ Πανσελήνου στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Thessalonike 2008, 55–56, figs 39–40. A. TSITOURIDOU, Ο ζωγραφικός διάκοσμος του Αγίου Νικολάου Ορφανού στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Συμβολή στη μελέτη της παλαιολόγειας ζωγραφικής κατά τον πρώιμο 14^ο αιώνα. Thessalonike 1986, 240–241, pls 4, 79, 104.

³⁸ Dimensions: 3.7 × 2.6 cm. P. HETHERINGTON, Byzantine Steatites in the Possession of the Knights of Rhodes. *The Burlington Magazine* 120/909 (December 1978) 811–820, figs 18 and 26. On the covers of the diptych there are four coats of arms with the emblems of the Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem and one with the emblem of the Grand Master Hélon de Villeneuve (1319–46) (ibid., 811, 816, 819–820, figs 19–21). Cf. also KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) 180–184, no. 102, who suggests convincingly that the first group of the panels, to which the steatite icon of Saint John belongs, can be attributed to the thirteenth century with no characteristic traits of the Palaiologan style.

³⁹ KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) esp. 45 and 181.

⁴⁰ Dimensions: 4.5 × 3.7 cm. Ibid., 215–216 no. 146. See also J. DURAND (ed.), Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises, exhibition catalogue, Musée du Louvre, November 6, 1992–February 1, 1993. Paris 1992, 437 no. 328 (J. DURAND). TOTEV (as footnote 3 above) 12, fig. 7k.

Another partially preserved two-sided steatite icon, kept at the Cabinet des médailles of the National Library in Paris (inv. no. 17), shows on one face the evangelist wearing garments modelled with plain surfaces and cut by straight lines in such a sketchy way that the impression given is beyond any three-dimensionality.⁴¹ On a much more gracious steatite icon with the Theologian, today kept under the inv. no. 13089 at the Historical Museum of Šumen, Bulgaria, the figure of the saint is broader, but less voluminous.⁴² This steatite icon has been dated to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, but a later date (at least by a century) seems far closer to the truth. Thus, the Prosakos steatite icon does not present any close similarities, iconographic or stylistic, with other known late byzantine steatites such as the afore-mentioned ones, which are of much cruder and less sophisticated workmanship.

The Prosakos steatite is undoubtedly a work of art of high quality, carved by a skilful artist, who has rendered diligently correct proportions and a naturalistic allure to the figure of Saint John in high relief. In iconographic terms, the figure is closely related to the fourteenth-century icon from Veroia.⁴³ In terms of technique, it forms part of a group of carvings, dated to the last third of the thirteenth and to the early fourteenth century, discerned by the confident outlining of the saint's body.⁴⁴ "These icons translate into relief the general stylistic features of the Palaiologan period found in painting and elsewhere," as Ioli Kalavrezou rightly observed twenty-six years ago.⁴⁵ This realistic rendering of voluminous figures is seen only on a few late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century steatite icons, like the one with the Archangel Michael at the Benaki Museum, Athens, which has been dated to the thirteenth century⁴⁶ and attributed to a Constantinopolitan workshop active after 1261.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Dimensions: 2.3 × 2.1 cm. KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) 244, no. A 43b, pl. 89.

⁴² Dimensions: 3.4 × 2.5 cm. A. BOŽKOV, Bălgarskata ikona. Sofia 1984, no. 42, fig. on 70; L. PRAŠKOV (ed.), Trésors d'art médiéval Bulgare, VIIe–XVIe siècle, exhibition catalogue, Genève, Musée d'art et d'histoire. Geneva/Bern 1988, no. 108; TOTEV (as footnote 3 above) 12, fig. 7i.

⁴³ See above, footnote 34.

⁴⁴ KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) 45–46.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁶ Dimensions: 6.5 × 5 cm. Cf. ibid., 186 no. 105, pl. 53.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Cf. also PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZIS (as footnote 21 above) 510–511, no. 700 (I.D. VARALIS). E. GEORGOULA (ed.), Greek Treasures from the Benaki Museum in Athens, exhibition catalogue, Sydney, Powerhouse Museum. Athens 2005, 136 no. 94 (A. DRANDAKI). The icon has a slightly bigger duplicate, kept in a private

However, the Prosakos steatite icon presents close iconographic and stylistic affinities with two relief icons typical of the Palaiologan art. The first is a capital decorated on three of its sides with apostles' busts in relatively high relief, kept at the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (inv. no. 71.147 T, **pl. VIII/1**); the second is a compartment in repoussé technique on the silver-gilt revetment of the icon with Christ Psychosostis (inv. no. 11, **pl. VII/2**), kept at the Icon Gallery, Ochrid.

The capital is of small dimensions and has been made of white marble; it was found in the cistern of Fethiye Camii in the early 60's and has been dated to c. 1300.⁴⁸ The portrait of Saint John looks like a cruder replica of the Prosakos steatite icon: the evangelist is turned likewise to the right, holds a half-opened Gospel book and has a bulbous forehead with sparse hair at the sides; the only differences are his divided beard and his soft halo, which extends over the projecting abacus. André Grabar has already drawn a parallel between this capital and the Prosakos panel.⁴⁹ The apostles' reliefs on the Fethiye Camii capital have been associated with some other Constantinopolitan sculptures depicting saints in half figure, all dated to the early Palaiologan era.⁵⁰ Moreover, the figure of Saint John does not strongly

collection in Germany (dim. 7.7 × 5.3 cm). Cf. L. WAMSER (ed.), *Die Welt von Byzanz – Europas Östliches Erbe. Glanz, Krisen und Fortleben einer tausendjährigen Kultur*, exhibition catalogue, München, Archäologischer Staatssammlung – Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte. Munich 2004, 172, no. 209 (Ch. SCHMIDT).

⁴⁸ Dimensions: height 30 cm, width at the top 22 cm and at the bottom 16 cm. C. MANGO/E. J. W. HAWKINS, *Report on Field Work in Istanbul and Cyprus, 1962–1963*. *DOP* 18 (1964) 331–332, figs 26–29; N. FIRATLI/C. METZGER/A. PRALONG/J.-P. SODINI, *La sculpture byzantine figurée au musée archéologique d'Istanbul*. Paris 1990, 125–126, no. 239, pl. 76, nos 239a–c, with previous bibliography; K. DURAK (ed.), *From Byzantium to Istanbul. 8000 Years of a Capital*, exhibition catalogue, Istanbul, Sakip Sabanci Museum, June 5–September 4, 2010. Istanbul 2010, 244, 480, no. 288 (Ş. KARAGÖZ), where the noted dimensions are slightly different (38 × 23 × 22.5 cm).

⁴⁹ A. GRABAR, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge II (XIe–XIVe siècle)*. Paris 1976, 131, no. 130.

⁵⁰ MANGO/HAWKINS (as footnote 48 above) 332; H. BELTING, *Zur Skulptur aus der Zeit um 1300 in Konstantinopel*. *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 23 (1972) 71–73, 82–83 passim, figs 8–9, 20; Ø. HJORT, *The Sculpture of Kariye Camii*. *DOP* 33 (1979) 262–263 and passim; J.-P. CAILLET, *L'antiquité classique, le haut moyen âge et Byzance au musée de Cluny*. Paris 1985, 77–78, no. 26. Cf. also M. RESTLE, *Ein palaiologisches Relief mit einer Apostelbüste*, in idem (ed.), *Festschrift für Klaus Wessel zum 70. Geburtstag*. In Memoriam. Munich 1988, 231–235, 438–439; K. ENGLERT, *Der sogenannte Berliner Apostelkopf – früh- oder spätbyzantinisch?* *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 35 (1993) 47–56. A.

diverge from the mutilated evangelists' busts which were carved on two other small capitals that may have originally belonged to the sculpture decoration of the katholikon of the Chora monastery, dating from the remodelling of the church by Theodore Metochites in 1315/6–1320/1.⁵¹

The rectangular compartment with Saint John the Theologian is on the left side of the frame on the silver-gilt revetment of the icon with Christ Psychosostis (Saviour of Souls), which is thought to have come from the monastery of the Virgin Peribleptos at Ohrid.⁵² Only slight differences can be noticed in the treatment of the face and hair, which show a somewhat less aged evangelist. The almost identical proportions, the close likeness in iconography and style, the same diligence in rendering the three-dimensionality betray undoubtedly a common model.

EFFENBERGER, *Die Reliefikonen der Theotokos und des Erzengels Michael im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin*. *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 48 (2006) 37–40. G. WOLF/C. DUFOUR BOZZO/A.R. CALDERONI MASETTI (eds.), *Mandylion. Intorno al 'Sacro Volto' da Bisanzio a Genova*, exhibition catalogue, Genoa, Museo Diocesano, April 18–July 18. Genoa/Milan 2004, 269–271 (G. AMERI). R. S. NELSON, *Byzantine Icons in Genoa Before the Mandylion*, in A.R. Calderoni Masetti/C. Dufour Bozzo/G. Wolf (eds.), *Intorno al Sacro Volto. Genoa, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI–XIV)*. Venice 2007, 87–90.

⁵¹ HJORT (as footnote 50 above) 227–229, 232 ff., figs 28a and 29. The first capital has been placed to the south of the Hodegetria mosaic panel – the other is kept at Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. The position of the former seems to have been the correct one since the late nineteenth century, as attested by a photograph taken in 1892. Cf. E. CHALKIA (ed.), *Thrace–Constantinople, Georgios Lambakis' Journey (1902)*, exhibition catalogue, Athens 2007, 106–107, no. 39 (A.G. MANTAS). For the latter, see H. BELTING, *Konstantinopol'skaja kapitel' v Leningrade. Rel'efnaja plastika pozdnevizantijskogo perioda v Kahrie Džami*, in: *Vizantija južnye slavjane i drevnjaja Rus' zapadnaja Evropa. Iskustvo i kul'tura, Zbornik statej v iest' V.N. Lazareva*. Moscow 1973, 136–155; BELTING (as footnote 50 above) 76–77, 81–82, figs 15, 19. On the remodelling of the church by Metochites, cf. P.A. UNDERWOOD, *The Kariye Djami*, 1. New York 1966, 14 ff. I. ŠEVČENKO, *Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and the intellectual trends of his time*, in P.A. Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami*, 4. *Studies in the art of the Kariye Djami and its intellectual background*. Princeton, New Jersey/London 1975, 28–29; R. OUSTERHOUT, *The architecture of Kariye Camii in Istanbul*. Washington, D.C. 1987, 91 ff.

⁵² On this icon, cf. K. BALABANOV, *Ikonite vo Makedonija – Icons of Macedonia*. Skopje 1995, 82–83, 117, 119–122, 193–194, no. 18, and M. GEORGIEVSKI, *Icon Gallery – Ohrid*. Ohrid 1999, 54–55, no. 19, with earlier bibliography. *Trésors médiévaux* (as footnote 3 above) 78–79, no. 27 (V. POPOVSKA-KOROBAR). The revetment of this icon has been studied by A. GRABAR, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du moyen âge*. Venice 1975, 38, no. 12, figs 31 and 33 (excellent b/w picture of the panel with Saint John).

The use of identical models in the production of steatite icons and silver-gilt sheets for icon revetments should not cause any surprise. Klaus Wessel has implied the use of common models in the production of marble relief and cast metal icons in his study of a late thirteenth-century marble bust of an apostle, kept in a private collection in Munich: the cast apostles' figures set on the bronze doors of San Giovanni that lead to the Baptistery of San Marco, Venice, offer the closest parallels to this piece of sculpture.⁵³ Moreover, Maria Vassilaki has also suggested the use of common models in the production of small icons made of stucco and of separate fields on icon revetments, when she studied the fourteenth-century icon with the Virgin Eleousa at the Benaki Museum.⁵⁴ The wooden frame of this icon was originally made of ten small icons with Dodekaorton scenes in coloured stucco, alternating with painted apostle's busts. The six preserved stucco icons are stylistically surprisingly close to the rectangular panels of the silver-gilt revetment of an icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, today kept at the Vatopedi monastery and dated to the early-fourteenth century.⁵⁵ This revetment was the donation of two aristocratic women, Papadopoulina and Arianitissa, daughters of a certain *pansevastos sevastos skouterios* Theodore Sarantinos, magnate of Veroia, and it certainly predates 1326, i.e. the year of the compilation of Theodore Sarantinos' testament, where it is explicitly mentioned that by that date all his children were dead.⁵⁶

⁵³ RESTLE (as footnote 50 above) 235; BAUMSTARK (as footnote 22 above) 238, no. 76 (M. RESTLE).

⁵⁴ M. VASSILAKI, Εικόνα της Παναγίας Γλυκοφιλούσας του Μουσείου Μπενάκη (αρ. ευρ. 2972): Προβλήματα της έρευνας, in eadem (ed.), *Byzantine Icons. Art, technique and technology. An International Symposium, Gennadius Library, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 20–21 February 1998. Heraklion 2002*, 205–206, figs 1–2. Cf. also H.C. EVANS (ed.), *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, exhibition catalogue, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 23–July 4, 2004. New York 2004, 502–503, no. 305 (M. VASSILAKI), with earlier bibliography.

⁵⁵ GRABAR (as footnote 52 above) 49–52, no. 21, figs 47–52. Cf. also recently K. LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA, Thessalonique, centre de production d'objets d'arts au XI^e siècle. *DOP* 57 (2003) 249, fig. 11. E.N. TSGARIDAS/K. LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA, *Holy Great Monastery of Vatopaidi. Byzantine Icons and Revetments. Mount Athos 2007*, 307–320, no. 2, with excellent colour reproductions. *Le Mont-Athos et l'empire byzantin. Trésors de la Sainte Montagne*, exhibition catalogue, Petit Palais – Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, April 10 – July 5. Paris 2009, 180, no. 79 (K. LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA).

⁵⁶ On Sarantinos and his daughters, cf. *PLP* 24906, 21746, 91321, respectively, and G. THEOCHARIDIS, Μία διαθήκη και μία δίκη βυζαντινή. Άνέκδοτα βατοπεδινά

The icon of Christ Psychosostis, with the Crucifixion on its verso, is one of a pair of bilateral icons; the other one shows the Virgin Psychosostria on the recto and the Annunciation on the verso. Both icons are regarded as Constantinopolitan imports at the time of the Emperor Andronikos II (1282–1328).⁵⁷ The only information available comes from two documents dated to the middle of the fourteenth century, which confirm that Andronikos II himself donated the Psychosostria monastery to Gregory, archbishop of Ohrid, and that the latter appointed Galaktion as the monastery's abbot.⁵⁸ However, Euthymios Tsigaridas and Katia Loverdou-Tsigarida have recently suggested that both these icons may be attributed to the artistic milieu of Thessalonike around the year 1300. Though using different paths of investigation, both authors concluded that the painting of these icons could be assigned to the atelier of George Kalliergis, the renowned painter of Thessalonike who worked at the church of the Saviour at Veroia in 1315,⁵⁹ while the silver gilt revetments may be considered as products of a workshop of Thessalonike specializing on icons made of precious metals.⁶⁰ No available evidence can cast doubt on the

έγγραφο του ΙΔ' αιώνος περί της μονής Προδρόμου Βεροίας. Thessalonike 1962, 14–28, no. 2, esp. 16–17, lines 21–25; Th. PAPAZOTOS, Χριστιανικές έπιγραφές Μακεδονίας. *Makedonika* 21 (1981) 408–409, no. 6; TSGARIDAS/LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA (as footnote 55 above) 308–309, 320.

⁵⁷ On this assumption, cf. N. P. KONDAKOV, *Makedonija. Saint Petersburg 1909*, 253–255; V.J. DJURIC, *Icônes de Jugoslavie. Beograd 1961*, 24–25, 91–93, nos 14–15; K. WEITZMANN, *The Icon. Holy Images, Sixth to Fourteenth Century. London 1978*, 126–127, pl. 44; BALABANOV (as footnote 52 above) 117; EVANS (as footnote 54 above) 179–180, no. 99 (M. GEORGIEVSKI).

⁵⁸ On Gregory, archbishop of Ochrid, cf. *PLP* 4482, and on Galaktion, cf. *PLP* 3470. The documents are an imperial *prostagma* of the Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos and a *sigillion* of Isidore, Patriarch of Constantinople, both issued in October 1347. See ARKADIOS BATOPEDINOS, Γράμματα της έν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Μονής της Θεοτόκου της Ψυχοςωστρίας. *BNGJ* 13 (1936–37) 308γ'–318γ', esp. 308δ', lines 16–22 and 308ε', lines 14–20. J. LEFORT/V. KRAVARI/CH. GIROS/K. SMYRLIS (eds.), *Actes de Vatopédi, II. De 1330–1376, édition diplomatique. Archives de l'Athos*, 22. Paris 2006, 208, no. 95, lines 11–14, and 210, no. 96, lines 10–14. See also F. DÖLGER, *Aus den Schatzkammern des heiligen Berges. 115 Urkunden und 50 Urkundensiegel aus 10 Jahrhunderten. Munich 1948*, 120–125, nos 43–44; R. JANIN, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin. II: Les églises et les monastères. Paris 1953*, 252. No icons are mentioned in these documents.

⁵⁹ E. TSGARIDAS, L'activité artistique du peintre thessalonicien Georges Kalliergis. *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaïologikes Hetaireias* 31 (2010) 53–70, esp. 66–68.

⁶⁰ LOVERDOU-TSIGARIDA, Thessalonique (as footnote 55 above) 247, where documents attesting the production of icon silver revetments in Thessalonike are

attribution of both icons to Kalliergis' cycle and his silversmith associates; indeed, these icons may now be considered as two of Thessalonike's artistic products that travelled further to the West.

III. Conclusions

The steatite icon with the representation of Saint John the Theologian was discovered in 1952 at the site of Manastir, near Demir Kapija, and can be dated to the late thirteenth or to the early fourteenth century. During this period, Prosakos and its wider area was under Byzantine control and belonged to a territory, in which Thessalonike played a major role in military, social and artistic matters.⁶¹ In the above analysis we have tried to show that the style and iconography of this small steatite icon finds its closest parallels in representations of Saint John that originate either from Thessalonike or from areas under its immediate influence, like Veroia. In particular, the icon of the Theologian at the Byzantine Museum of Veroia may be assigned, in my opinion, to the artistic influence of the painting of Thessalonike, if not directly to the work of a talented Thessalonian artist, who was active in the first decades of the fourteenth century.⁶² The representation of the saint on the frame of the silver-gilt revetment of the icon of Christ Psychosostis from Ohrid, recently attributed to a Thessalonian silversmith, is closely related to the Prosakos steatite icon on account of its iconographic, stylistic and technical characteristics, as well as the

cited. Eadem, *Αργυρές επενδύσεις εικόνων από τη Θεσσαλονίκη του 14ου αιώνα. Δελτίον της Christianikes Archaïologikes Hetaireias* 26 (2005) 263–272, esp. 268–271.

⁶¹ Cf. indeed O. TAFRALI, *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle*. Paris 1913. D.M. NICOL, *Thessalonica as a Cultural Centre in the Fourteenth Century*, in: *Ἡ Θεσσαλονίκη μεταξὺ Ἀνατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως. Πρακτικά Συμποσίου Τεσσαρακονταετηρίδος τῆς Ἑταιρείας Μακεδονικῶν Σπουδῶν*, 30 Ὀκτωβρίου–1 Νοεμβρίου 1980. Thessalonike 1982, 121–131 (repr. in his *Studies in Late Byzantine History and Prosopography*. London 1986, art. X). The bibliography on the cultural influence of Thessalonike on Serbian art is vast. Cf. recently V.J. DJURIC, *Thessalonique et la peinture serbe du moyen âge. Cyrillomethodianum* 15–16 (1991–92) 25–39. P.L. VOCOTROULOS, *Η ακτινοβολία της ζωγραφικής της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά την μέση και ύστερη βυζαντινή περίοδο*, in: *Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη. Πόλις συναντήσεως Ανατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως*, Holy monastery of Vlatades, October 12–18, 1997. Thessalonike 2006, 339–368.

⁶² Cf. above, notes 34–37.

diligent rendering of three-dimensionality.⁶³ The small Constantinopolitan capital with apostles' busts in relief,⁶⁴ although affiliated in iconography, is deficient in all technical features found in the subtle carving of the Prosakos steatite icon.

No traces of holes or cavities can be seen on the back or along the damaged rim of the Prosakos steatite icon that would indicate that it had been used as a pectoral mounted in a pendant made of precious metals, although such a possibility cannot be excluded. On the contrary, the rim of the icon has been cut obliquely, as if to facilitate its insertion into a rectangular hollow depression on a wooden panel. Indeed, there are several well-known examples of wooden panels with rectangular or circular cavities where small steatite icons were inserted, such as the renowned panels from Sinai,⁶⁵ the Vatican Museum,⁶⁶ and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.⁶⁷ A highly hypothetical reconstruction of such a wooden frame can be seen on **pl. VII/3**: in the centre, one would expect an icon of the enthroned Christ, while the icon of Saint John would have been one of the four surrounding panels depicting the evangelists. A small icon showing the Hetoimasia or Archangel Michael could have occupied the central compartment of the upper register, while icons of other saints would have filled the remaining fields. Such a combination of iconographic motifs is corroborated by the above wooden panels and by known examples of metal revetments, like the one of the afore-mentioned icon of Christ Psychosostis.

In conclusion, the Prosakos steatite icon of Saint John the Theologian is an artefact of significant importance for a number of reasons. First of all, it adds a new representation of high quality to the relatively thin corpus of carved portraits of this saint in Byzantine art. It

⁶³ Cf. above, notes 57–60.

⁶⁴ Cf. above, notes 48–51.

⁶⁵ Dimensions 21 × 16 cm (with the frame). KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) 106–107, no. 14, pl. 10. M. BACCI (ed.), *San Nicola. Splendori d'arte d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, exhibition catalogue, Bari, Castello Svevo, December 7, 2006–May 6, 2007. Pesaro/Milan 2006, 201, 210, no. II.10 (A. WEYL CARR).

⁶⁶ Estimated overall dimensions 37.3 × 25.7 cm (with the frame). KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) 127–129, no. 35, pl. 20. H.C. EVANS/W.D. WIXOM, *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, exhibition catalogue, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 11–July 6, 1997. New York 1997, 494–495, no. 330 (M. LEE COULSON).

⁶⁷ Estimated dimensions of the today lost frame over 16.2 × 11.8 cm. KALAVREZOU-MAXEINER (as footnote 21 above) 230–233, no. 168, pl. 74. EVANS (as footnote 54 above) 235–236, no. 143 (S. T. BROOKS).

also presents remarkable similarities to artefacts produced in Thessalonike, like the icon of Saint John in Veroia and the silver gilt revetment of the Christ Psychosostis icon in Ohrid. Finally, it can be associated with an archaeological context whose numismatic evidence corroborates the date of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century that I have proposed as its date of manufacture. This small steatite icon represents, therefore, one of the precious artefacts that the Palaiologan metropolis of Thessalonike (or its secondary city-centres in the environs, like Veroia) exported to certain strongholds in northern Macedonia, along the course of the Vardar river, such as Prosakos.

Abstract

A steatite icon with the representation of Saint John the Evangelist, nowadays kept at the Archaeological Museum in Skopje (inv. no. 84), was discovered at the site of Manastir near the modern village of Demir Kapija in 1952. The icon was found in the debris of a three-aisled church on the top of a hill in the periphery of Prosakos, the well-known stronghold which was under Byzantine rule from the aftermath of the battle of Pelagonia (1259) until its cession to the Serbian State of Stephen Dušan (1328 or slightly earlier). The context, to which the icon belonged, can be dated to the 12th or 13th c. according to monetary evidence. The iconographic and stylistic analysis of the steatite icon shows that there are conclusive characteristics of the saint's depiction and carving technique which cannot pre-date the 13th c. Saint John is similarly carved on a small marble capital from the Fethiye Camii, Istanbul, which has been dated to the end of the 13th c. The most striking analogies with the Prosakos steatite can be observed on the frame of the silver-gilt revetment of the icon of Christ Psychosostis in Ohrid, where the evangelist is shown with a similar pose and in an analogous volume. The icon of Christ has been recently attributed to a workshop from Thessalonike and dated to the early 14th c. The same place of origin and date are also suggested for the Prosakos steatite.

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7. Beginning of the staircase of the southern part of the double house



8. North-eastern branch of the sottoscala, view from the west



9. North-western branch of the sottoscala, view from the south



10. The upper vessel at the rear side of the partition wall, view from the south



1. – Skopje, Archaeological Museum. Steatite icon with Saint John the Theologian (inv. no. 84), frontal view (source: author)



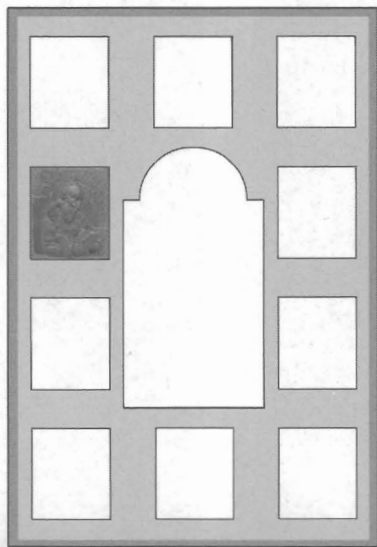
2–3. – Skopje, Archaeological Museum. Steatite icon with Saint John the Theologian (inv. no. 84), oblique views (source: author)



4. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum. Marble capital from Fethiye Camii (inv. no. 71.147 T), with the bust of Saint John the Theologian (source: author)



5. Ohrid, Icon Gallery. Panel with Saint John the Theologian from the silver-gilt revetment of the icon of Christ Psychosostis (source: Grabar, *Les revêtements en or*, fig. 33)



6. Hypothetical reconstruction of a wooden panel with steatite icons, where the Prosakos steatite icon might have originally belonged (drawing by: Alexandros Gounaris and Christina Mitsopoulou)

6. Hypothetical reconstruction of a wooden panel with steatite icons, where the