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Dionysius of Fournas: Artistic Identity Through Visual Rhetoric

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Mateusz Jacek Ferens

June 2015

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Conrad Rudolph, Chairperson

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2015

The Thesis of Mateusz Jacek Ferens is approved:

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This work is dedicated to my wife, Molly – my ever-present source of encouragement and inspiration.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Dionysius of Fournas: Artistic Identity Through Visual Rhetoric

by

Mateusz Jacek Ferens

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Art History  
University of California, Riverside, June 2015  
Dr. Conrad Rudolph, Chairperson

In much of the recent scholarship on post-Byzantine art, a key role is played by the *Hermeneia* – a painter’s manual written by Dionysius of Fournas around 1730. This manuscript outlines artistic practices of Greek Orthodox artists working on Mount Athos in the eighteenth century; it records their traditions and techniques, but it also relates certain ideological positions maintained by its author. Scholars in the past have emphasized traditionalistic qualities in the manuscript. This allowed them to describe Dionysius as a traditionalist – one who staunchly resisted modernization and one who defended Byzantine traditions against the growing cultural Europeanization of the Balkans in the eighteenth century. In the study at hand, I point out a number of elements that problematize this commonly maintained opinion of past scholars. By focusing on

qualities in Dionysius's work that contradict his supposed traditionalistic inclinations, I demonstrate that the ideological position that Dionysius posited is more complex. I use the contents of the *Hermeneia* and Dionysius's paintings as evidence for determining his ideological and conceptual position on art – his artistic identity. I question the presumptions put forward in the past, and I reassess the possible motives that might have compelled Dionysius to write the *Hermeneia*. According to my findings, the preservation and the promotion of Byzantine artistic traditions of the past were not his primary objectives. In order to address the cultural crisis around him, Dionysius strategically incorporated select aspects of tradition, past and new practices, and contemporary ideas into his work. I attempt to show that Dionysius's artistic identity is characterized by conscious synthesis of modern practices with past traditions and by the fusion of contemporary currents with eighteenth-century Orthodox monastic culture in order to enrich and to contribute to the vibrancy of his artistic culture and to bring it up to date with contemporary artistic practices.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	ix
Foreword.....	xv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Historical Introduction.....	16
Figures for Chapter I.....	30
Chapter II: Visual Rhetoric of the <i>Hermeneia</i> .....	34
Figures for Chapter II.....	67
Chapter III: Artistic Vocabulary as Visual Rhetoric.....	107
Figures for Chapter III.....	128
General Conclusion.....	145
Bibliography.....	150

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Chapter I

- 1.1.1 Map of the major trade routes throughout the post-Byzantine period. (Richardson ed., *Locating Renaissance Art*, 2007, p. 12).
- 1.1.2 Map of the Ottoman conquests from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. (Davies and Davis, "Greeks, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire," *Hesperia Supplements*, Vol. 40, (2007), 25-31, fig. 1.1).
- 1.1.3 Letter and sigillion of the Ecumenical Patriarch Neophytos VI, 1740, Metamorphosis, Fourná. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fourná*, 2008, fig. 314).

### Chapter II

- 2.1.1 *Hermeneia*, MS 127, fol. 34-35, 1787, Great Lavra, Mount Athos. This is a copy of the *Hermeneia* written by Dionysius of Fourná c. 1732. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fourná*, 2008, fig. 279).
- 2.1.2 *Peri Zographias* (detail), fol. 4, Panagiotis Doxaras, (written in 1726), published in 1871 in Athens. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fourná*, 2008, fig. 289).
- 2.1.3 *Trattato della pittura*, MS 1285, fol. A ii, trans. Panagiotis Doxaras, 1724, National Library, Athens. (Damianaki, *Translation and critical reception of Leonardo da Vincis Trattato della pittura in Greece*, 2003, fig. 5).
- 2.1.4 *Saint John the Baptist*, Panagiotis Doxaras, oil on wood, c. 1722, Church of St. Demetrios, Lefkada. (Damianaki, *Translation and critical reception of Leonardo da Vincis Trattato della pittura in Greece*, 2003, fig. 31).
- 2.1.5 *Saint John the Baptist* (detail), Dionysius of Fourná, egg tempera on wood, 1711, cell of Dionysius of Fourná, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Chalkia et. al., *Post Byzantium: The Greek Renaissance*, 2002, p. 20. Photo by G. Kakavas).
- 2.2.1 Topographic plan of Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fourná*, 2008, fig. 323).

- 2.2.2 *Evangelist Luke*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 34).
- 2.2.3 *Evangelist Luke*, Dionysius of Fournas, fresco, c. 1711, Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 220).
- 2.2.4 *St. Luke*, Gospel Lectionary, MS Gr. 233, fol. 87v, artist unknown, tempera on vellum, late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth century, the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. (Evans ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 2004, fig. 203).
- 2.2.5 *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin*, Rogier van der Weyden, oil on panel, 1435-1440, originally located in the Chapel of St. Catherine or St. Luke Guild House, Brussels. (Evans ed., *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, 2004, fig. 340).
- 2.3.1 *Anastasis* (Christ's Descent into Hell), artist unknown, fresco, 1315-1320, Parekklesion, Chora, Constantinople. (Artstor Digital Library, Image 10311441193).
- 2.3.2 *The Last Judgement*, artist unknown, fresco, 1315-1320, Parekklesion, Chora, Constantinople. (Artstor Digital Library).
- 2.3.3 *The Four Horsemen*, New Testament, Hans Holbein the Younger, woodcut, published in 1523 in Basel by T. Wolff. (Strand, *Woodcuts to the Apocalypse from the Early 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, 1969, fig. 48).
- 2.3.4 *The Four Horsemen*, Luther's first complete Bible, Schaffner or Schwarzenberg, woodcut, published in 1534 in Wittenberg by Hans Lufft. (Strand, *Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time*, 1968, fig. 80).
- 2.3.5 *The Four Horsemen*, New Testament, Petit-Bernard, woodcut, published in 1553 in Lyon. (Renaud, *Le Cycle de l'Apocalypse de Dionysiou*, 1943, pl. XV-2).
- 2.3.6 *The Four Horsemen*, artist unknown, fresco, 1547-1603, refectory, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 206.3).

- 2.3.7 *The Fifth Angel*, artist unknown, fresco, 1547-1603, refectory, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 208.1).
- 2.3.8 *The Four Horsemen*, Luther's September Bible, Lukas Cranach, woodcut, published in 1522 in Wittenberg by Melchior Lotther. (Strand, *Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time*, 1968, fig. 35).
- 2.3.9 *The Fifth Angel*, Luther's September Bible, Lukas Cranach, woodcut, published in 1522 in Wittenberg by Melchior Lotther. (Strand, *Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time*, 1968, fig. 40).
- 2.3.10 *The Vision of John*, artist unknown, fresco, 1547-1603, refectory, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 206.3).
- 2.3.11 *The Vision of John*, Luther's September Bible, Lukas Cranach, woodcut, published in 1522 in Wittenberg by Melchior Lotther. (Strand, *Woodcuts to the Apocalypse in Dürer's Time*, 1968, fig. 33).
- 2.4.1 *Nativity*, Dionysius of Fournas, tempera on wood, c. 1711, Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 46).
- 2.4.2 *Nativity*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 10.2).
- 2.4.3 *Nativity*, Theophanes Strelitzas (Bathas), tempera on wood, c. 1546, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 51).
- 2.4.4 *Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco, c. 1535, Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 63).
- 2.4.5 *Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco, c. 1560, Church of St. Nicholas, Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 119.2).
- 2.4.6 *Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco, c. 1312, Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 61).



- 2.4.7 a: *Christ on Mount of Olives* (b: detail), Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 72).
- 2.4.8 *Christ on Mount of Olives*, artist unknown, fresco, Chilandari catholicon, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 65.4).
- 2.4.9 *Prayer on the Mount of Olives*, Duccio di Buoninsegna, tempera on panel, c. 1308, Siena. (Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana del Duomo, Siena.)
- 2.4.10 *Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco, c. 1568, Dochiariou Monastery, Mount Athos. (Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 1927, pl. 222.2).
- 2.5.1 *Pentecost*, Dionysius of Fournà, tempera on wood, c. 1711, Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 2008, fig. 117).
- 2.5.2 *Aaron*, artist unknown, fresco, c. 1720-1730, Docheiariou Monastery, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 2008, fig. 41).
- 2.5.3 *Aaron*, Dionysius of Fournà, fresco, c. 1711, Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 2008, fig. 31).
- 2.5.4 *Melchisedek*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 56).
- 2.5.5 *Anastasis* (Christ's descent into Hell), Dionysius of Fournà, fresco, c. 1711, Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 2008, fig. 111).
- 2.5.6 *Resurrection*, Moskos, wood panel, c. 1679, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 2008, fig. 116).
- 2.5.7 *Triodion* of Maximus, Bishop of Cythera, (title page), Oxford, Bodleian Library, I. 1.2. Th. Seld., artist unknown, c. 1573-1602, edited and published in Venice by Bishop Maximus. (Hetherington, "The Poets' in

the 'Epmhneia of Dionysius of Fournai," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 27, (1973), pp. 317-322).

### Chapter III

- 3.1.1 Map of the overland trade route to Thessaloniki. (Brewer, *Greece, the Hidden Centuries*, 2010, p. 200).
- 3.2.1 *St. John of Damascus*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 128).
- 3.2.2 *St. John of Damascus* (detail), Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 129).
- 3.2.3 *St. Artemios* (detail), Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 46).
- 3.2.4 *Lamentation* (detail), Manuel Panselinos, fresco, c. 1290, Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Papageorgopoulos, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 2003, fig. 77).
- 3.2.5 *Lamentation* (detail), Giotto di Bondone, fresco, c. 1305, Arena Chapel, Padua. (Artstor Digital Library).
- 3.3.1 *Dormition*, Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco), second half of the sixteenth century, Church of the Koimesis tis Theotokou (Assumption of the Mother of God), Crete. (Acheimastou-Potamianou ed., *From Byzantium to El Greco*, 1987, fig. 63).
- 3.3.2 *The Adoration of the Magi*, Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco), c. 1565-1575, Crete. Benaki Museum, Athens. (Acheimastou-Potamianou ed., *From Byzantium to El Greco*, 1987, fig. 62a).
- 3.3.3 *St. Theodore the Tiro*, Angelos, fifteenth century, Crete. Byzantine Museum, Athens. (Acheimastou-Potamianou ed., *From Byzantium to El Greco*, 1987, fig. 32).

- 3.3.4 *Noli Me Tangere* (“Touch Me Not”), artist unknown, tempera on panel, early-sixteenth century, Zakynthos, Crete. (Acheimastou-Potamianou ed., *From Byzantium to El Greco*, 1987, fig. 58).
- 3.3.5 *Μη μου άπτου* (“Touch Me Not”), Theophanes Strelitzas (Bathas), fresco, c. 1546, Catholicon of Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos. (Kordis, *Η «Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης» Διονύσιου του εκ Φουρνά: Αισθητικά και εικαστικά σχόλια*, 2006, fig. 7).
- 3.3.6 *St. Makarios the Roman*, artist unknown, tempera on wood, eighteenth century, Skete of St. Anne, Mount Athos. (Karakatsanis ed., *Treasures of Mount Athos*, 1997, fig. 2.118).
- 3.3.7 *Saint John the Baptist*, Dionysius of Fournas, egg tempera on wood, 1711, cell of Dionysius of Fournas, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Triantaphyllopoulos, *Post Byzantium: The Greek Renaissance*, 2002, p. 20. Photo by G. Kakavas).
- 3.3.8 *Saint John the Baptist* (detail), Dionysius of Fournas, egg tempera on wood, 1711, cell of Dionysius of Fournas, Karyes, Mount Athos. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 190).
- 3.3.9 *The Virgin Zoodochos Pege*, Dionysius of Fournas, egg tempera on wood, 1737, Metamorphosis, Fournas. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 134).
- 3.3.10 *Christ the High Priest* (Enthroned), Dionysius of Fournas, egg tempera on wood, 1737, Metamorphosis, Fournas. (Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournas*, 2008, fig. 159).

## FOREWORD

Scholarship on different aspects of post-Byzantine culture often runs into a problem with terminology.<sup>1</sup> Because the study at hand considers an aspect of identity, one that occupies a particular time and space in post-Byzantine culture, ambiguous terminology must be defined before any discussion of the subject may take place. Three terms appear in this study to define larger and more complicated concepts: first, “post-Byzantine” – a term that is used to define chronological as well as cultural distinctions; second, “visual rhetoric” – a term used to define the aspects of image making that suggest an ideological position; and third, “artistic identity” – a term that is used to define and to encompass the ideological positions that are posited through visual rhetoric.

The term “post-Byzantine” refers to the phrase “Byzance après Byzance” coined by Nicolae Iorga in 1935.<sup>2</sup> It is a term that defines the period between the political termination of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and the establishment of the Greek State in 1821. When discussing post-Byzantine art, David Talbot-Rice

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1. Dimitris Livianos, “The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453-1913,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 237-269.

2. Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance: Continuation de l’Histoire de la Vie Byzantine* (Bucharest: Institut d’Etudes Byzantines, 1935), 45-56.

emphasized a cultural shift brought about by the fall of the empire. He utilized the term “Greek” to distinguish all works produced in the Greek-speaking world after 1453.<sup>3</sup> Both terms, “post-Byzantine” and “Greek,” are problematic when discussing art because neither term properly acknowledges aspects of cultural continuity from the Byzantine period.<sup>4</sup> I reference the term “post-Byzantine” to indicate the chronological position of works produced after 1453. Furthermore, I distinguish between the terms “Byzantine” and “post-Byzantine” when referring to aspects of culture and tradition; the former indicates correspondence with the Byzantine convention, and the latter indicates a possible break with the Byzantine convention. Thus, a work of art belonging chronologically to the post-Byzantine period may also be culturally Byzantine. Context will serve to clarify these points. Concerning works of art, I reserve the term “Greek” to generally indicate art produced after the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829).

I use the term “visual rhetoric” to encompass significant aspects of image making in Dionysius’s works. This term applies to both graphical and literary works, and it does not distinguish between visual devices such as composition, color, physiological features, or the symbolic and conventionalized usage of such

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3. David Talbot-Rice, *Icons: And Their History* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1974), 58.

4. John J. Yiannias, *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), ix-x.

elements. Instead, the term “visual rhetoric” emphasizes Dionysius’s use of distinct visual devices to establish or to maintain an ideological position. These visual devices are found in visible and extant works, such as frescos and panel-paintings, and they are also found in linguistic descriptions when these descriptions represent envisioned end-products. The term “visual rhetoric” also refers to aspects of style and the treatment of visual devices when they indicate an ideologically significant choice or preference. By using this term I wish to emphasize the ideological position that Dionysius expressed through his painted and written works.

While “visual rhetoric” stands for distinct visual devices that posit ideological positions, “artistic identity” is a term used here to describe the collective standpoint of these ideological positions.<sup>5</sup> For example, instances where Dionysius claims to have followed the traditions of an artist from the past are forms of visual rhetoric; these are then complicated by instances where Dionysius apparently breaks with his original claim and chooses to follow

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5. Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi Around 1622: The Shaping and Reshaping of Artistic Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 23. The term “artistic identity” encountered in the work at hand is used similarly to Mary Garrard’s use of the term. In her publication on Artemisia Gentileschi, Garrard uses the term “artistic identity” to talk about the formation of an identity as it is seen through the artist’s work. Furthermore, this term encompasses a contradiction between two forms of self-presentation found in two paintings of Gentileschi that Garrard then explains. I found this very practical use of the term “artistic identity” to fit my needs well. Like Garrard, I focus on Dionysius’s identity as it is seen through his work, and I also make use of the term to encompass apparent contradictions in his work.

contemporary models – the two seemingly contradictory forms of visual rhetoric contribute to Dionysius’s larger artistic identity. In this way, the term “artistic identity” is advantageous because it can be used to define a broad range of rhetorical stances without excluding contradictory elements. Furthermore, the term also encompasses aspects of agency: consciousness of past traditions, knowledge of past and contemporary practices, understanding of canonicity or the conventional usage of artistic subjects, and recognition of the origins of these subjects. Discussions of artistic identity concerning Dionysius rely on the interpretation of visual rhetoric as it is made available through extant works and documented sources. So far, no primary source has been found that directly or deliberately posits Dionysius’s ideological position on art and aspects of art making.<sup>6</sup> The subject remains open to debate.

Very few scholars take up Dionysius’s artistic identity as the main topic of their work, yet many of them make sweeping conclusions on this very matter. Identifying Dionysius and his visual rhetoric as traditionalistic or nationalistic are, essentially, attempts at determining his ideological positions on art – his artistic identity. However, such terms are too limiting and too simplistic to accurately describe Dionysius and his work. Taking up the artistic ideologies of

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6. In contrast, another contemporaneous author and artist, Panagiotis Doxaras, wrote a manual for artists where he clearly stated his ideological position on art. This is discussed in Chapter II.

Dionysius as the focus of this study, I found it necessary to define new terms of discourse in order to properly address the complexity of the subject at hand. These terms allow for greater linguistic maneuverability without burdening the subject with restrictive language.



## INTRODUCTION

## The Hermeneia of the Art of Painting

The *Ερμηνεία της ζωγραφικής τέχνης* (*The Hermeneia of the Art of Painting*), hereafter referred to as the *Hermeneia*, was completed by Dionysius of Fourni between the years 1729 and 1732.<sup>1</sup> Dionysius, a *hieromonachos* (monk-priest) who lived and operated on Mount Athos and in his native village of Fourni, was both a painter and an author. The *Hermeneia* is a compilation of post-Byzantine artistic traditions and practices structured as a series of instructions for painters and students. It contains three prologues and six sections. The first section provides the reader or student with technical instructions; these include recipes for colors, steps on how to prepare materials for painting, some descriptions on the stylistic treatment of visual elements, and the proportions of the human body. The following four sections deal with the iconographical treatment of religious subjects. Section two describes how to illustrate scenes from the Old Testament. Section three covers the principal events from the New Testament. Section four continues with illustrations from the New Testament starting with the Passion of Christ and the parables; then it describes the Divine Liturgy,

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1. Emmanuel Moutafos, "Post-Byzantine hermeneiai zographikes in the eighteenth century and their dissemination in the Balkans during the nineteenth century," in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol.30, No.1 (2006), 69-70. Moutafos explains that the term "*hermeneia*" (interpretation) is borrowed from liturgical language; *hermeneiai* are more than just instructions on painting. Rather, they are renderings of themes and personalities into a sacred pictorial language.

psalms, and it ends with eschatological themes – the Apocalypse, the Second Coming, and the Last Judgement. The fifth section describes how to illustrate different feast-days of the *Theotokos* (the Mother of God), twenty-four stanzas of the *akathistos* (hymn) dedicated to her, and groups of holy figures including apostles and evangelists, holy bishops and ecclesiastics, holy martyrs and saints, and the Seven Ecumenical Councils. The final section contains such miscellanea as instructions on how to depict the life of the true monk, iconographical nomenclature, epithets, epigrams, and the appropriate allocation of scenes within the church.

The sources of the *Hermeneia* vary widely and, so far, only a few instructions have been linked to definite sources.<sup>2</sup> Dionysius would have had access to older manuals, to existing paintings in churches on Mount Athos, to liturgical books, as well as to oral tradition, and to the current ideas of his time through possible correspondence with other artists and scholars or through

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2. Paul Hetherington, “‘The Poets’ in the Epmhneia of Dionysius of Fourni,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 27 (1973): 317-322. The section on the illustration of poets has been linked to a *triodion* (type of prayer book) published in Venice in 1600 by Paul Hetherington.

Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich, „Der Apokalypsen-Zyklus im Athosgebiet und seine Beziehungen zur Deutschen Bibelillustration der Reformation,“ *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag GmbH, 1939), 1-40. The section on the illustration of the Apocalypse Cycle has been linked to woodcuts of Hans Holbein the Younger.

George Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourni (c.1670-1745): Artistic Creation and Literary Description* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2008), 56-60. Kakavas discusses a number of major subjects in the *Hermeneia*, and he links them to possible sources found on Mount Athos.

personal experience. It is likely that Dionysius had access to one or more technical guides published in the West or some knowledge of their content because several words in the *Hermeneia*, especially in the technical section, are derived from Italian or German. Large parts of the iconographical sections were likely appropriated from Western sources as well; the absence of certain subjects from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine artistic repertoires suggests that these were modelled after foreign examples. While the *Hermeneia* contains many sources of various origins, some of them Western and others Byzantine or post-Byzantine, it bears some resemblance to Western technical guides; its general structure, for example, parallels Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro dell' Arte*.

With regard to content, the *Hermeneia* belongs to the variety of painter's manuals that were already widely used by artists in the Ottoman Balkans. These consisted of technical manuals, also called *hermeneiai*, and pattern-books. However, the structure of Dionysius's *Hermeneia* is unique. The six sections that the *Hermeneia* contains can be more broadly grouped into two categories – the technical and the iconographical. These categories of instruction had never before been combined into a single volume. Because of this, Dionysius's *Hermeneia* became the most extensive and complete treatise on artistic practices in the Orthodox Christian culture. It is due to this quality that copies of the

manuscript became vastly popular in many artistic workshops throughout the Balkans and in other artistic centers including Jerusalem, Russia, and the Slavic countries that adhered culturally to Byzantine artistic traditions.<sup>3</sup> It was, and is to this day, primarily used as a practical source for artists.

While Dionysius integrated a wide range of sources into his manual, his audience was much more distinctive. The *Hermeneia* addresses painters' apprentices – to “all you pupils of diligent painters” – and it was intended to be a practical manual for use by artists and their students in the workshop.<sup>4</sup>

Dionysius makes no distinction between a lay or monastic audience. While most copies of the *Hermeneia* were found in monasteries, monastic workshops, even on Mount Athos, were open to both lay and monastic painters. Apprenticeship typically lasted for only one year, and no demographic of the circulating students is certain, though they would undoubtedly have been Orthodox Christians. In either case, the approach to art would have been similar for both the lay artist and the monastic. Lay artists at that time would adhere to similar standards of

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3. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fournà*, 56-60.

4. Paul Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà* (Redondo Beach: Oakwood Publications, 1989), 2.

piety and conduct as clergy and monks.<sup>5</sup> It was expected, as a nineteenth-century artist's manual prescribes, even for married artists to lead semi-monastic lives, and they, similarly to monks supervised by abbots, might have had supervisors assigned to them from the local clergy.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the *Hermeneia* was likely intended for an audience with high moral standing and with close connection to the ecclesiastical system of the Orthodox Church. Taking into account the diverse positions on art that were maintained by different groups within the Orthodox Church itself, Dionysius's *Hermeneia* does not appear to be an accusatory statement against opposing artistic ideologies; in no part of the *Hermeneia* does Dionysius urge his reader to abandon other practices. Instead, he addressed those artists and students who already maintained similar religious and moral convictions to his own but were in need of direction. In other words, Dionysius seems to have aimed for the artists or students caught in-between differing artistic ideologies, and he calls upon their religious convictions for like-mindedness in matters of art making.

Since its appearance in Western scholarship in the late-nineteenth century, the *Hermeneia* has, until relatively recently, been regarded as the key element to

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5. Moutafov, "Post-Byzantine hermeneiai zographikes," 72.

6. Ibid.

the general conformity of Byzantine art. Byzantine artists were, typically, very conscious of their traditions, but the perception that these artists worked under a strict code and rigid rules is no longer accepted. Having been regarded as the missing explanation for Byzantine artistic tradition, the great excitement that the *Hermeneia* generated in the late-nineteenth century was misplaced. However, the manuscript continues to feature prominently in much of the scholarship concerning various aspects of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art. The *Hermeneia* is an indispensable source of Orthodox Christian iconography and of Byzantine and post-Byzantine technical practices. Furthermore, the manuscript has recently taken a central position in scholarship on eighteenth-century culture and tradition in Ottoman Greece. Today, a discussion of post-Byzantine artistic culture would be virtually incomplete without mention of Dionysius and his *Hermeneia*.

### Previous Literature on the *Hermeneia*

The *Hermeneia* of Dionysius was copied and subsequently disseminated across the Balkans within the first few decades of its completion.<sup>7</sup> However, it took almost a century for it to be noticed by Western scholars. A partial copy of Dionysius's *Hermeneia* was first mentioned in a publication by G. Schorn in 1832.<sup>8</sup> Schorn described a painter's manual used by Euthymios Dimitri, who painted some frescos at a Greek Orthodox chapel in Munich in 1828.<sup>9</sup> However, not much attention was given to this manual, and it was not until Adolphe Didron's publication that the study of Dionysius's *Hermeneia* really began. During his travels to several monasteries on Mount Athos in 1839, French archeologist Didron came across copies of a painter's manual used by artists in the Monastery of Esphigmenou and in Karyes.<sup>10</sup> To Didron, these texts were a kind of revelation, and he came to the conclusion that they explained the similarity and

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7. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fournà*, 57.

8. G. Schorn, „Nachricht über ein neugriechisches Malerbuch,“ *Kunstblatt*, No. 1-5, 1832.

9. Some parts of the painter's manual used by Euthymios date to 1741 while the rest date to 1820.

10. Adolphe Napoleon Didron, *Manuel d'Iconographie Chrétienne Grecque et Latine*, trans. Paul Durand, (Paris : Imprimerie Royale, 1845), iii-xlvi and xxii.



iconographic uniformity of the entire Medieval artistic tradition.<sup>11</sup> Didron left some money for the monks on Mount Athos to provide him with a copy of the manuscript. However, this copy was not completed by the time Didron received a different version of the manuscript, copied by Constantine Simonidis.

Simonidis's copy of the *Hermeneia* was then translated into French by Paul Durand and published by Didron in 1845. Later, Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus revealed that Simonidis's copy was a forgery and that parts of it were not genuine.<sup>12</sup> Simonidis, who became a notorious forger, had inscribed the front page of his version with the fictitious date of 1458, perhaps to add an element of prestige and to raise the monetary value of the work.<sup>13</sup> Simonidis's spurious text was translated into German by Godehard Schäfer in 1855<sup>14</sup> and partially translated into English in 1886.<sup>15</sup>

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11. Ibid, xxii-xxiii.

12. Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης (Hermeneia of the art of painting)*, (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie B. Kirschbaum, 1909). δ'-η'.

13. Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual,'* i. The copy by Simonidis, kept at the municipal library of Chartres, was destroyed in 1944 according to Hetherington.

14. Godehard Schäfer, *Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής: Das Handbuch der Malerei vom Berge Athos aus dem handschriftlichen neugriechischen Urtext übersetzt mit Anmerkungen von Didron d. Ä. und eigen von G. Schäfer* (Trier, 1855).

15. Adolphe Didron, *Christian Iconography; or, the History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages, Vol. II*, ed. Margaret Stokes, trans. E. J. Millington, (London, 1886), 265-399.

The most trusted or accurate versions of the *Hermeneia* were first published by scholars in the East. In 1868, the Russian bishop Porphyrii Uspenskii published a Russian translation of the *Hermeneia* from a manuscript that he found in Jerusalem, one which, according to Uspenskii, closely corresponded to the earliest copies of Dionysius's original.<sup>16</sup> In 1909, Papadopoulos-Kerameus published an edition of the entire *Hermeneia* in its original Greek language.<sup>17</sup> He based his edition on an eighteenth-century manuscript, *Codex Grecus 708*, now located in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library in St. Petersburg. To this day, his publication remains the authoritative text of the *Hermeneia*. In this edition, Papadopoulos-Kerameus exposed the spurious nature of Didron's source, and he included five other texts in the appendices as possible sources for the *Hermeneia*. Vasile Grecu, a Romanian scholar, published another edition based on Romanian versions of the text in 1936.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Porphyrii Uspenskii, *Ерминия или наставление в живописном искусстве составленное иеромонахом и живописцем Дионисием Фурнографитом* (Kiev, 1868). The original manuscript that Uspenskii translated into Russian is now lost.

17. Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ερμηνεία της ζωγραφικής τέχνης (manual of the art of painting)*, (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie B. Kirschbaum, 1909).

18. Vasile Grecu, *Cărți de pictură bisericească bizantină* (Cernauti, 1936). This edition is also a republication of the *Hermeneia* copied by Archimandrite Makarie in 1805.

A number of translations and editions have been made from copies of Dionysius's *Hermeneia* as early as the second half of the eighteenth century; many of these were hand-copied by artists for use in the field. George Kakavas has catalogued over 41 manuscript copies of the *Hermeneia*, and it is thought that many more existed but are now lost or destroyed through arduous usage.<sup>19</sup> The original autograph manuscript of Dionysius also remains lost, and no known copy of the manuscript dates back from before the second half of the eighteenth century. However, the edition published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus is very likely an exact replication of the archetypal text, at least in terms of content. Having compared two of the earliest manuscript copies of the *Hermeneia* (the *Codex Grecus 708*, dating to the second half of the eighteenth century, and the *Codex Benaki 58*, dated 1768), Kakavas found both to be virtually identical.<sup>20</sup> According to Kakavas, both manuscripts were probably copied directly from the original, and they can be trusted in its stead.<sup>21</sup>

Two crucial works must be given special consideration in relation to the argument at hand. The first is the English translation of the *Hermeneia* by Paul

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19. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourna*, Appendix IV.

20. *Ibid*, 18.

21. *Ibid*, 18-19.

Hetherington, published in 1974.<sup>22</sup> Hetherington translated the *Codex Grecus 708* into English, and he provided copious annotations and explanations of the manuscript within his edition. The second is a recent study of Dionysius and the *Hermeneia* by George Kakavas published in 2008.<sup>23</sup> Kakavas incorporated Dionysius's painted works together with the literary context of the *Hermeneia* in order to interpret the ideas expressed by the eighteenth-century painter and author. Kakavas also provided the reader with a translation of the biography of Dionysius, recorded by the *hierio*-monk Theophanes of Agrapha, and descriptions of several important primary sources, such as the documented exchanges between Dionysius and his correspondents.<sup>24</sup>

Critical literature and scholarly interpretations of the *Hermeneia* are few. Some information is available in the summary of post-Byzantine art published in 1957 by Andreas Xyngopoulos.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, much work remains to be done

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22. Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual.'* The version published in 1974 was republished in 1989. The study at hand references the more recent publication.

23. George Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourni (c.1670-1745): Artistic Creation and Literary Description* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2008).

24. *Ibid.*, 64-72. In these pages Kakavas translated the biography of Dionysius, written by Theophanes of Agrapha, found in the *Codex Benaki 37* on folia 73-80.

25. Andreas Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιάσμα Ιστορίας της Θρησκευτικής Ζωγραφικής μετά την Αλωσιν (An Outline of the History of Religious Painting after the Fall)*, (Athens: Archeological Association of Athens, 1957), 292-311.

on eighteenth-century post-Byzantine culture in general. Regarding the *Hermeneia* of Dionysius, the publications by Hetherington and Kakavas remain the most extensive studies on the subject to date.

## Conclusion

Kakavas's publication is the first major work that deals with the identity of Dionysius and visual rhetoric. Papadopoulos-Kerameus was largely concerned with the sources of the text; Grecu focused more on the philological and textual problems than with content, and, while he attempted to provide an overview of the subject-matter, Hetherington admitted that his work is only a first step toward fuller evaluation of the contents of the *Hermeneia*.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, most other authors who mention the *Hermeneia* touch upon partially formed notions concerning Dionysius's artistic identity. Most popular among scholars are the perceptions of nationalism and conservatism in Dionysius's work. In support of this interpretation, Kakavas affirms that Dionysius used the format of a painter's manual in order to propagate his own agenda – to encourage the revival of earlier Byzantine practices – as an act of nationalism.<sup>27</sup> However, the observant reader will not be satisfied with the given explanation because there exist many elements within Dionysius's visual rhetoric that do not correspond to this interpretation of artistic identity. While Kakavas takes an important step

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26. Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual,'* v.

27. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fournai,* 25.

toward discussing Dionysius's visual rhetoric, his work cannot be considered the final step in this direction.

Given the first steps toward determining the artistic identity of Dionysius that were made by Hetherington and Kakavas, the next step for scholarship on the subject is to delve deeper into the issue of artistic identity and especially the problematic elements that seem to controvert the popular notions of nationalism and conservatism in the work of Dionysius. The following argument will attempt to explore Dionysius's artistic identity with a stronger consideration for the complexity of the visual rhetoric posited throughout his works.

CHAPTER I  
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION



## Dionysius of Fournia, Life and Works

Dionysius was born around 1670 in the town of Fournia in the district of Agrapha to a local priest by the name of Panagiotis Chalkia.<sup>1</sup> He was orphaned at twelve and moved to Constantinople where he resumed his education for another four years. Dionysius then moved to Mount Athos where he established his living quarters in the town of Karyes, the monastic and the socioeconomic center of the peninsula. He then became a priest, or *hieromonachos*, while studying and practicing the art of icon and mural painting. Dionysius eventually became a well-regarded spiritual father and art teacher, and he even established an art school at Karyes. His works on Mount Athos, as listed by Hetherington, include his cell complex together with the *parecclesion* dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, the wall-paintings in the *parecclesion* of Saint Demetrius (Vatopedi Monastery), and the west wall of the catholicon of Docheiariou.<sup>2</sup> Several other paintings on

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1. *Codex Benaki 37*, 73-80. translated and published by Kakavas: George Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fournia (c.1670-1745): Artistic Creation and Literary Description*. Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2008. Most of what is known about Dionysius is located in the Codex Benaki 37. The biography of Dionysius written by Theophanes of Agrapha is located on folia 73-80. The rest of the manuscript contains documents pertaining to Dionysius's activity at Fournia and the establishment of the school there.

2. Paul Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournia*, (Redondo Beach: Oakwook Publications, 1989), ii. Some of these conclusions seem to be based on stylistic grounds as analyzed by Andreas Xyngopoulos in: *Σχεδιάσμα Ιστορίας της Θρησκευτικής Ζωγραφικής μετά την Άλωσιν*, (Athens: Archeological Association of Athens, 1957), 306-310.

Mount Athos that are attributed to Dionysius, such as his work at Karakallou, are either unconfirmed or are no longer located there.

Dionysius returned to Fourni in 1724 where, at the request of his compatriots, he painted the interior of the local church dedicated to the Holy Transfiguration. In Fourni, Dionysius helped construct a building for local nuns, and he founded a small monastery dedicated to the Virgin of the *Zoodochos Pege* (the Life-giving Spring) for himself and the small number of monks that travelled with him. Unfortunately, only a small amount of his work survived from these projects because the church in Fourni burned down in 1821 and the monastery that he built collapsed in 1906. However, some of Dionysius's written works, kept in the school building, have survived. These include a number of letters, eighteen epigrams, two *akolouthia* (liturgical works) of which one is dedicated to the holy neo-martyr Seraphim, Archbishop of Phanarios (d. 1611), and the other to the Virgin of the *Zoodochos Pege*, and, in copied form, the *Hermeneia*. Dionysius returned for a short while to Karyes where he repaired his cell complex. He also travelled a second time to Constantinople in 1740 with a petition to the Patriarch concerning the monastery that he was building. The latter part of his life Dionysius spent at Fourni where he continued his construction projects. The date and location of his death is assumed to be 1745 or 1746 in Fourni.

## Collective Identity and Culture in the Ottoman Balkans

In past scholarship on post-Byzantine collective identities and post-Byzantine culture, the two centuries that preceded the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829) have been commonly associated with the rise of nationalism. However, national identity, as we understand it today, was not an ethnic reality for most Greek people at this time. Rather, Orthodox Christianity and Hellenization were the chief expressions of Balkan identity.<sup>3</sup> Collective identities, as they were described by authors, scholars, and political figures from the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the rise of the Greek State, seem to have fluctuated between three primary distinctions: religious, linguistic, and ethnic. Of these, the religious was the dominant distinction of identity, at least until the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, because it was facilitated by the Ottoman *millet* system – a system that divided social groups into self-governing religious units. In this system, the Patriarch was spiritually and, to a large extent, temporally responsible for the entire body of Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire. Even so, unity under a common religion was never uniform; among other complicating factors, collective identities were also determined by

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3. Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the Eighteenth Century," *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie, Anno 18 (79), Nr. 1, *The Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (1999), pp. 131-145, 140.

regional loyalties and divisions of labor or social status.<sup>4</sup> Collective identities were spread and formed by education, the economy, and predominantly by the Orthodox Church and its agents. Since the Byzantine period, the Patriarchate of Constantinople preserved the channels of communication that reached deep into the social structures of the Ottoman-held regions. Orthodox Christianity was the overarching religion of the Balkan peoples while the ruling Muslims and the Catholics formed a scattered minority, albeit an influential one. Cultural identities of the Balkans were also shaped by external or foreign cultures, particularly those bordering the Ottoman-held regions but also including European powers such as Russia, Britain, and France. Likewise, Greek communities in the diaspora formed important cultural networks between the Greeks under Ottoman occupation and the rest of Europe. These diaspora communities were very effective in facilitating cultural exchange through commerce and education. [Figure 1.1.1]. Thus, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Balkan region was culturally characterized by ethnic pluralism and religious co-existence.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Dimitris Livianos, "The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453-1913," in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 246-249.

5. Kitromilides, "Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity," 135.

In the seventeenth century, central authority in the Balkans entered a period of decline. Mounting internal and external pressures forced the ruling Ottoman classes to exercise less and less authoritative power. Provincial government officials struggled to keep control over their subjects who, feeling increasingly confident, repeatedly tested the limits of governmental authority. For instance, the policy of the *devşirme*, the levy of young boys for the service of the Sultan, was continuously met with violent opposition until the policy was altogether abolished by the end of the seventeenth century. Wars with European powers also contributed to internal deterioration of centralized authority. After the costly war with Venice over Crete (1645-1669), the Ottoman Empire suffered a series of political setbacks. These resulted in the peace treaties of Carlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718), both of which weakened Ottoman presence in the Balkans. [Figure 1.1.2]. The two treaties had the effect of stabilizing the Ottoman-European borders and weakening central authority in the Balkan provinces. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, Christian subjects of the Empire experienced a general easing of governmental pressures and a growth of cultural mobility.

The same circumstances that contributed to a growth of cultural mobility in the Ottoman territories, namely the penetration of Western commerce into

Ottoman territories, also facilitated the emergence of a rich and powerful Greek merchant class, the Phanariots.<sup>6</sup> The immensely rich Phanariot families quickly ascended to high positions within Ottoman society where they exerted a certain amount of influence over the sultan and the patriarch through financial diplomacies. The Phanariots and the Patriarchate became mutually dependent on each other for survival and growth; by the end of the seventeenth century, their relationship was almost symbiotic. The Phanariots also attained a degree of social and political power. They were responsible for new reforms, they enacted social changes to keep up with the European nations, and, though they formally identified as Orthodox Christians, the Phanariots looked toward the West for inspiration in matters of culture, education, and politics. Generations of their children were educated in the most prestigious universities in the West, most notably Padua, and many of them were raised to some of the highest courtly positions upon their return to Constantinople. Their positions, however, were always precarious in the capital; the sultan had the right to seize their lands and assets at any opportunity. Because of this, some of the richest and most powerful of these families invested a large part of their resources into obtaining land and

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6. The name “Phanariot” was derived from the Phanar district of Constantinople – where the patriarchal quarters were located and where many of the rich merchant-class families settled in the seventeenth century.

courtly positions in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. There, their resources remained out of the reach of the sultan, even if politically and religiously these families remained dependent on the Sultanate and the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Other families, such as the Ghikas and the Mavrocordatos, operated from within the capital itself. Altogether, the Phanariots were motivated by the idea of an eventual overthrow of the Ottoman Sultanate so that they could establish a new government, a kind of Byzantine revival with themselves in ruling positions. For such ambitions, any form of separatism was unfavorable, and many of these Phanariot families strove to keep the Empire intact and stable. It was, in fact, a Phanariot, Alexander Mavrocordatos, who was the chief Ottoman delegate at the peace conference of Carlowitz in 1699. Alexander, originally a medical practitioner, had a highly successful career at Sultan Ahmet Köprülü's court. Already appointed as the Grand Dragoman and Chief of Foreign Affairs, he then became Exaporite, Minister of the Secrets, Private Secretary to the sultan with the title of Prince and Illustrious Highness, and his ambassadorial skills earned him the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire by the Hapsburg emperor.<sup>7</sup> The Phanariots who attained similar heights were all very well-educated, highly motivated, and

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7. Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 368.

financially wealthy. Their social and political impact was immense, but they also stimulated important cultural programs. The Phanariot families became patrons of the arts in Greek lands and, despite their predominantly Western and secular education, were instrumental in the affairs of the Orthodox Church. They regularly paid off the debts of the Patriarchate, which gave them vital Church-political leverage, and they even paid for the taxes, the repairs, and new construction projects of monastic communities such as Mount Athos. In this way, the Greek elite classes prominently embedded themselves into the cultural and social consciousness of the Balkan populations.

Narrowing down the question of identity to an individual is somewhat more complex because personal ideologies and experiences would have added to the preexisting milieu of collective identities. This is true even for a monk, whose level of activity would seemingly be limited by his social status and monastic environment. However, many monks living on Mount Athos in the eighteenth century held a considerable amount of personal freedom because of a weakened monastic government. Administrative authority on Mount Athos diminished around the middle of the seventeenth century when the office of *Prôtos* (Abbot) was replaced by short-term representatives elected from among the monks on an annual basis. Furthermore, most monasteries had turned from a *coenobitic* to an



*idiorrhhythmic* form of monasticism, and, to some degree, all monasteries on Mount Athos experienced a period of moral laxity and financial poverty by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> The financial situation improved eventually, but the administrative weakness lasted well into the eighteenth century.

Dionysius lived and operated at a time that facilitated a great amount of collective and personal mobility, and it was also a time of economic and cultural revival. Phanariot families alleviated the financial constraints placed upon cultural centers such as Mount Athos, thereby imbuing them with means of cultural expression. Indeed, twice as many Greek artists are known to have operated in the first half of the eighteenth century as in the entire previous century, and Dionysius would likely have found himself a beneficiary of this cultural revival. His activities and accomplishments certainly attest to a participation in the cultural expansion, and, considering that he initiated the building of a monastic community and the establishment of two schools – an art school on Mount Athos and a public school at Fourná – Dionysius could well be regarded as one of its active agents.

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8. A coenobitic (lit. communal life) form of monasticism was typically characterized by a communal lifestyle and strict rules. On the other hand, *idiorrhhythmic* (lit. following one's own rule) monasticism is typically characterized by an isolated lifestyle and a loosely maintained community of semi-independent monks.

## Conclusion

Documentary evidence suggests that Dionysius was financially supported by certain Phanariot families in his building projects. The *Codex Benaki 37* contains a report written and signed by Dionysius on June 5, 1740, the same year that he travelled to Constantinople, concerning the monastery of the *Zoodochos Pege*. The report is addressed to “Lord Prince Alexandros Ghikas, and Lord Grigorios Kallimachis.”<sup>9</sup> Both the Ghikas and the Kallimachis families were two of the foremost Phanariot families at the time. Both families had members serving as the Princes of Moldavia and Wallachia, and the two individuals named in the letters undoubtedly played a crucial role in securing Dionysius’s monastery with the *stavropegic* status – subordinate directly to the patriarch. Indeed, the following pages of the manuscript contain an order of service directly from the Patriarch Neophytos, dated August of 1740, granting Dionysius’s monastery the status of a *stavropigion*.<sup>10</sup> [Figure 1.1.3]. The support of the courtly families was even more significant in that it ensured a certain continuity of aid to the monastery even after Dionysius’s death. A Princely Chrysobull, found in Fourná, was issued to the monastery by “his Reverence and

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9. *Codex Benaki 37*, fol. 43-44.

10. *Ibid*, fol. 44-45.

Highness, Prince and ruler of all Hungary and Wallachia K[yrios] K[yrios] Ioannis Skarlatos Alexandros Kallimachis" written in Jassy on December 8, 1817.<sup>11</sup> Almost a century after its foundation by Dionysius, the monastery was still receiving attention from Phanariot nobility. Other letters recorded in the *Codex Benaki 37* also list patrons more locally situated. These exchanges between Dionysius and the princes, the patriarch(s), and the local benefactors demonstrate the type of patronage that Dionysius sought and received throughout his life. Dionysius operated simultaneously at different social levels reaching beyond the immediate circle of his small monastic community. Altogether, the diverse patronage that Dionysius received suggests a progressive mindset and openness to communication with the elite members of society.

Dionysius was treated very differently on Mount Athos. In general, he was respected among the monks, but Theophanes relates an incident, around 1717, where Dionysius was humiliated and harshly punished by the *prohegoumenos* (abbot) of the Karakallou Monastery. According to Theophanes, the *prohegoumenos* was displeased with the work that Dionysius produced there because "he [Dionysius] had not artfully and beautifully painted the icons of their monastery, [but] really having it in his mind to denigrate the skillfulness

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11. Ibid, fol. 87-91.

and ingenuity of his painting.”<sup>12</sup> Theophanes does not elaborate on what kind of ingenuity merited such a harsh response. Karakallou was a particularly conservative monastery known for its devout asceticism even among other similar monasteries on Mount Athos. Another artist, Damaskinos of Ioannina, painted the catholicon of the Karakallou monastery in 1716, just a year before Dionysius worked there. Damaskinos was a proponent of a conservative style characterized by flat figures and pronounced linearity of forms.<sup>13</sup> It is probable that the *prohegoumenos* desired or expected something similar from Dionysius. Instead, Dionysius had adopted the volume style of the thirteenth-century painter Manuel Panselinos; this style was undergoing a revival on Mount Athos around the same time. The approach was perhaps too innovative and overly progressive for the *prohegoumenos* of Karakallou. Regardless, Dionysius sparked a great debate over art on Mount Athos the details of which are, unfortunately, not known. It is at this time that Dionysius acquired a large following, one that likely prompted him to form a proper school for those wishing to learn the art of painting and, perhaps, the eventual compilation of the *Hermeneia*.

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12. Ibid, fol. 75.

13. Panagiotis L. Vocotopoulos, “Monumental Painting,” in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, ed. Athanasios A. Karakatsanis, (Thessaloniki: Ministry of Culture, 1997), 37.

In his writings, Dionysius does not address issues of an ideologically charged nature or of cultural identity. Much of the sentiment that is expressed in his letters, the epigrams, the *akolouthia*, and even in the *Hermeneia* is religious in spirit – entirely befitting a *hiero*-monk and a spiritual father. However, Dionysius clearly found secular patrons to be much more accommodating than conservative monastics. While Dionysius’s artistic identity remains a speculation due to the limited amount of documented evidence, his sphere of operation can be determined to have facilitated artistic diversity, syncretism, and a progressive mentality. In addition, this sphere would have inhibited such attitudes toward art as retrogression and idealistic conservatism. Dionysius’s response to the pressures around him remains to be gleaned from the visual rhetoric in his artistic works.

CHAPTER I  
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

FIGURES

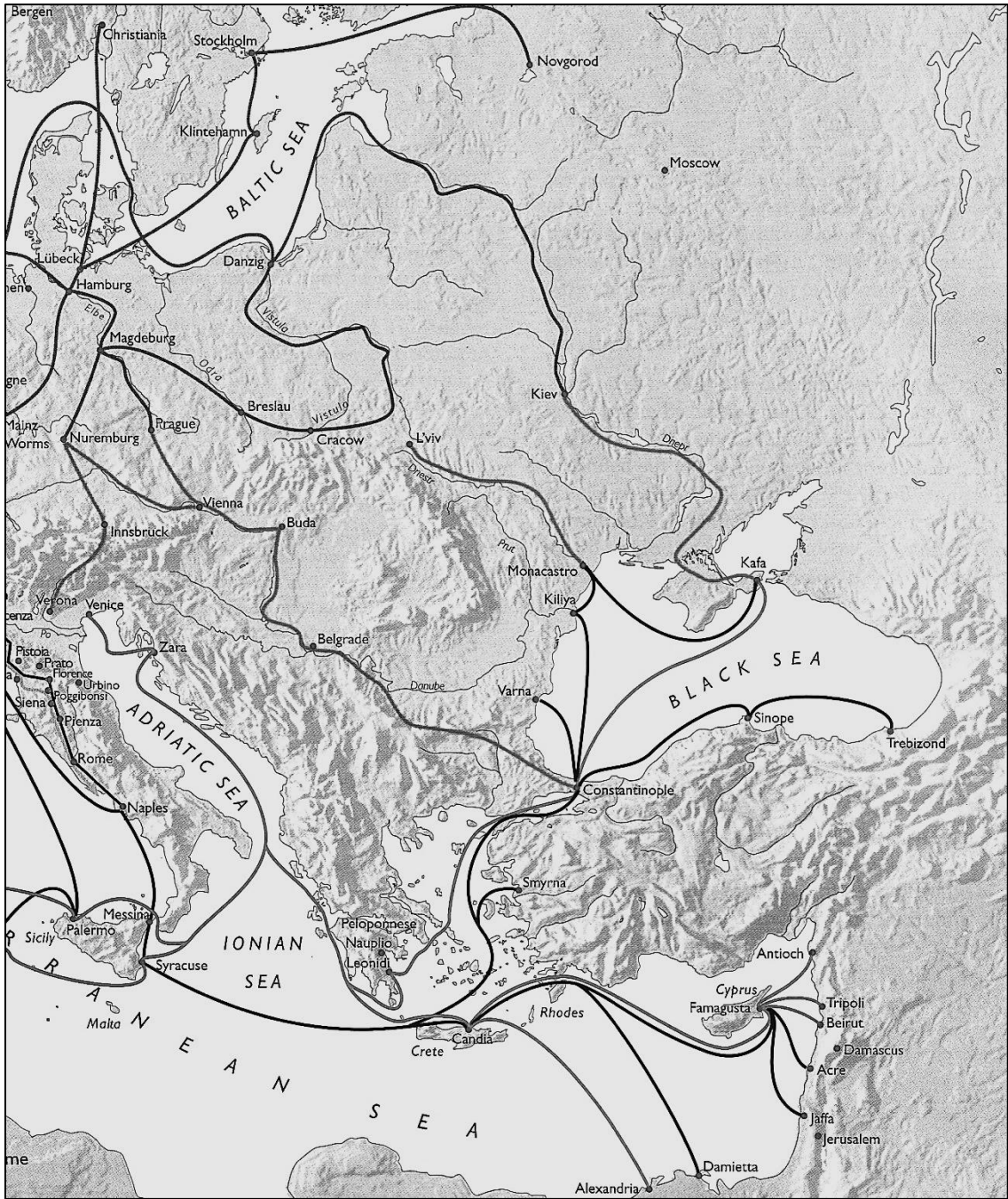


Figure 1.1.1

Map of the major trade routes throughout the post-Byzantine period.



Figure 1.1.2

Map of the Ottoman conquests from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.



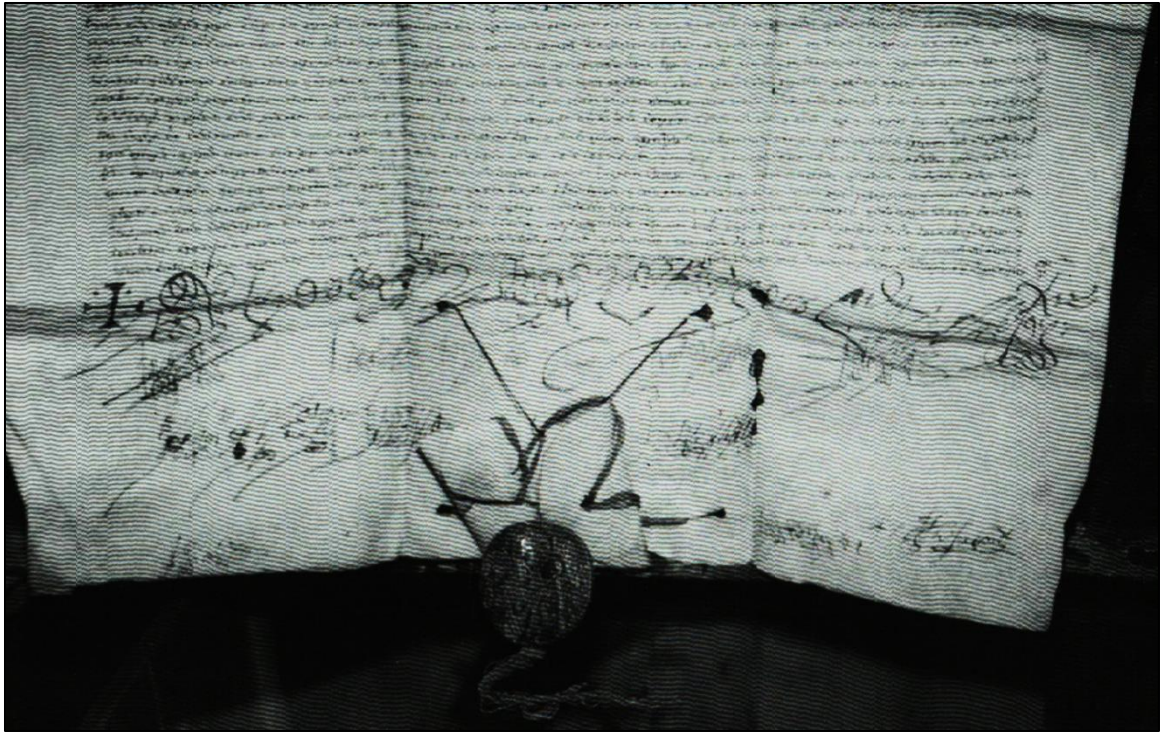


Figure 1.1.3

Letter and sigillion of the Ecumenical Patriarch Neophytos VI,  
1740,  
Metamorphosis, Fourná.

CHAPTER II

VISUAL RHETORIC OF THE *HERMENEIA*

## Problems of Interpretation

Through secondary literature, the *Hermeneia* of Dionysius of Fournas has come to be seen as a revival of Byzantine artistic traditions in the face of the Europeanization of Greek Orthodox culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The manuscript has attained such synonymy with Byzantine artistic tradition that scholars have recently used the text as a retrospective tool to aid in the discussion of technique and iconography in earlier Byzantine works.<sup>1</sup> However, past scholars have generally overlooked or ignored the fact that Dionysius's work contains instances of deviation from Byzantine conventions, and only recently has this aspect attracted academic attention. Even so, recent scholarship downplays deviation on the part of Dionysius in favor of the view that Dionysius actively promoted a return to past artistic practices of the late-Byzantine era and, more precisely, the Macedonian aesthetic qualities of the Palaiologan period.<sup>2</sup> Of the factors that are used to support this particular interpretation, two stand out.

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1. Myrtili Acheimastou-Potamianou, ed., *From Byzantium to El Greco*, trans. David A. Hardy (Athens: Greek Ministry of Culture, 1987), 44 and 54.

2. Thalia Gouma-Peterson, "The Icon as a Cultural Presence after 1453," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannias (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 161.

First, Dionysius pointed to Manuel Panselinos, a Macedonian painter from Thessalonica who operated during the Palaiologan period, as the model for the reader or student to follow. Dionysius included the following statement in the introduction to the *Hermeneia* that clearly articulates the high regard he attributed to Panselinos. Dionysius writes:

This painter [Panselinos]... shone in his profession of painting so that his brilliance exceeded that of the moon, and he obscured with his miraculous art all painters, both ancient and modern. This art I wished with all my heart to propagate for the benefit of all you who are of the same profession.<sup>3</sup>

In support of this relation to Panselinos, much of the extant sources suggest that Dionysius integrated, more or less closely, the Macedonian painter's work into his own. Ties to Panselinos are especially apparent in Dionysius's visual rhetoric. However, Dionysius's work is neither dependent on the works of Panselinos nor is it entirely faithful to the artistic conventions of Palaiologan art. Dionysius reached for sources beyond the works of Palaiologan artists, and this aspect brings into question many of the presumptions about the traditionalistic inclination of Dionysius's work and his artistic identity.

The second factor that emboldens the perception of Dionysius as an advocate of Byzantine artistic traditions is the popular juxtaposition of the

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3. Paul Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà* (Redondo Beach: Oakwook Publications, 1989), p. 2.

*Hermeneia* with another contemporary manuscript, titled *Peri Zographias (On Painting)*, authored by Panagiotis Doxaras around 1726. [Figures 2.1.1 and 2.1.2]. Doxaras, who lived and operated on the Ionian Islands under Venetian rule, was a vociferous proponent of Venetian Mannerism and of Italian masters such as Paolo Caliari (Veronese). He also translated Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato della Pittura* into Greek, and this translation subsequently shaped the so-called Heptanesian or Ionian school of painting.<sup>4</sup> [Figure 2.1.3]. The members of the Heptanesian School operated in former Byzantine territories, but they rejected nearly all of the Byzantine artistic conventions. The school itself was characterized by a fervent adoption of Venetian or Italian techniques and stylistic expressions, and Doxaras was one of its most prominent artists. A painting of St. John the Baptist by Doxaras exemplifies such tendencies. The artist depicted realistic modeling of the flesh, naturalistic treatment of the drapery, and, especially, the illusionary gradation of colors on the wings of the figure. [Figure 2.1.4]. In comparison, Dionysius treated the corresponding elements in a painting of the same subject very differently. [Figure 2.1.5]. Here, modeling of the flesh is implied but treated unrealistically; the drapery is schematized; the wings of the

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4. Andreas Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιάσμα Ιστορίας της Θρησκευτικής Ζωγραφικής μετά την Αλωσιν (An Outline of the History of Religious Painting after the Fall)*, (Athens: Archeological Association of Athens, 1957), 333.

figure are rendered with ornate and flat patterning. The differences between the visual expressions of the two artists are axiomatic in their paintings. More importantly, both artists promoted their respective artistic convictions within their written work. Thus, Doxaras's very direct and deliberate introduction of a Westernizing treatise into the Greek Orthodox artistic culture seems to be a stark contrast to the ideals promoted by Dionysius. In much of the scholarship concerning Dionysius, the juxtaposition of the *Hermeneia* and *Peri Zographias* as binary opposites has been used by authors to assign a culturally Byzantinizing role to the *Hermeneia* in opposition to a Europeanizing role of Doxaras's treatise. The placement of the two manuscripts into a shared dialectic has been used to emphasize the polarity between Byzantine and Western artistic ideologies. According to such polarity, Dionysius, a supporter of the former, took a defensive stance against the latter.<sup>5</sup> However, these manuscripts do not represent absolute extremes on the spectrum between Byzantine tradition and a foreign or Western antithesis. Certain complications in Dionysius's *Hermeneia* reveal a rather different dynamic between the two works than the contentious relationship originally proposed by scholars in the past.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourni*, 23-29.

6. This relationship will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The idea that Dionysius looked back in time for inspiration from Byzantine and especially Palaiologan traditions, largely based on the two arguments discussed above, has allowed for his work to be interpreted as being covertly nationalistic. Nationality and nationalism were more obscure concepts for the Balkan people at this time than in the beginning of the nineteenth century when romantic nationalism was fuelled more intensely by external and internal political pressures. Some scholars, therefore, consider the *Hermeneia* as an early manifestation of the type of militant nationalism that surfaced about a century later.<sup>7</sup> Their interpretation of Dionysius's retrospect as a form of nationalistically motivated traditionalism has resulted in defining Dionysius with very restrictive terms. Explaining instances of deviation from Byzantine artistic traditions in Dionysius's work has become a problematic area for these scholars. They treat instances of deviation in the *Hermeneia* as anomalies and as inadvertent effects of Western influences.<sup>8</sup> However, the deviations in Dionysius's work, whether occurring inadvertently or deliberately, are integral forms of visual rhetoric that contribute to his artistic identity. Contrary to the approaches of past scholarship, a refocused emphasis on the relationship between foreign and Byzantine

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7. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourni*, 29.

8. *Ibid*, 48.

elements in the work of Dionysius brings to light a more complete understanding of his ideological conception of art within a complex and diverse culture.



## Two Iconographical Types of the Evangelist Luke

Manuel Panselinos was a painter from Thessalonica active on Mount Athos around 1290-1320. He allegedly painted the frescos of the Protaton, a church in the village of Karyes on Mount Athos, and he is widely regarded as the most significant Macedonian painter of his time.<sup>9</sup> The attribution of paintings to Panselinos is controversial because no paleographic evidence of his activity has survived. The *Hermeneia*, in fact, remains the earliest known source that links Panselinos to the frescos in the Protaton despite a chronological gap of four centuries.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of written documentation, oral tradition alone sustained the idea of Panselinos's authorship. Such oral tradition was undoubtedly embellished, and Panselinos had quickly become a legendary, even a mythical, figure on Mount Athos. By the eighteenth century, Athonite monks ubiquitously attributed the frescos in the Protaton to Panselinos.<sup>11</sup> During his

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9. E. N. Τσιγαρίδας (E. N. Tsigaridas), «Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος, ο κορυφαίος ζωγράφος της εποχής των Παλαιολόγων», in *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος εκ τον ιερον ναού τον Πρωτάτον*, ("Manuel Panselinos, the foremost painter of the Palaiologan era," in *Manuel Panselinos of the Holy Sanctuary of the Protaton*), (Thessaloniki: Αγιορείτικη Εστία (Mount Athos), 2003), 17.

10. Matthew J. Milliner, "Man or Metaphor? Manuel Panselinos and the Protaton Frescoes," in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration: Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, ed. M. J. Johnson (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 226.

11. Василий Барский (Vasilii Barskii), *Странствования Василия Григорьевича Барского по святым местам востока с 1723 по 1747 г.* (*Stranstvovaniiia Vasiliia Grigorovicha Barskago po svatym*

stays on Mount Athos, Dionysius lived and worked primarily in Karyes. There, he painted the catholicon of the *Timios Prodromos* (The Forerunner) and his cell, both of which were located within close proximity to the Protaton. [Figure 2.2.1]. Additionally, Karyes is also the most likely location for the *Hermeneia's* completion.<sup>12</sup> The illustrious reputation of Panselinos's paintings among the monks on Athos and the proximity and accessibility of Dionysius to these works during his stays at Karyes are factors that suggest that he moved to this location specifically to study and to emulate the works of Panselinos. The following passage from the *Hermeneia* clearly supports this proposition. Dionysius writes:

I urged myself to increase the slight talent that the Lord had given me, that is to say the little art that I possess, which I learnt from my youth, studying hard to copy as far as I was able, the master of Thessalonica, Manuel Panselinos.<sup>13</sup>

After some instruction on preliminary training and the appropriate prayer for undertaking the study of painting, Dionysius added the following passage indicating that his initial reason for studying the works of Panselinos was the absence of an otherwise learned and skillful master:

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*mestam vostoka s 1723 po 1747g. - The Travels of Vasilii Grigorovich Barskii to Holy Places in the East from 1723 to 1747*, Volume 3 (St. Petersburg: V. Kirschbaum Press, 1887), 171.

12. Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fourni*, 49-56.

13. Hetherington, *The Painter's Manual*, 2.

If you only find one [teacher] who is unlearned and unskillful, do as we did and see if you can find some original works by Manuel Panselinos, and copy them at any opportunity, drawing them in the way that we shall instruct you further on, until you master the proportions and forms of the original.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, Dionysius seems to have copied much of the work of Panselinos in a similar manner to the instructions provided in the *Hermeneia*. A comparison of the frescos of the Evangelist Luke by each of the two artists distinctly exemplifies the compositional similarity of one to the other. [Figures 2.2.2 and 2.2.3].

Panselinos painted the evangelist as a scribe, as opposed to the classicized author portrait, in an iconographical type that was prevalent in Palaiologan Byzantium.<sup>15</sup> Dionysius chose to base his own fresco on the model in the Protaton, and an inscription in the *Hermeneia* on how to depict the Evangelist Luke corresponds with the iconographical type employed by Panselinos: “Luke the evangelist writing: ‘Forasmuch as many have taken in hand.’ Luke is represented inside [a house], whenever he is writing.”<sup>16</sup>

By the eighteenth century, other iconographical types of the Evangelist circulated throughout the Ottoman Balkans. In addition to the type employed by

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14. Hetherington, *The Painter’s Manual*, 4.

15. Ivan Drpić, “Painter as Scribe: artistic identity and the arts of *graphē* in late Byzantium,” *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, (October, 2013): 338-9.

16. Hetherington, *The Painter’s Manual*, 53.

Panselinos, Dionysius references an entirely different compositional theme for St. Luke in the *Hermeneia*. In the section for individual traits of the apostles, Dionysius relays the iconographical type of the Evangelist Luke as “a young man with curly hair and a short beard, painting the *Theotokos* (God-bearer)”.<sup>17</sup> This significantly contrasts with the descriptions of the other three evangelists who are each described as “holding a Gospel.”<sup>18</sup> The iconographical type of the Evangelist Luke painting an image of the *Theotokos* originated in the Byzantine territories before the Palaiologan period, but, at least until the fifteenth century, this type was limited to manuscript illuminations. [Figure 2.2.4]. In the West, this type was readily adopted around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially in Northern Europe where the association of St. Luke with the painting profession increased the reputation of painters’ guilds and where the painters widely adopted St. Luke as their patron saint.<sup>19</sup> An exemplary painting by Rogier van der Weyden, *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin* painted in the first half of the fifteenth century, was likely kept at a painters’ guild in Brussels as a

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17. Ibid, 52. For a Greek transcription, see: Papadopoulos-Kérameus, *Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης* (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie B. Kirschbaum, 1909), 150. «Ο Λουκάς ο ευαγγελιστής... ιστορίζων την Θεοτόκον» (Luke the Evangelist painting the *Theotokos*).

18. Hetherington, *The Painter’s Manual*, 52.

19. Helen C. Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 569-70.

reminder to those who worked there of the spiritual and social import of their work. [Figure 2.2.5]. The iconographical type of St. Luke painting the Virgin carried a visual implication about painters' social status in the European West at a time when attitude toward their craft was changing and their social status was improving significantly. For these artists, St. Luke exemplified the elevated status of painters above other craftsmen.<sup>20</sup>

At about the same time in the East, the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Ottomans and the subsequent dissolution of imperial patronage resulted in the derailment of Palaiologan artistic practices. These cultural shifts contributed to substantial changes in both the artistic expression and visual rhetoric of post-Byzantine artists. Though most of these changes were gradual, they were culturally significant. One such cultural shift was the growing popularity of the image of the Virgin *Hodegetria* (she who shows the way). The original icon of this type was believed to have been painted by St. Luke himself and preserved at the church of the Blachernae in Constantinople. During this politically tumultuous time, Orthodox Christians turned to the *Hodegetria* for salvation. The theme of St. Luke painting the Virgin, already well-established in the West, appealed to artists and Orthodox Christian audiences in the Balkans, and production of this

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20. Ibid.

type became widespread particularly in these early stages of the post-Byzantine period.<sup>21</sup> It is at this time that the iconographical type, inspired by its popular representation in the West, made the transition from manuscript illumination to icon and fresco paintings in the former Byzantine territories.

With regard to the visual rhetoric in the work of Dionysius, both iconographical types of the Evangelist Luke are present. The fresco by Dionysius in the *Timios Prodromos* and its corresponding inscription in the *Hermeneia* exemplify Dionysius's direct appropriation of the work of Panselinos. The two frescos are compositionally analogous, and both artists follow the same iconographical type. However, the similarity of Dionysius's work to the fresco in the Protaton does not define Dionysius's visual rhetoric absolutely. The alternative inscription in the *Hermeneia* suggests that Dionysius considered and incorporated another type, one that did not correspond strictly to Palaiologan examples. Rather than an exclusive and faithful adherence to Panselinos and Palaiologan practices, Dionysius included the description of the Evangelist Luke painting the *Theotokos*. This type was adopted by painters in the East during the

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21. Josef Höfer, Karl Rahner, ed., *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, VI, (Freiburg: Herder-Verlag, 1961), cols. 1205-1206. In the *Lexikon* the entry 'Lukas' suggests that the concept of St. Luke painting the Virgin [for painters in the East] originated in the fifteenth century; and also:

Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Images: Expressions of Faith and Power," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 148; and the entry by M. W. Ainsworth in the same publication, p. 569-71.

post-Byzantine period, and it was generally inspired from Northern European or foreign models. Instead of a one-dimensional attitude toward artistic practices characterized by the appropriation and the adherence to strictly Palaiologan models, the two iconographical types evident in Dionysius's work, each stemming from different periods and different cultural backgrounds, imply that Dionysius's artistic identity is complex. Dionysius chose to expand beyond the imagery available to him through the works of Panselinos, and the visual rhetoric in the *Hermeneia* is shown to be complicated by non-Palaiologan elements.

## The Apocalypse Cycle and its Adaptation

With the inclusion of imagery not associated with Panselinos or Palaiologan art, such as the type of the Evangelist Luke painting the Virgin or Theotokos, Dionysius exhibited a certain duality of visual rhetoric, but neither representation of St. Luke departed from the accepted imagery and the conceptual standpoint of Byzantine traditions. However, Dionysius included a number of subjects that were altogether foreign to past artistic conventions. An example of this is the series of instructions for twenty-four scenes from *The Book of Revelation* that Dionysius incorporated into the *Hermeneia*.

The Eastern Orthodox Church accepted *The Book of Revelation* into the list of apocryphal scriptures after some three centuries of disputation. The book's textual facilitation of Chiliasm or Millennialism, addressed and confirmed as a heresy at the Council of Constantinople in 381, contributed to its tenuous reception, and the book was never integrated into liturgical practice. Even as theologians provided discursive polemics on eschatology itself, Byzantine artists maintained a circumspect attitude toward depicting scenes from *The Book of Revelation*. Because Byzantine artists often depicted the liturgical texts that were read in church, it is self-evident that the *Revelation*, a subject that was not actively used for worship, was omitted in Byzantine ecclesiastical art. Furthermore, the



enigmatic nature of the text lent itself poorly to graphical representation. As a result, the general oeuvre of Byzantine art is devoid of any direct representations from *The Book of Revelation* in churches. As far as Palaiologan representation of eschatological themes is concerned, the end-times, the life after death, and the promise of eternal life all culminate within the visual representation of the *Anastasis* (Christ's descent into Hades). [Figure 2.3.1]. The Last Judgment is perhaps the only scene found in the Byzantine artistic repertoire that directly integrates imagery from *The Book of Revelation*. [Figure 2.3.2]. However, its integration in this scene is secondary to other literary sources, namely *The Old Testament*, *The Gospels*, and exegetical works such as Ephraim the Syrian's *On the Coming of the Lord* and *On the Judgment*.<sup>22</sup>

The cyclical narrative scenes from *The Book of Revelation* in the *Hermeneia* are foreign to the Byzantine tradition. Ludwig H. Heydenreich pointed out the close correspondence of the description of the scenes in the *Hermeneia* with a series of woodcut prints by Hans Holbein the Younger.<sup>23</sup> Holbein's twenty-two

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22. Alfredo Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006), 158. Tradigo lists Genesis 3:15; Daniel 7:9-10; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 16:20-26; and Revelation 6:14, 20:13; and Ephraim the Syrian's *On the Coming of the Lord*, and *On the Judgment* as sources for the imagery of the Last Judgment.

23. Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich, „Der Apokalypsen-Zyklus im Athosgebiet und seine Beziehungen zur Deutschen Bibelillustration der Reformation,“ *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag GmbH, 1939), 1-40.

woodcuts were published in an illustrated version of the *New Testament* in Bâle (Basel) in 1523, and copies of this book likely arrived on Mount Athos sometime in the subsequent century. However, Holbein's woodcuts formed only a partial source for Dionysius. The *Hermeneia* contains some variances from these prints, such as the description of Death wielding a scythe instead of the three-pronged weapon present in Holbein's woodcut of the Four Horsemen. [Figure 2.3.3].

"Behind him again is Death, sitting on a [green] horse, and holding a scythe."<sup>24</sup>

These variances indicate that Dionysius had alternative representations of the scenes available to him. The three-pronged weapon is depicted in Dürer's woodcuts and by his followers, but other engravers, both before and after Dürer, have depicted the fourth horseman as Chronos who originally held a scythe.

[Figure 2.3.4]. Paul Hetherington suggests that Dionysius could have misinterpreted a print by Petit-Bernard, published in Lyon in 1553, in which the billowing drapery under the horse of Death could have been mistaken for a scythe.<sup>25</sup> [Figure 2.3.5]. In either case, Dionysius integrated parts of at least two printed Apocalypse Cycles into his work.

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24. Hetherington, *The Painter's Manual*, 46. Hetherington interprets the color *leukos* to mean green rather than pale.

25. *Ibid*, 104.

Dionysius was not the first artist on Mount Athos to make use of Western prints for the Apocalypse Cycle. Frescos in the refectory of the Dionysiou Monastery on Mount Athos were also modelled on Western prints of the same subject. [Figures 2.3.6 and 2.3.7]. Juliette Renaud juxtaposed the frescos at Dionysiou with prints from Luther's September Bible to demonstrate a striking compositional similarity between the two cyclical works.<sup>26</sup> [Figures 2.3.8 and 2.3.9 in comparison to figures 2.3.6 and 2.3.7]. Given the compositional consistency of the Athonite artist's paintings to the models provided by Lukas Cranach and Dürer's followers, it is improbable that the artist could have followed a model from any other source.

The *Hermeneia* and the frescos at the refectory of Dionysiou demonstrate that the Athonite communities willingly accepted prints from the West – both in the form of individual prints and books. Printed material was easy to transport and inexpensive, and it played an important role for Mount Athos when Athonite monks embarked on journeys throughout the Balkans to collect alms. Positive reception of prints on Mount Athos also depended on the ability of Athonite artists to render this medium and its subjects into their own visual

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26. Juliette Renaud, *Le Cycle de l'Apocalypse de Dionysiou: Interprétation Byzantine de Gravures Occidentales* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1943), 199-220.

conventions.<sup>27</sup> More than any other medium, prints resembled sketches that artists on Mount Athos already widely utilized as visual aids.

In the cases of Dionysius and the anonymous painter at Dionysiou, both artists integrated imagery from the prints into their own artistic repertoire by manipulating certain components to make them fit more seamlessly with Byzantine conventions. The painter at Dionysiou worked in an environment that was predetermined. The Monastery was founded during the reign of Emperor Andronikos II (1282-1328) around the same time that Panselinos painted the frescos in the Protaton. The catholicon of the Monastery was then renovated in 1547, but the style and subjects remained the same. Undoubtedly, the artist who painted the *Revelation* frescos in the refectory, possibly the same artist who renovated the catholicon, would have consciously painted in keeping with the original Palaiologan works. Furthermore, the artist of the refectory and Dionysius both reinterpreted certain elements of the composition to conform to their understanding of the text. For example, they distinguished the figure of God the Father from the figure of Christ more clearly, and St. John was represented sitting. Dionysius describes “a cave, and seated in it is St. John the

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27. Lilia Evseyeva, “Greek and Slav Icons: 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *Post-Byzantine Painting: Icons of the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Iraklion: Domos Publications, 1995), 19.

Divine... behind him on clouds is Christ.”<sup>28</sup> [Figures 2.3.10 and 2.3.11]. In this way, Dionysius and the Athonite painter adapted what they thought was necessary to make the printed scenes of the Apocalypse Cycle conform to their own preferences or the preferences of relevant individuals and patrons.

The twenty-four scenes from *The Book of Revelation* that form part of Dionysius’s visual rhetoric were appropriated from sixteenth-century prints originating in Northern Europe. Through the adaptation of certain elements, Dionysius and other painters on Mount Athos demonstrated that their rendering of Western sources into Byzantine conventional forms legitimized their adoption. For Dionysius, these foreign models worked in concert with the Byzantine artistic conventions. Regarding the visual rhetoric in the *Hermeneia*, Dionysius opted for the multiplicity of subjects at the expense of strict congruity with Palaiologan precedents. Without directly contradicting past traditions, Dionysius and other post-Byzantine artists added new subjects to the existing repertoire of Byzantine and post-Byzantine conventions.

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28. Hetherington, *The Painter’s Manual*, 46.

## The Compositional Variance of the Nativity Scene

A certain amount of confusion concerning Dionysius's artistic identity is centered on the Nativity scene found in his icon painted in 1711 and in the corresponding description of the scene in the *Hermeneia*. [Figure 2.4.1]. In the previous examples, the two types of St. Luke and the Apocalypse Cycle, Dionysius integrated imagery into the *Hermeneia* that was not seen in works of Palaiologan painters. In these examples, Dionysius adopted extrinsic imagery, but he did not depart from the Byzantine convention where it was accessible. However, Dionysius did depart from the Byzantine convention in the Nativity scene. Even more significant is that he decided to forego the composition and iconography of the Nativity scene painted by Panselinos in the Protaton. [Figure 2.4.2]. The tripartite composition that includes narrative sub-scenes of Joseph's contemplation and the bathing of the Christ-child by the midwife Salome are absent in both Dionysius's icon and in the *Hermeneia*:

A cave, inside it on the right the Mother of God kneeling and laying the infant Christ, wrapped in swaddling clothes, in the crib; on the left Joseph is kneeling with his hands crossed on his breast.<sup>29</sup>

However, it is unlikely that Dionysius could have misinterpreted or altogether overlooked the compositional and iconographical depiction of the scene

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29. Hetherington, *The Painter's Manual*, 32.

employed by Panselinos; this scene and its compositional layout and iconography were prevalent throughout the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods. Even the Cretan painter Theophanes Strelitzas (Bathas) painted a fresco of the Nativity with the conventional tripartite composition, despite including a few variances that are typical of Cretan works. [Figure 2.4.3]. Dionysius's departure from the Byzantine convention can be exemplified by three main elements. First, Dionysius excluded the narrative sub-scene of the infant Christ being bathed by a midwife. Second, Dionysius integrated the figure of Joseph into the central scene and, more significantly, depicted Joseph and the Virgin in a kneeling pose. Finally, the Virgin's action of presenting or laying the infant Christ into the manger is likely the first such depiction on Mount Athos.

The bathing scene is depicted in some Early Christian works. The episode was not recorded in any of the four canonical Gospels, but it is found in the apocryphal *proto-evangelion* of St. James and in some *synaxaria*. Most artistic representations of the Nativity throughout the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods include this episode within the greater composition of the scene. Its omission by Dionysius could be explained by a theological movement on Mount Athos in the eighteenth century to avoid and, in some cases, to remove existing depictions of this episode. Instances of systematic erasures of the bathing episode

occurred in several locations on Mount Athos; two of these are exemplified by the damaged frescos at the monastery of the Great Lavra [Figures 2.4.4 and 2.4.5] and at the monastery of Vatopedi [Figure 2.4.6].<sup>30</sup> However, the most significant aspect of this omission by Dionysius is that he did not follow the model provided by Panselinos whom Dionysius claimed to follow so ardently.

Dionysius's Nativity scene contains several complications concerning the artistic and liturgical practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Dionysius depicted St. Joseph in a pose of adoration – kneeling at the manger together with the Virgin. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the act of kneeling was generally regarded as a penitent pose; it is for this reason that the Church forbade kneeling on Sundays and on the days of the Pentacost.<sup>31</sup> Around the time of the Great Schism (c. 1054) or shortly thereafter, the Eastern Orthodox Church retained the penitent pose – as acts of *proskynesis* (prayer) – only in the form of a full prostration. However, kneeling was abolished by the Eastern Church in part to

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30. Constantine Cavarnos, *Guide to Byzantine Iconography: Vol. 1*, (Boston: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1993), 139. Constantine Cavarnos suggests that this movement was possibly influenced by a decision at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) that forbade depictions of the infant Jesus being bathed. See also: Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourni*, 139.

31. Nikodemos and Agapios of Athos, *The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Orthodox Christians*, trans. D. Cummings (Chicago: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), 196. This is an English translation of the 1908 publication of the *Πηδαλιον* (Pedalion) originally written by the monks Agapios and Nikodemos on Mount Athos in the eighteenth century and first published in 1800.



differentiate the Eastern Orthodox practice from the Western practice where kneeling took on a different meaning – an act of ceremonial reverence or adoration.<sup>32</sup> In the Eastern Church, worship was since practiced in one of two possible positions – standing upright or in a full prostration. Panselinos, for example, depicted Christ praying on the Mount of Olives standing [Figure 2.4.7a and 2.4.7b], and another Athonite artist depicted Christ in the pose of a full prostration [Figure 2.4.8]. A contrasting example of a contemporary Western portrayal of Christ kneeling is provided by Duccio's painting of the same subject. [Figure 2.4.9]. The pose of kneeling remained culturally foreign to religious practices of Orthodox Christians even until the eighteenth century. In art, however, the representation of kneeling was somewhat more complicated. This is especially true for regions like Crete where Orthodox Christians lived under Venetian jurisdiction since 1204. Cretan artists amalgamated Western and Byzantine practices because they catered to patrons from both religious groups. A number of Cretan artists, Theophanes Strelitzas among them, moved to Mount Athos in the sixteenth century where they introduced Cretan artistic practices to the monastic communities on the peninsula. It was then that the kneeling Virgin in the pose of adoration became widespread in scenes of the Nativity. [Figure

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32. Ibid, 396.

2.4.10]. However, no work on Mount Athos also depicted St. Joseph in this same kneeling pose with crossed hands prior to its adoption by Dionysius.<sup>33</sup> Most likely, he appropriated the composition of the Nativity scene directly from a Western source or possible personal contact with an artist familiar with Western practice. Adding to the conflation of possible models, Dionysius depicted the Virgin in the act of presenting the Christ-child or laying Him into the manger. This representation of the Virgin has no precedent on Mount Athos or in other locations where Dionysius was active. It is neither an adoption of Cretan works, nor is it an appropriation of Western models. Dionysius's representation of the Virgin is, most likely, an innovation on the part of the artist.<sup>34</sup>

Concerning the bathing scene, Dionysius seems to have placed himself in accordance with the contemporary movement on Mount Athos. In order to do so, Dionysius broke with the Byzantine conventions that Panselinos followed. Furthermore, Dionysius depicted St. Joseph in a kneeling pose. He almost certainly adopted this pose and the rest of the composition from Western models. Finally, Dionysius included an element of his own artistic innovation, the Virgin presenting or laying the Christ-child into the manger. Thus, the scene depicted

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33. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fournna*, 137.

34. Ibid. Kakavas interprets the Virgin's action as "laying" the Christ-child into the manger. However, this action is likely a "presentation" of Christ to Joseph.

by Dionysius departs noticeably from Panselinos and Palaiologan precedents. Given that the traditional depiction of the Nativity existed in the Protaton, Dionysius must have deliberately opted for the unconventional version of the scene, and he later recorded it in the *Hermeneia* without correcting any of these compositional elements. Regarding the depiction of the Nativity, Dionysius was not simply influenced by Western models, as is posited by Cavarnos,<sup>35</sup> nor was Dionysius oblivious of his departure from tradition, as is suggested by Kakavas.<sup>36</sup> In either of those cases, Dionysius would have found the image of Panselinos a more compelling and trusted model. Panselinos would also have provided Dionysius with a source that was culturally more familiar. Instead, Dionysius followed the eighteenth-century movement against the bathing scene, he found and followed a foreign model for St. Joseph, and he included an element of his own artistic innovation. In this case, Dionysius's claimed adherence to the art of Panselinos was complicated by contemporary ideologies and independent preferences.

In each of the previous examples discussed above, the image of St. Luke painting the Virgin and the Apocalypse Cycle, Dionysius brought non-

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35. Cavarnos, *Guide to Byzantine Iconography*, 139.

36. Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 140.

Palaiologan subjects into concord with Palaiologan traditions. In these examples, Dionysius stretched the Byzantine tradition to include unconventional, foreign, and contemporary artistic practices. With the depiction of the Nativity scene, Dionysius similarly pushed the limits of the Byzantine convention to address a contemporary preference and issue, but, in this case, Dionysius consciously and deliberately broke away from the Palaiologan model to do so.

## Conclusion

Dionysius compiled the *Hermeneia* with a selective and methodical approach. The amount of scriptural quotes that he paired with the descriptions of cyclical scenes and of individual saints can only be indicative of a profound awareness of scripture and liturgical writings. The Gospels, *akoulouthia* (daily liturgical books), and *synaxaria* (a collection of the lives of saints and descriptions of feastsdays), formed a major part of Dionysius's sources. For iconographical and compositional arrangements, Dionysius also relied on extant works available to him on Mount Athos and through possible correspondences. In those cases where a particular iconographical element seemed ambiguous, Dionysius carefully considered theological and traditional explanations.

Such is the case with the scene of the Pentecost. A letter to Dionysius, dated 1727, from his close friend, Anastasios Gordios, addressed a question posed by Dionysius about the depiction of the cosmos as an old man in the scene of the Pentecost.<sup>37</sup> This depiction of the cosmos was included in one of Dionysius's icons that he painted around 1711. [Figure 2.5.1]. In this letter, Gordios expressed a preference for an alternative choice, saying that the depiction of the cosmos was not as good. Dionysius considered this opinion, but

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37. Kakavas, *Dionysius of Fournà*, 84-85.

he opted, instead, to follow his original iconographical representation of the Pentecost. In the *Hermeneia*, completed only a few years after his exchange with Gordios, Dionysius instructed the reader or student on how to represent the Pentecost: "... below [the apostles] is a small chamber in which an old man holds... twelve rolled scrolls... and over him these words are written: 'The Cosmos.'"<sup>38</sup> The exchange between Dionysius and Gordios exemplifies several important details about Dionysius's approach to his work. Dionysius questioned and scrutinized an ambiguous iconographical representation; he turned to a trusted friend for advice, considered the options, and only then did he make a final decision about the particular iconographical representation. There are, of course, a number of instances in the *Hermeneia* where Dionysius chose an unconventional representation or made an inaccurate observation with regard to Orthodox tradition. However, Dionysius's approach toward his work indicates that he meticulously wrote the *Hermeneia* with full awareness of his choices. The entirety of the visual rhetoric posited within the *Hermeneia* is a consciously reasoned artistic statement. More than that, the *Hermeneia* also embodies Dionysius's theological stance and his ideological position on the larger

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38. Hetherington, *The Painter's Manual*, 40.

Orthodox artistic culture. His departure from Panselinos and Byzantine conventions is a conscious and an independent choice.

Dionysius's claimed adherence to the art of Panselinos meets certain problems when it is weighed against the visual rhetoric posited throughout the rest of the manuscript. However, the idea that Dionysius sets as his primary objective the adherence to Panselinos and to Palaiologan artistic practices is a construct of modern scholarship. Dionysius certainly voiced the highest regard for the Macedonian painter, but, in doing so, Dionysius also voiced the opinion of most artists and of the general monastic population of Mount Athos regarding Panselinos. The latter half of the seventeenth century was a time when artists on Mount Athos collectively, though not without exception, developed an aesthetic preference for the Macedonian art of the Palaiologan era. During Dionysius's lifetime alone, artists operating in the catholicon at the Vatopedi Monastery, the catholicon at the Docheiariou Monastery, the *parekklesion* at the Lavra Monastery, the church of St. John in Kastoria, the church of St. Nicholas at Moschopolis, the church of the Nea Panagia in Thessaloniki, and others like Dionysius all imitated the paintings in the Protaton to a relatively high degree.<sup>39</sup> [Figures 2.5.2-4]. This new focus on Macedonian art replaced the Cretan practices that were introduced

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39. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourni*, 24-25.

to Mount Athos around the fifteenth century. It is also around this time that the name of Panselinos generally attained near-mythical status. Several writers of artistic treatises used the name of Panselinos to help gain popularity or to attain an authoritative status. Such is the case with the manuscript, published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus as Appendix A, where a late-seventeenth-century author conveyed the so-called correct colors and proportions of Panselinos.<sup>40</sup>

Dionysius's high regard for Panselinos was genuine. That much was ascertained by comparing the two artists' frescos of St. Luke. However, Dionysius reached beyond Panselinos for visual sources. The instruction in the *Hermeneia* to depict St. Luke painting the Theotokos suggests that Dionysius's adherence to Palaiologan art was a complex issue. The *Hermeneia* is full of instances that indicate a certain duality with regard to Byzantine and Western sources; Dionysius instructed the reader or student on how to paint scenes such as the *Anastasis* (Byzantine) [Figure 2.5.5] and the Resurrection (Western) [Figure 2.5.6], the Nativity (Byzantine) and the Adoration of the Magi (Western). The sections where Dionysius described twenty-four scenes from *The Book of Revelation* were shown to have originated from Western sources when juxtaposed against woodcuts from Luther's September Bible. This argument also extends to

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40. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης*, 235-301.



the cyclical representations of the Life of the Virgin, the cyclical representation of the Passion of Christ, narrative scenes from *The Old Testament*, and to individual representations such as the Fall of Lucifer, and David saving Susanna, among others.<sup>41</sup> Paul Hetherington convincingly traced the list of hymnographers in the *Hermeneia* to a *triodion* published in Venice in 1600.<sup>42</sup> [Figure 2.5.7]. In the *Hermeneia* the list of hymnographers is almost identical with the *triodion*, though, again, Dionysius made several adjustments.<sup>43</sup> Dionysius seems to have accepted as large a selection of graphical representations as he could gather, and all of these would have been converted and rendered to conform to Byzantine stylistic conventions as closely as possible. Given the great care with which Dionysius selected the representations for his visual rhetoric, it is incomprehensible that he would include imagery that, to him, would have seemed illegitimate.

Finally, the analysis of the Nativity scene, exemplified by both Dionysius's icon and the instruction in the *Hermeneia*, demonstrated a point at which Dionysius decided to forego the model of Panselinos entirely. Though the exact reason for this is unknown, his resulting work was congruent with the

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41. Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fournà*, 45.

42. Paul Hetherington, "'The Poets' in the Epmhneia of Dionysius of Fournà," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 27 (1973): 317-322.

43. *Ibid*, 318-319.

contemporaneous artistic currents on Mount Athos and not the Palaiologan or Byzantine precedents. Contemporary artistic currents and their cultural clash with preexisting practices were likely the reason why Dionysius established an art school on Mount Athos and why he compiled the *Hermeneia*. Dionysius was certainly reacting against the degradation of artistic practices in his cultural circles.<sup>44</sup> However, he did not revert to past traditions, nor did he advocate such reversion despite his acclamation of Panselinos in the prologue to the *Hermeneia*. Strict adherence to Palaiologan examples would have been too limiting, and, instead, Dionysius opened up his visual rhetoric to include unconventional, foreign, and contemporary sources. Dionysius then appealed to his audience by advocating the art of Panselinos. Even though Dionysius's regard for Panselinos was genuine and important, it was primarily a means for achieving a larger objective. Thus, the adherence to Panselinos and to Palaiologan art in the *Hermeneia* was only a secondary aim.

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44. Hetherington, *The Painter's Manual*, ii-iv. See also: Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourna*, 25.

CHAPTER II

VISUAL RHETORIC OF THE *HERMENEIA*

FIGURES



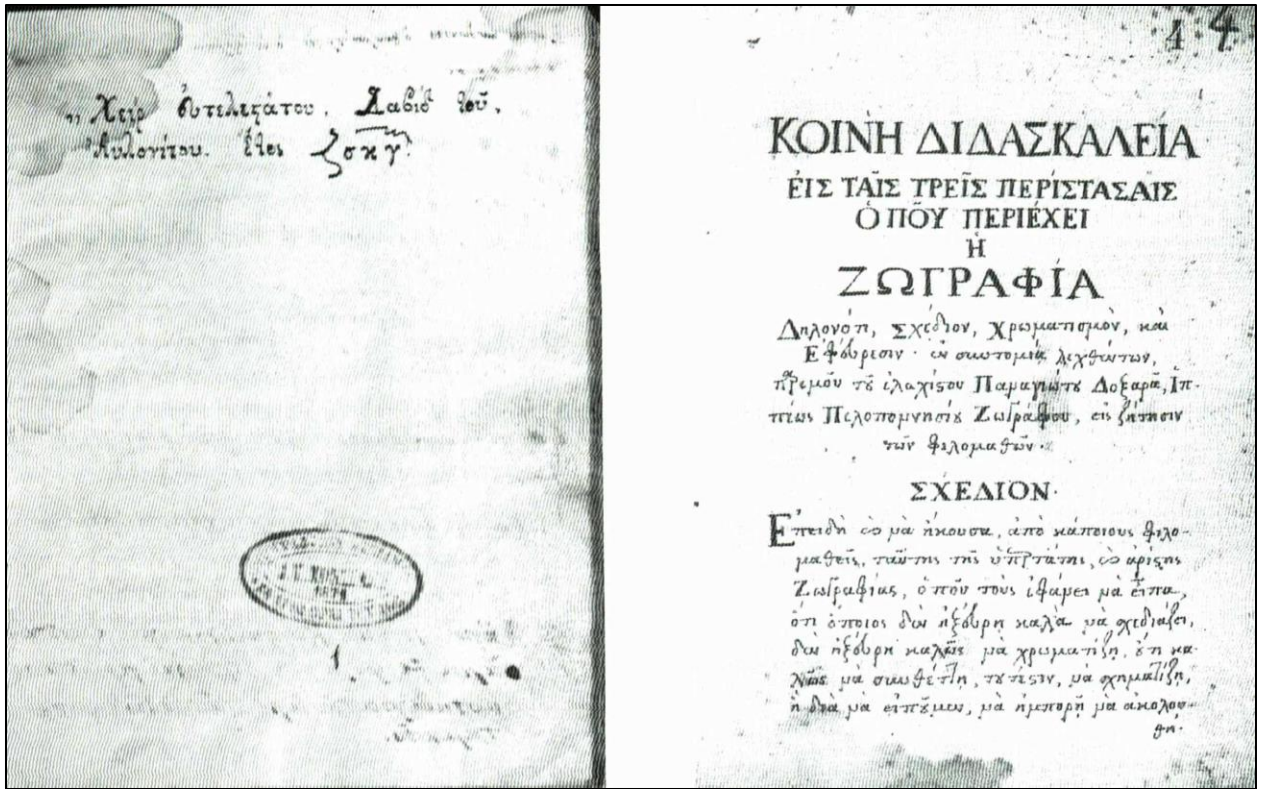


Figure 2.1.2

*Peri Zographias*, fol. 4, Panagiotis Doxaras,  
Published in 1871,  
Athens.





Figure 2.1.3

*Trattato della pittura*, MS 1285, fol. A ii, translated by Panagiotis Doxaras,  
 c. 1724,  
 National Library, Athens.



Figure 2.1.4

*Saint John the Baptist*, Panagiotis Doxaras, oil on wood,  
c. 1722,  
Church of St. Demetrios, Lefkada.





Figure 2.1.5

*Saint John the Baptist with scenes from his life (detail)*, Dionysius of Fournia, egg  
tempera on wood,  
c. 1711,  
Cell of Dionysius of Fournia, Karyes, Mount Athos.



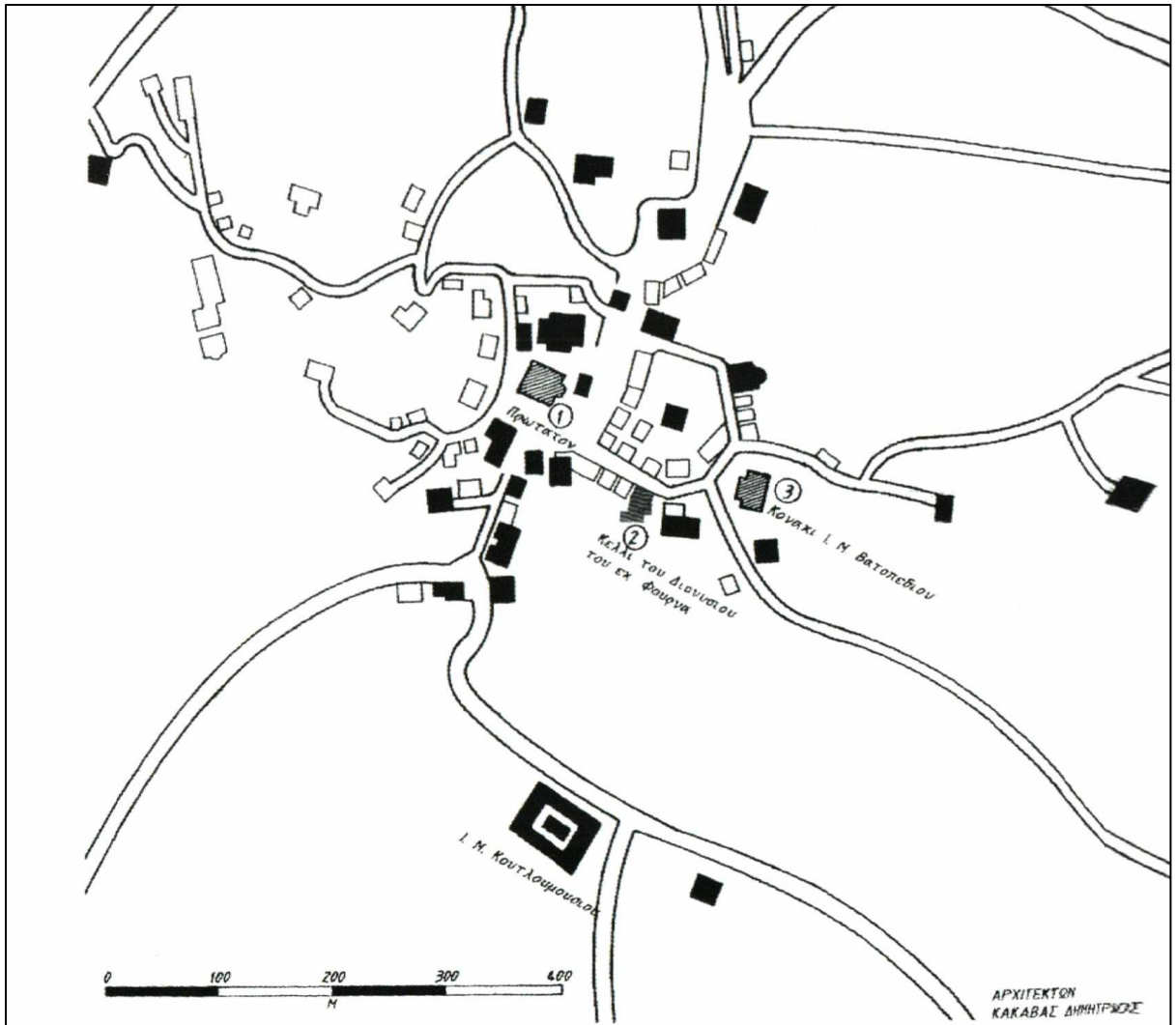


Figure 2.2.1

Topographical Sketch of Karyes:  
1) Protaton,  
2) Cell of Dionysius of Fournia,  
Drawing by D. Kakavas.

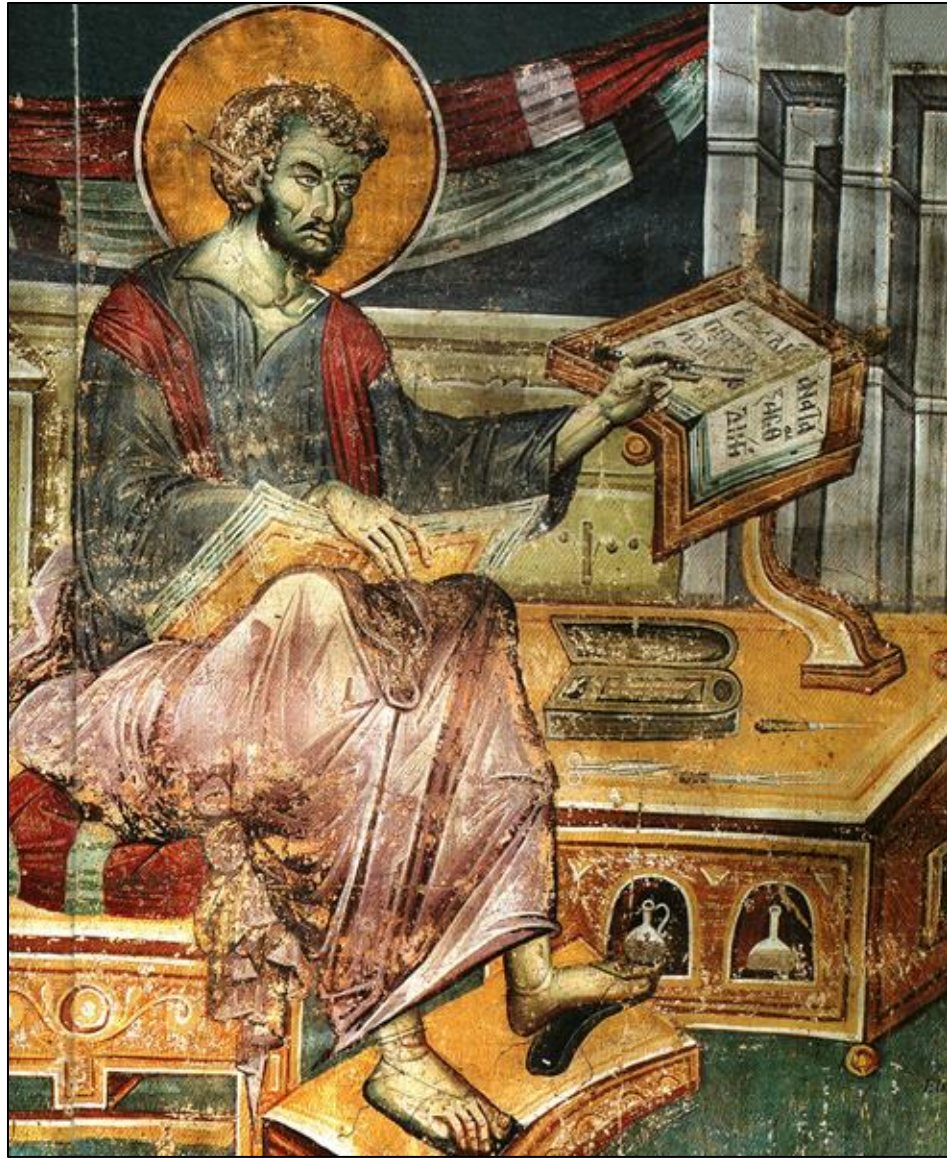


Figure 2.2.2

*Evangelist Luke*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco,  
c. 1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.



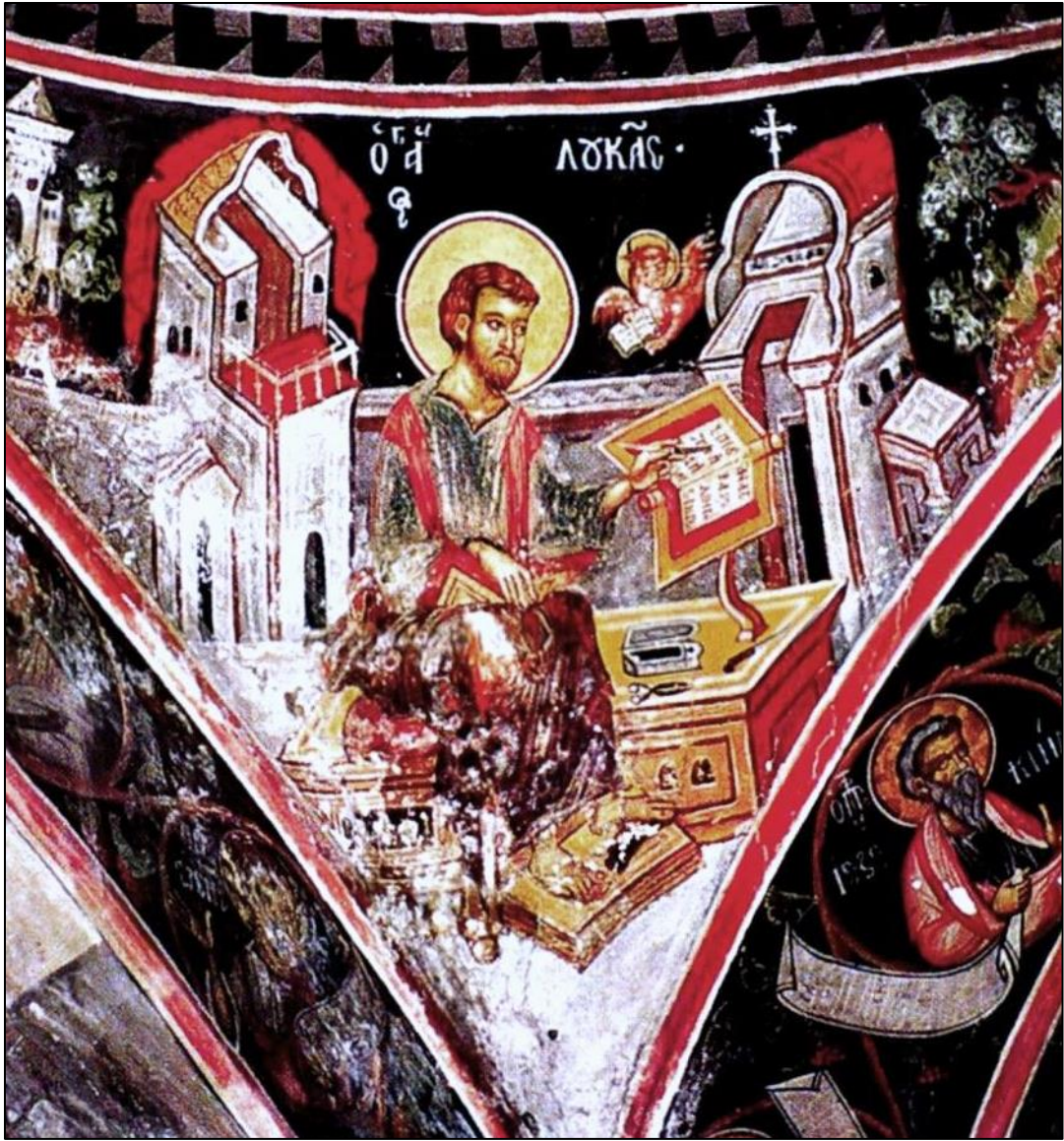


Figure 2.2.3

*Evangelist Luke*, Dionysius of Fournia, fresco,  
c. 1711

Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.



Figure 2.2.4

Gospel Lectionary, (Gr. 233), fol. 87v, artist unknown, tempera on vellum,  
Late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth century,  
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.





Figure 2.2.5

*Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin*, Rogier van der Weyden, oil on panel,  
c. 1435-40,  
Chapel of Saint Catherine or St. Luke Guild House, Brussels.



Figure 2.3.1

*Anastasis (Christ's Descent into Hell)*, artist unknown, fresco,  
1315-1320,  
Parekklesion, Chora, Constantinople.





Figure 2.3.2

*The Last Judgment*, artist unknown, fresco,  
1315-1320,  
Parekklesion, Chora, Constantinople.

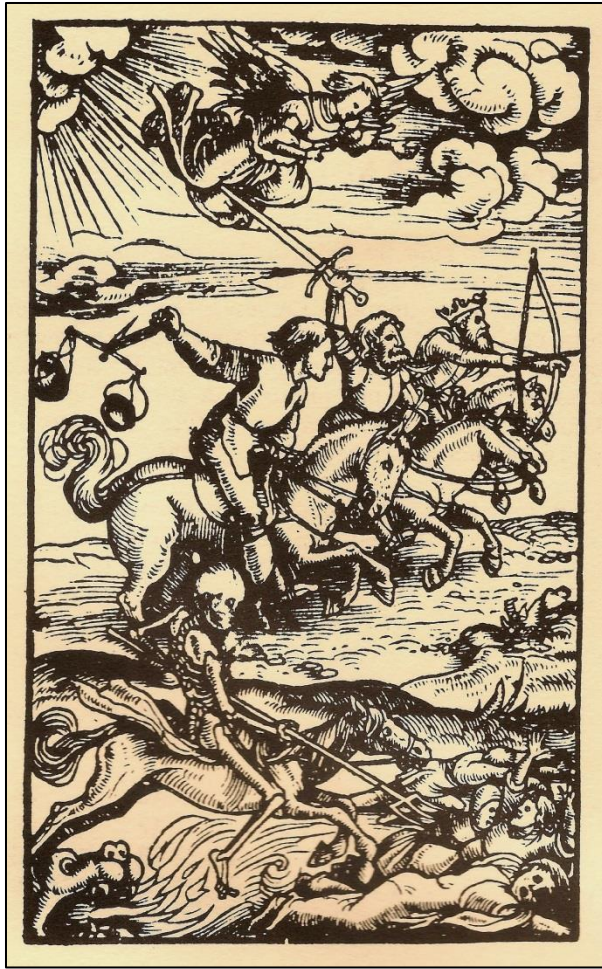


Figure 2.3.3

*The Four Horsemen*, Hans Holbein the Younger, woodcut,  
Published in 1523,  
T. Wolff, *New Testament*, Basel.





Figure 2.3.4

*The Four Horsemen*, Schaffner or Schwarzenberg, woodcut,  
Published in 1534,  
Hans Lufft, Luther's first complete Bible, Wittenberg.

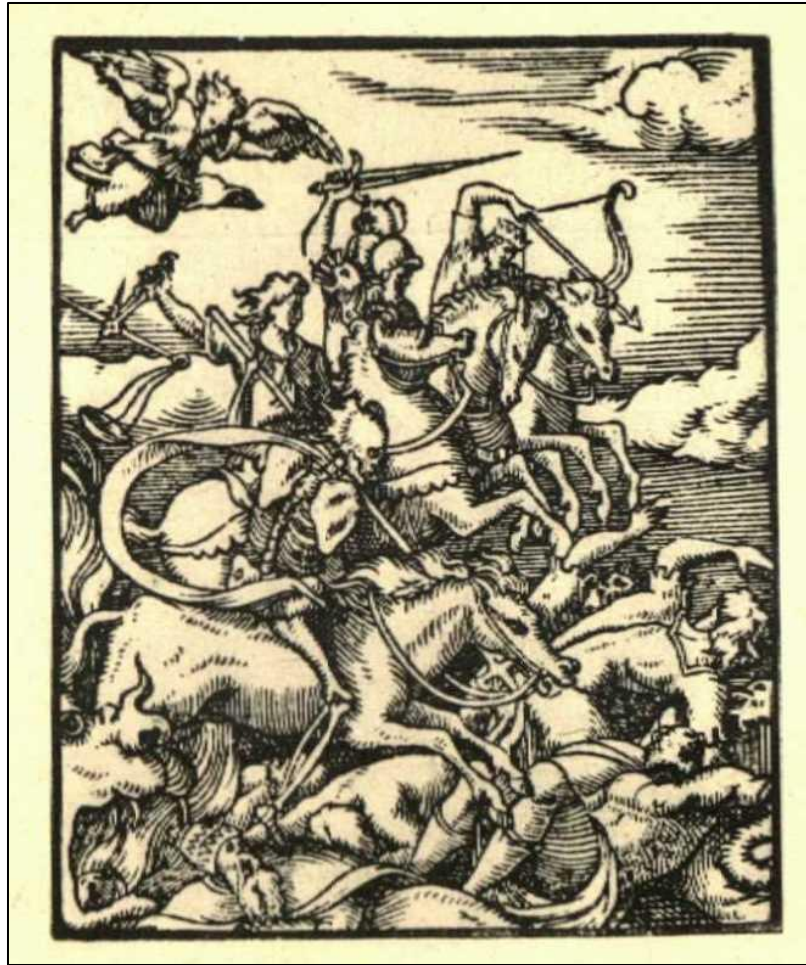


Figure 2.3.5

*The Four Horsemen*, Petit-Bernard, woodcut,  
Published in 1553,  
*Le Nouveau Testament*, Lyon.





Figure 2.3.6

*The Four Horsemen*, artist unknown, fresco,  
1547-1603,  
Refectory, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos.



Figure 2.3.7

*The Fifth Angel*, artist unknown, fresco,  
1547-1603,  
Refectory, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.3.8

*The Four Horsemen*, Lukas Cranach, woodcut,  
Published in 1522,  
Melchior Lotther, Luther's September Bible, Wittenberg.

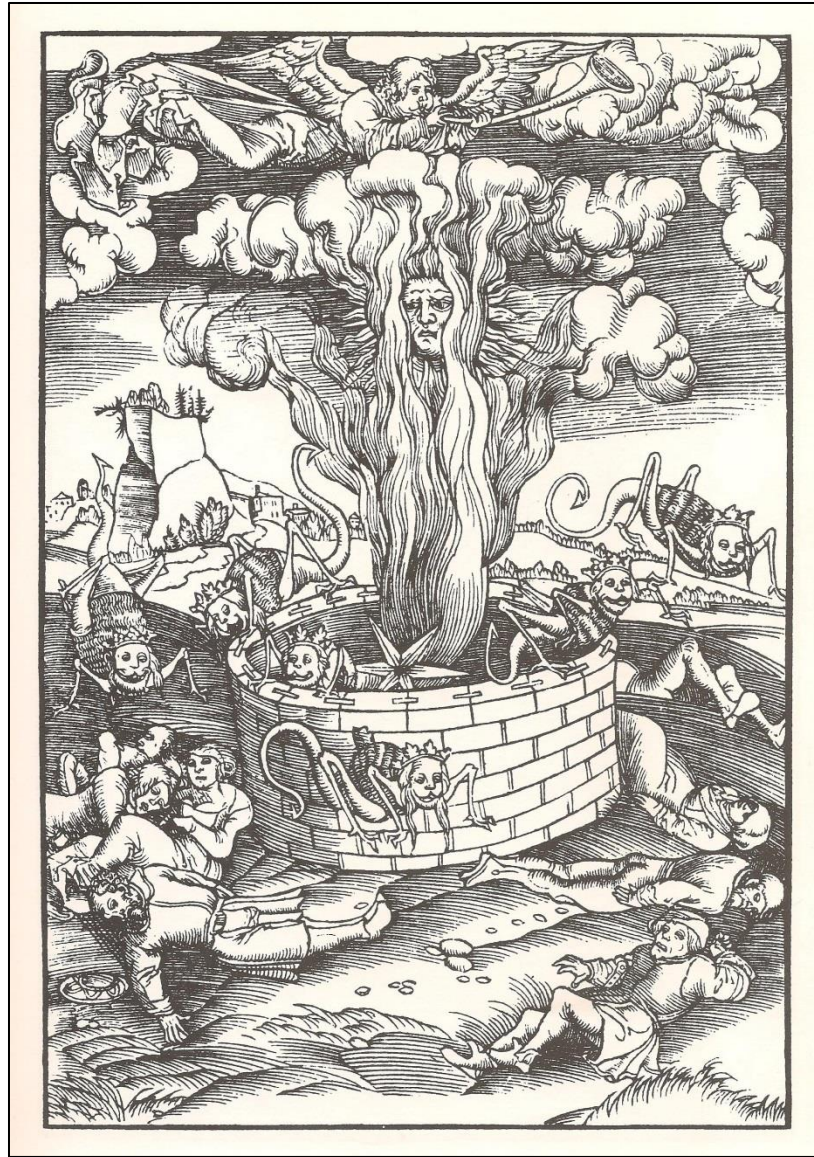


Figure 2.3.9

*The Fifth Angel*, Lukas Cranach, woodcut,  
Published in 1522,  
Melchior Lotther, Luther's September Bible, Wittenberg.





Figure 2.3.10

*The Vision of John*, artist unknown, fresco,  
1547-1603,  
Refectory, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos.



Figure 2.3.11

*The Vision of John*, Lukas Cranach or Hans Burgkmair, woodcut,  
Published in 1522,  
Melchior Lotther, Luther's September Bible, Wittenberg.





Figure 2.4.1

*Nativity*, Dionysius of Fournia, tempera on wood,  
c. 1711,  
Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.



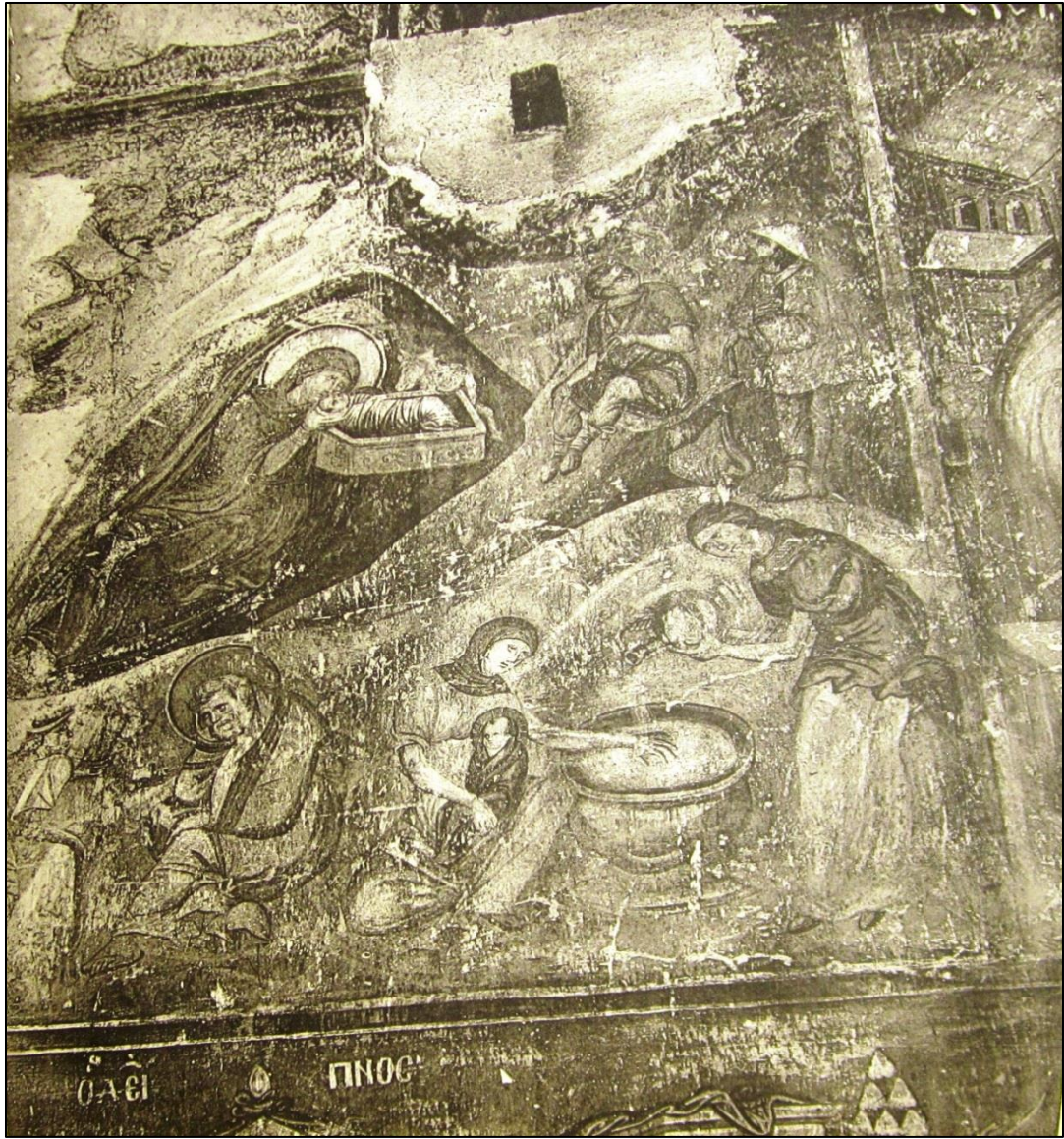


Figure 2.4.2

*Nativity*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco,  
c. 1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.4.3

*Nativity*, Theophanes Strelitzas (Bathas), tempera on wood,  
c. 1546,  
Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos.



Figure 2.4.4

*Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco,  
c. 1535,  
Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.4.5

*Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco,  
c. 1560,  
Church of St. Nicholas, Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos

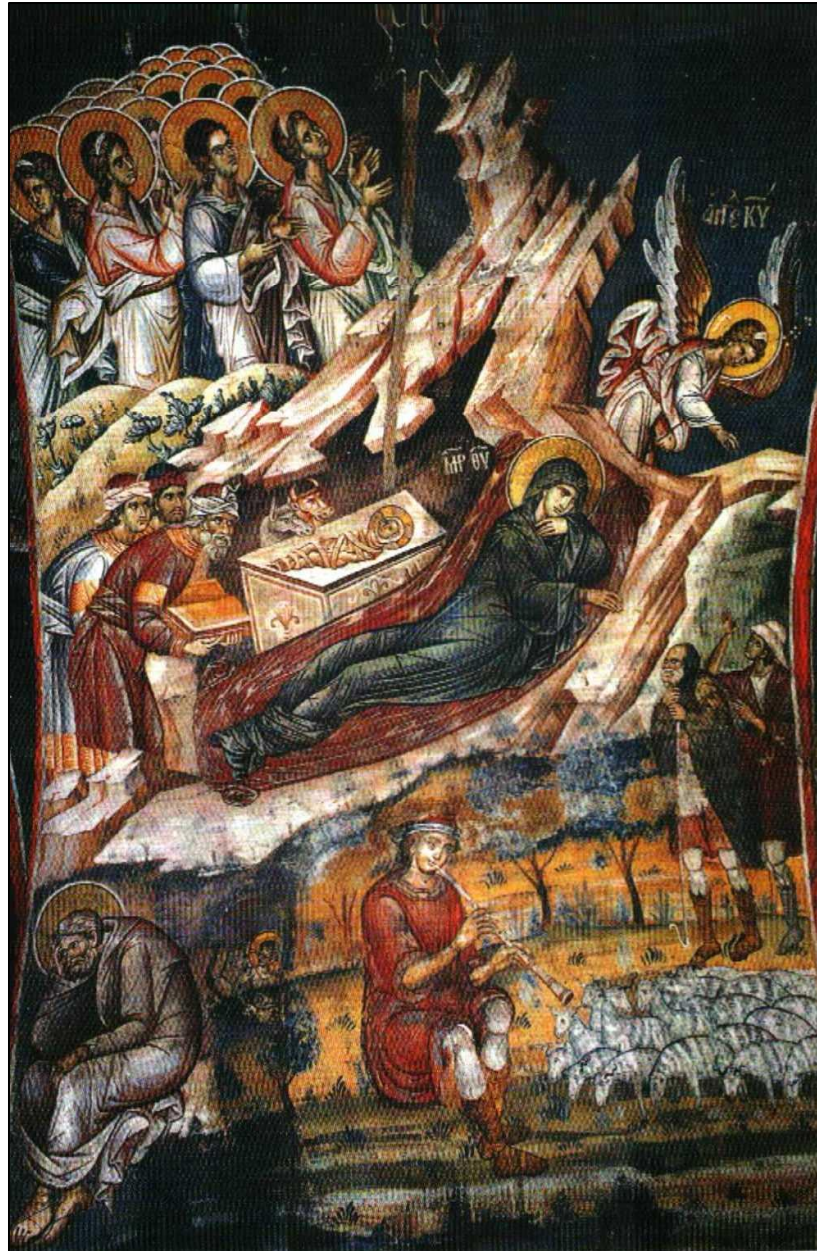


Figure 2.4.6

*Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco,  
c. 1312,  
Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.4.7 a

*Christ on Mount of Olives*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco,  
c. 1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.

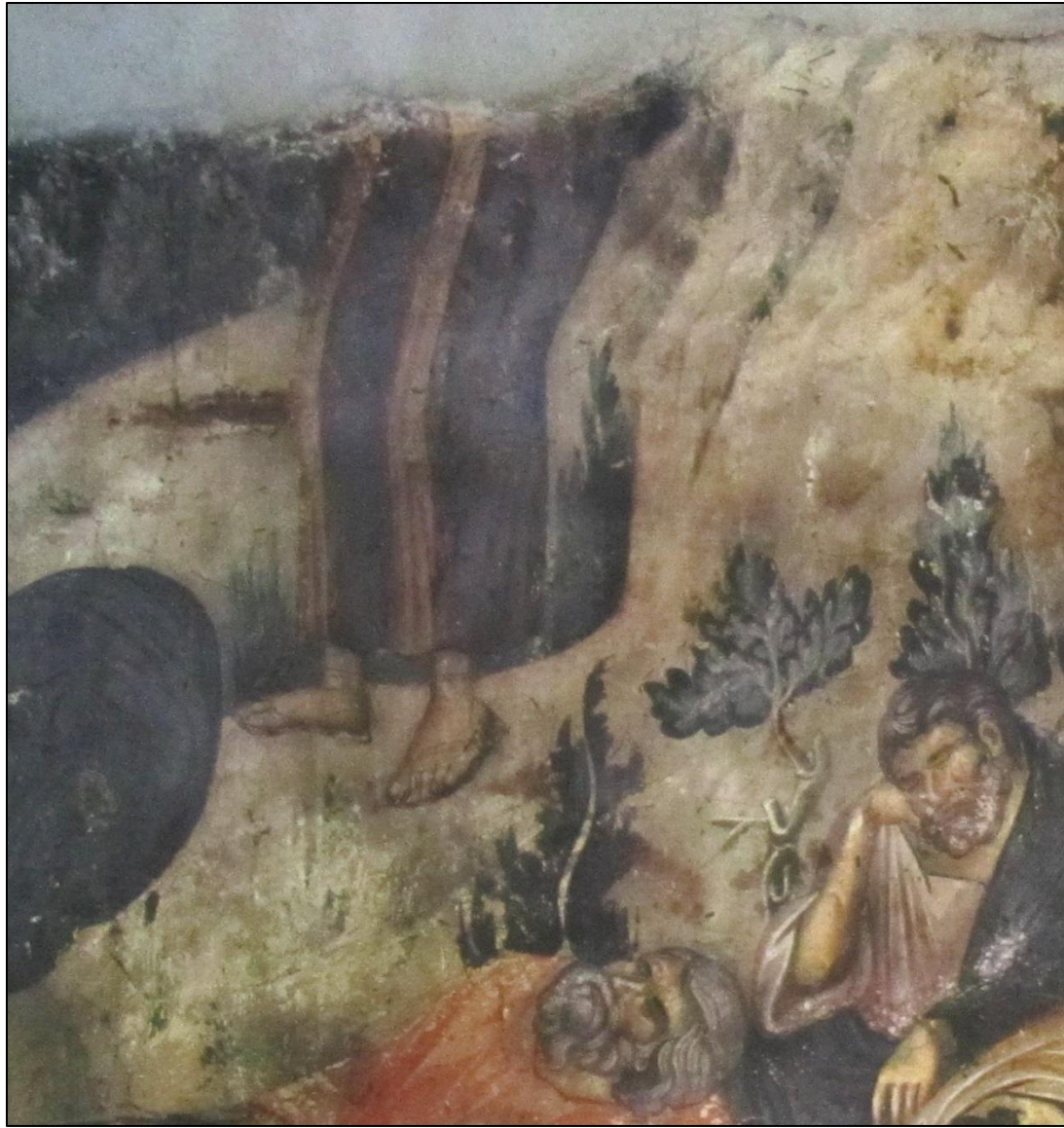


Figure 2.4.7 b

*Christ on Mount of Olives* (detail of Christ standing), Manuel Panselinos, fresco,  
c. 1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.4.8

*Christ on Mount of Olives*, artist unknown, fresco,  
Fourteenth century,  
Catholicon, Chilandari, Mount Athos.



Figure 2.4.9

*Prayer on the Mount of Olives*, Duccio di Buoninsegna, tempera on panel,  
c. 1308,  
Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana del Duomo, Siena.



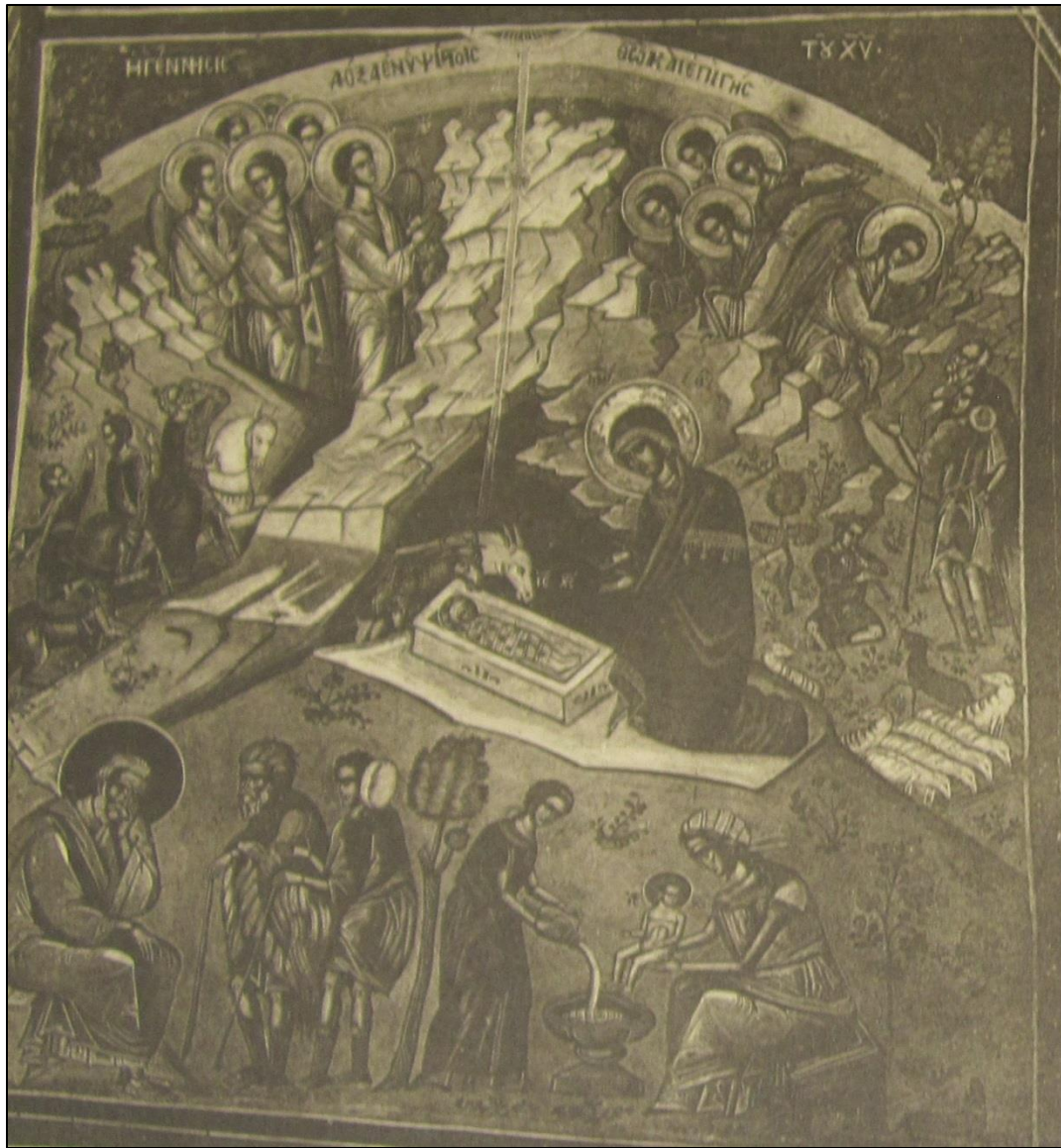


Figure 2.4.10

*Nativity*, artist unknown, fresco,  
c. 1568,  
Dochiariou Monastery, Mount Athos.

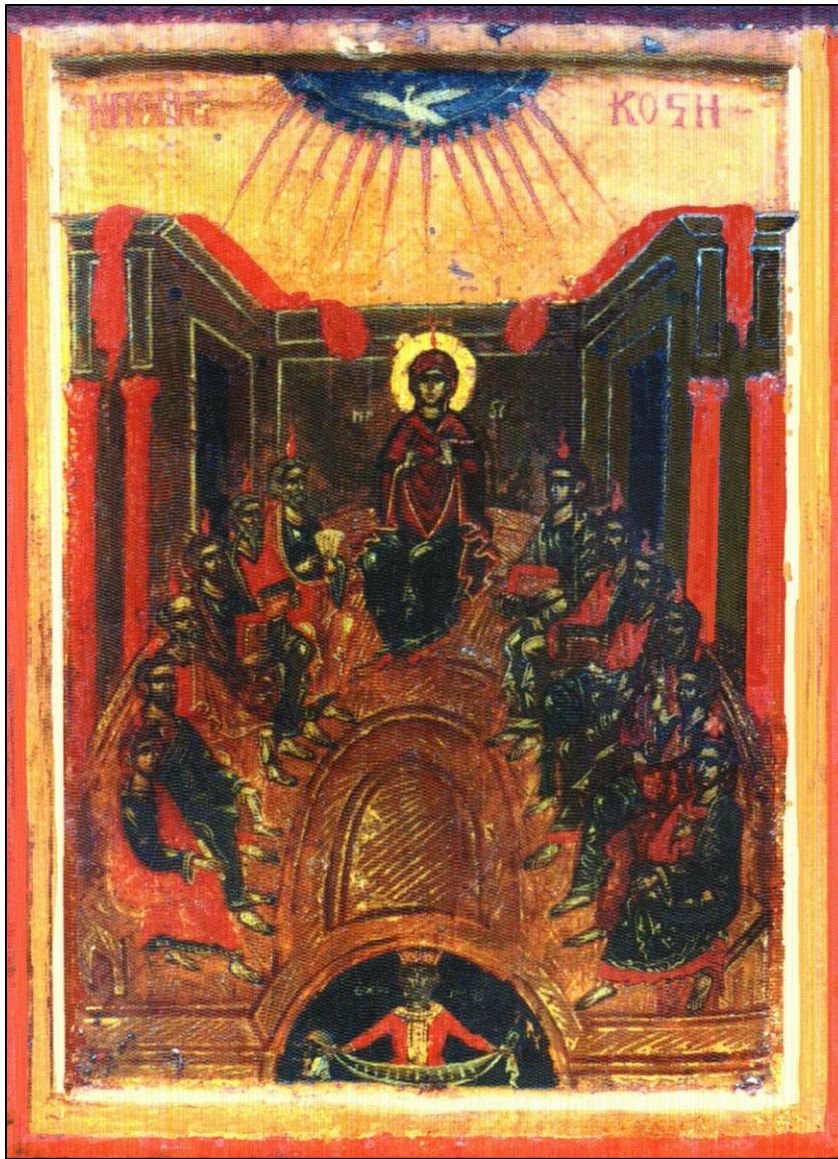


Figure 2.5.1

*Pentecost*, Dionysius of Fournia, tempera on wood,  
c. 1711,  
Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.5.2

*Aaron*, artist unknown, fresco,  
1720-1730,  
Docheiariou Monastery, Mount Athos.

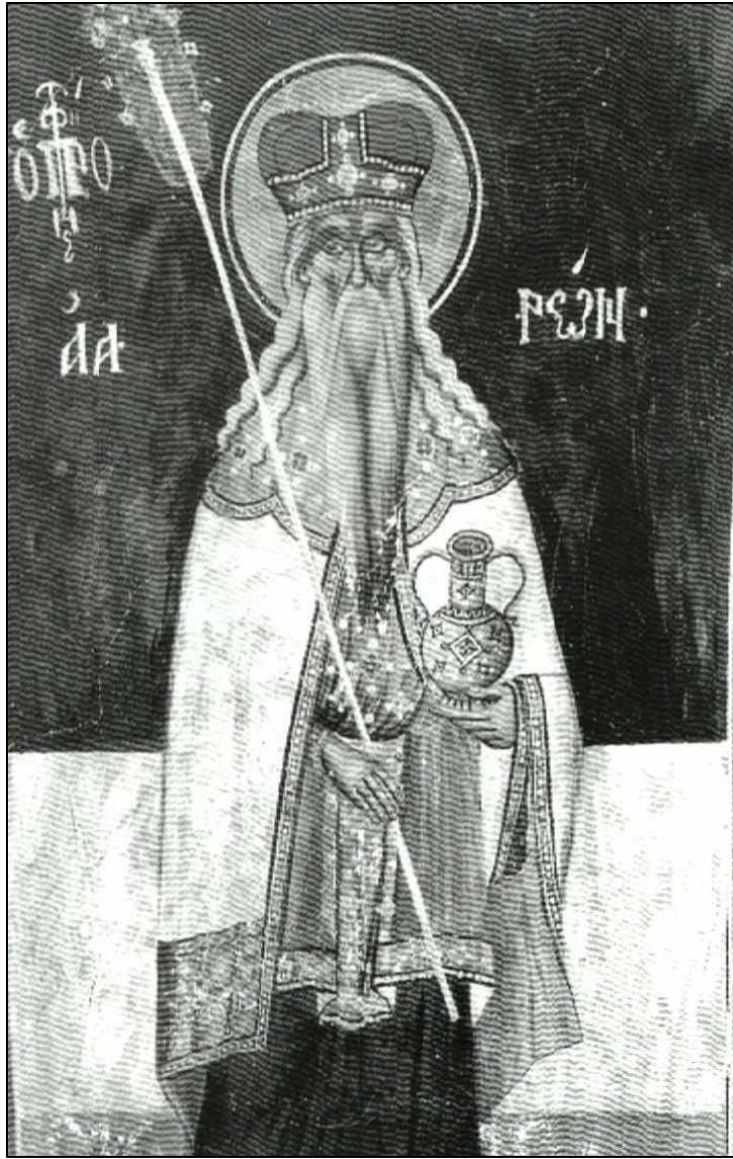


Figure 2.5.3

*Aaron*, Dionysius of Fournia, fresco,  
c. 1711,  
Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.



Figure 2.5.4

*Melchisedek*, Manuel Panselinos, fresco,  
c. 1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.5.5

*Anastasis*, Dionysius of Fournia, tempera on wood,  
c. 1711,  
Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 2.5.6

*Resurrection*, Moskos, wood panel,  
c. 1679,  
Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens.

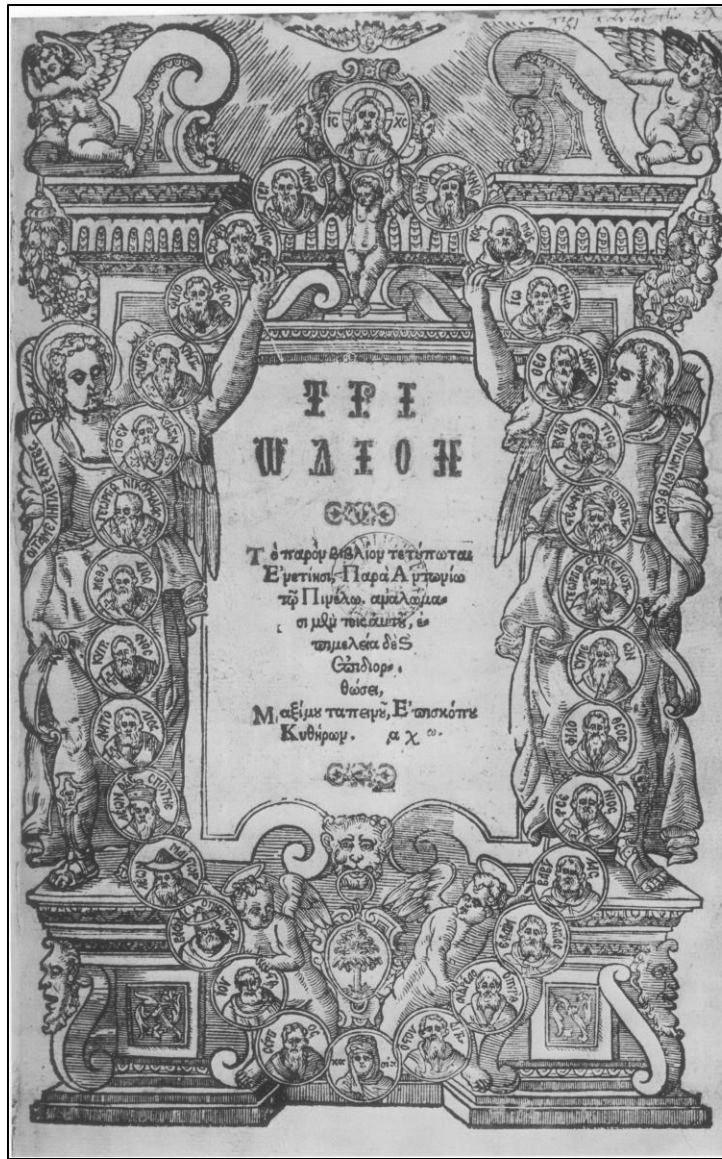


Figure 2.5.7

*Triodion*, edited and published in Venice by Maximus, Bishop of Cythera, print,  
c. 1600,  
Bodleian Library, Oxford.

CHAPTER III

ARTISTIC VOCABULARY AS VISUAL RHETORIC

## Cultural Diversity on Mount Athos

Mount Athos has the reputation of being a receptacle of Byzantine artistic culture. Such a reputation is well-deserved since the libraries on Mount Athos collectively carry more Greek manuscripts than any other institution in the world,<sup>1</sup> and the painted frescos in the monasteries cover an estimated surface area of one hundred thousand square meters.<sup>2</sup> The monks there have also preserved many of the undocumented oral traditions as well as religious practices that date back to the Byzantine period. In the eighteenth century, Mount Athos functioned as the beating heart of monastic Orthodoxy throughout the Ottoman-held regions, and its reputation reached Orthodox communities far beyond the Ottoman borders.

In 843, one of the earliest documented dates associated with it, the peninsula had already acquired considerable renown for the ascetic life of its inhabitants. Over the next six centuries, the monks of Mount Athos formed into organized monastic communities, and many of these enjoyed upper-class

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1. Basil Atsalos, "Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos," in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, ed. A. Karakatsanis (Thessaloniki: Ministry of Culture, 1997), 583. Around 15,000 manuscripts are believed to have survived on Mount Athos, according to Atsalos.

2. Panagiotis L. Vocotopoulos, "Monumental Painting on Mount Athos, 11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century," in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, ed. A. Karakatsanis (Thessaloniki: Ministry of Culture, 1997), 33. The majority of the frescos on Mount Athos date to the fifteenth century or after. Most of the original Byzantine frescos have been lost or have been painted over.

patronage from the Byzantine monarchs and the aristocracy. However, imperial patronage was eliminated in 1424 by the Ottoman conquest, and the flow of high culture was relegated to that of popular culture.<sup>3</sup> Mount Athos was allowed to function much as it had before the conquest, but heavy taxation had a profoundly negative effect on monastic culture. In the early post-Byzantine period, the monasteries were forced to sell many valuable treasures kept in their libraries and churches, and monks were regularly sent out to collect alms on missions that could last several years. Literacy levels plummeted, and monastery buildings fell into disrepair. Despite these setbacks, Mount Athos remained a major center for Orthodoxy, and the loss of valuables was countered by many generous donations, especially from the Phanariot patrons in the eighteenth century. Several wealthy individuals donated entire libraries, and others willed their lands or made monetary contributions to the monasteries.<sup>4</sup> The financial situation of the monastic communities was fluctuating constantly throughout the post-Byzantine period, and the same can be said about its culture.

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3. Speros Vryonis Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy in the Formal Culture of the Balkan Peoples," in *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople*, ed. John J. Yiannias (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 17-19.

4. Sir Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), 370.

Mount Athos was, and is to this day, a monastic microcosm of the Balkan and Slavic lands. Many monasteries on the peninsula are not Greek at all; Chilandar, a Serbian monastery, had about eight hundred monks in the 1670s; the Bulgarian monastery of Zographou had about two hundred monks; Iveron had a smaller population of Georgian monks, and multiple monasteries and smaller sketes on Mount Athos were Russian.<sup>5</sup> The mountain, of course, cannot be said to have an indigenous population; all of the monks living on Mount Athos are essentially foreign to the peninsula. This mixture of linguistic and cultural diversity was bound by the common Orthodox religion, and the mountain is thought of as being a pan-Orthodox community. Far from being culturally stagnant, Mount Athos was an important transit point for cultural exchange and cultural reception, particularly at times of financial growth. Much of this exchange was fueled by Thessaloniki nearby; it was a commercial trade center with direct ties to Mount Athos.<sup>6</sup> Thessaloniki was a terminal point for the northern trade route to Vienna which was established in the seventeenth century

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5. Vryonis, "The Byzantine Legacy in the Formal Culture of the Balkan Peoples," 36.

6. The Bishop of Thessaloniki maintained jurisdiction over the monasteries of Mount Athos that had not attained *stavropegic* status.

and run primarily by Greeks in the diaspora.<sup>7</sup> [Figure 3.1.1]. At the same time, Thessaloniki was accessible by sea, and it connected the northern overland trade route with other commercial ports – Constantinople, Candia, and Venice being some of the most prominent destinations. Among other commercial goods, these trade routes enabled the circulation of printed material that was produced in Venice and Vienna and then bought and distributed by the monasteries of Mount Athos.<sup>8</sup> And so, in addition to forming a pan-Orthodox community, the monasteries on Mount Athos were also important centers of cultural reception and exchange with the West, albeit through Greek communities in the diaspora.

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<sup>7</sup> David Brewer, *Greece, the Hidden Centuries* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2010), 199-201.

<sup>8</sup> Dory Papastratos, *Paper Icons: Greek Orthodox Religious Engravings 1665-1899*, Volumes I and II, trans. John Leatham (Athens: Papastratos S. A. Publications, 1990). Almost all of the engravings catalogued by Papastratos were produced in one of three locations: Venice, Vienna, and later on Mount Athos itself.

### Artistic Culture on Mount Athos: 1261-1424

Almost no frescos that survive on Mount Athos date to the Byzantine period proper (before 1424). Of those that do, the most complete program is preserved in the Protaton church in Karyes (c. 1290), painted by Manuel Panselinos. These late-Byzantine frescos were rendered in a Macedonian or Palaiologan style, also known as the 'volume style,' characterized by a pronounced representation of a three-dimensional body underneath the drapery through the techniques of shading and highlighting. The fresco of Saint John of Damascus painted by Panselinos is a remarkable example; the technique employed by the artist can be observed clearly, despite any chemical changes that have occurred for over seven hundred years. [Figure 3.2.1]. The figure's contrapposto stance is evident by the highlighting of the figure's left leg and the darkening of the right. At the same time, the drapery is abstracted by the use of deep creases and angular shapes from which the form is built up. Upon closer inspection, both the geometric quality of the shapes and their delineation through the use of strong contours become apparent. [Figure 3.2.2]. The individual strokes are emphatic, and the colors are not always rendered in stepped gradations of each other; this is seen very well in the green cloak, where individual layers of colors progress from a cold-light-green color forming the



base, to a brown-green color with a drastic increase of red hue, and then to a warm-light-green set of highlights. Panselinos rendered the flesh with softer transitions than the drapery, and this he did through the multiplicity of brushstrokes as seen in the fresco of Saint Artemios. [Figure 3.2.3]. The brushstrokes overlap each other with some regularity, though at a distance they converge to create a relatively soft modeling of the flesh. Altogether, the Palaiologan style that Panselinos represents is a sophisticated approach to Byzantine figural depiction.

The artistic period during which Panselinos operated, called the “Palaiologan Renaissance,” was marked by cultural revival after a time of political strife, namely the pillage of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The Byzantine Empire was re-established sixty years later and the Palaiologan dynasty reasserted itself, together with the aristocracy, as the patrons of the arts on Mount Athos. Understandably, attitudes toward the West were bitter after the sack of Constantinople, especially given the poor relationship that the Byzantine and the Latin Empires already kept since the Great Schism of 1054. At this time, the artistic cultures of the East and the West diverged stylistically. A comparison of two contemporary painters, Panselinos [Figure 3.2.4] and Giotto [Figure 3.2.5], reveals contrasting attitudes toward art

through the stylistic variances in their paintings. Giotto was a leading innovator among other artists around him who painted in the Italo-Byzantine style. His smooth treatment of forms contrasts that of Panselinos whose work adheres more faithfully to earlier Byzantine art and its artistic conventions. The different artistic mentalities between the Byzantine East and the Latin West became more pronounced with time, and Panselinos and Giotto became highly revered within their respective cultures. In the fifteenth century, Cennino Cennini wrote that “Giotto changed the profession of painting from Greek back into Latin, and brought it up to date.”<sup>9</sup> In *The Lives of the Artists* (1550), Giorgio Vasari re-iterated the same statement: “[Giotto] became such an excellent imitator of nature that he completely banished that crude Greek style and revived the modern and excellent art of painting.”<sup>10</sup> Though there is no comparable account of Panselinos’s life, several sixteenth and seventeenth-century painter’s manuals in the East related “the measures (μέτρα)<sup>11</sup> and the colors (χρώματα) of

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9. Cennino d’Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman’s Handbook: The Italian “Il Libro dell’ Arte,”* trans. Daniel V. Thompson, jr. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1954), 2. Cennino Cennini originally wrote the manual in the fifteenth century.

10. Giorgio Vasari, *Giorgio Vasari: The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 16.

11. The word ‘measures’ in this case relates to the proportions of the human figure.

Panselinos,” thereby referencing Panselinos as an exemplary model.<sup>12</sup> These manuals or technical guides also demonstrate a continuation of the Palaiologan style from the Byzantine to the post-Byzantine period; they were likely preserved in the form of oral tradition until they were written down. Dionysius might have used a number of these preexisting painter’s manuals and possible elements of oral tradition as sources for the *Hermeneia*.

Following the events of the Fourth Crusade, the negative political and social attitudes toward the West were reflected in late-Byzantine culture and especially in art. In many ways, Palaiologan art was a kind of reaffirmation of the culture’s Byzantine traditions and Byzantine identity in response to and against the artistic progression in the West.<sup>13</sup> In his discussion on Palaiologan manuscript illumination, John Lowden observed that Palaiologan art represented a defining “counter-Renaissance” movement.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, the Palaiologan artistic vocabulary was sustained throughout the Ottoman Conquest in the form of extant works and oral traditions until these were later preserved in technical

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12. Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kérameus, *Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης* (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie B. Kirschbaum, 1909), Παράρτημα Α'-Ε' (Appendix 1-5).

13. John Lowden, “Manuscript Illumination in Byzantium, 1261-1557,” in *Byzantium: Faith and Power 1261-1557*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 269.

14. *Ibid.*

guides or painter's manuals. However, by the eighteenth century, attitudes toward the West on Mount Athos were no longer the same as those in the late-Byzantine period. Post-Byzantine artistic identity on Mount Athos was characterized by cultural exchange and amalgamation of stylistic preferences. The same technical guides that related the measures (proportions) and colors of Panselinos, for example, also related the technique of attaining the naturalistic flesh tones of fifteenth-century Cretan-Byzantine painter Theophanes Strelitzas.<sup>15</sup> And so, while the Palaiologan artistic vocabulary had been preserved for over four centuries, it seems to have contributed differently to eighteenth-century artistic purposes than it had to the artists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

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15. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ερμηνεία της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης*, Appendix 1.

### Artistic Culture on Mount Athos: 1424-1745

The eighteenth century was a peak of prosperity that positively affected artistic production on the peninsula. Such peaks occurred with the reign of Emperor Andronicos II around 1300, when Panselinos painted the Protaton, and in the second and third quarters of the sixteenth century, at a time when Theophanes Strelitzas worked at the monastery of Stavronikita.<sup>16</sup> The Cretan art that was introduced to Mount Athos in the sixteenth century was a current that changed the artistic vocabulary of Athonite art. After Crete came under Venetian control in 1204, many of the artists living there cooperated on social, economic, and cultural levels with Venetian merchants. These artists catered to a wide variety of audiences and patrons. For this reason, Cretan artists adopted iconographical and stylistic elements from the West. By the sixteenth century, most of them became experts at rendering scenes in both the *maniera Greca* and the *maniera Latina*. Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) was one such artist before his drastic departure from both traditions altogether; the *Dormition* [Figure 3.3.1], painted by him in the sixteenth century, follows Byzantine artistic conventions while the *Adoration of the Magi*, painted between 1565 and 1575, takes on a Western subject with stylistic elements of Venetian Mannerism.

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16. Vocotopoulos, "Monumental Painting on Mount Athos, 11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century," 36.

[Figure 3.3.2]. Other artists were proficient in conflating the two traditions together. Angelos, an artist who painted in the fifteenth century, demonstrated a closer adherence to Byzantine art in his painting of St. Theodore, especially in the figure's drapery and the landscape in the background. [Figure 3.3.3]. However, the legs of the figure are indicative of stylistic conflation with the *maniera Latina* considering the naturalistic indication of musculature around the knees. Stylistic conflation became characteristic of Cretan art as is demonstrated by the painting of a Western subject, *Noli Me Tangere*, by a Cretan artist in the early-sixteenth century. [Figure 3.3.4]. Christ's drapery is treated in accordance with Byzantine conventions, but Mary Magdalene's drapery and the treatment of her hair is much closer to being anachronistically rendered in the so-called International Gothic style. In 1546, Theophanes painted a very similar representation of this scene at the Stavronikita Monastery when he moved to Mount Athos. [Figure 3.3.5]. The Cretan style, encompassing the synthesis of Byzantine and Latin stylistic elements, became popular on Mount Athos from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century.

When the Ottomans conquered Crete in 1669, artistic production on the island ceased, and the distribution and the appropriation of Cretan art entered a period of decline. In 1683, the Ottoman Empire suffered a devastating loss at the

battle of Vienna and was subsequently forced to relinquish a large amount of its hold over the Balkans. As the peace treaties of Carlowitz and Passarowitz ushered in commerce and cultural exchange into the Balkans, the resulting Europeanization of the Balkan lands threatened the existing Orthodox culture. While some embraced Europeanization, others reacted negatively toward it. Dionysius's correspondent and personal friend Anastasios Gordios wrote a treatise around 1718 titled *Composition concerning Mohammed and against the Latins*. Like Dionysius, Gordios came from the Agrapha region, and, after having studied in Padua, Gordios became a priest, a teacher, and a writer. He interpreted the threat to his culture according to popular mentality expressed within the secular Church. Turning to the *Book of Revelation*, Gordios explained in his teaching that Muhammad and the pope are represented by the two beasts of the Apocalypse.<sup>17</sup> A similar mentality was adopted by some artists in the Balkans. Representations of the Latins and Ottomans began to appear in images of the Last Judgement, as the damned, and in representations of the Psalm 149:6-9, as the fettered kings and nobles featured in verse 8.<sup>18</sup>

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17. Vocotopoulos, "Monumental Painting on Mount Athos, 11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century," 36.

18. Günter P. Schiemenz, "The Painted Psalms of Athos," in *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism*, ed. Anthony Bryer and Mary Cunningham (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1996), 224-231.



(8) To bind their kings with fetters, and their nobles with menacles of iron,  
(9) to execute on them the judgment written: this honor have all His  
saints.<sup>19</sup>

However, these types of representations seem to be limited to secular churches in regions of higher socio-political tension.<sup>20</sup> In the *Hermeneia*, Dionysius opted for the more benign verses from the '*Pasa Pnoe*' (let everything that hath breath [praise the Lord]) sung during *orthros* (matins), and his compositional descriptions of the Apocalypse Cycle, the Second Coming, and the Last Judgement bear neither overt nor commonly understood allusions toward the Latins and Ottomans.<sup>21</sup>

At this point in its cultural history, Mount Athos experienced a crisis of culture. The monks on the peninsula reacted to the decline of Cretan art and the threat of cultural Europeanization by taking the initiative to establish their own artistic concepts and preferences. Before the eighteenth century, most of the painters working on Mount Athos were laymen; Theophanes Strelitzas and several other painters were exceptions.<sup>22</sup> However, this demographic changed, and, almost exclusively, monks and *hieromonks* formed the general body of

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19. Psalms 149:8-9

20. Schiemenz, "The Painted Psalms of Athos," 225.

21. Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual'*, 46-50.

22. Vocotopoulos, "Monumental Painting on Mount Athos, 11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century," 38.

artists on Mount Athos from the beginning of the eighteenth century on.<sup>23</sup> Some monks turned to a form of ascetic art exemplified by the icon of *St. Makarios*. [Figure 3.3.6]. But this particularly unrefined style was reserved for conservative painters such as Damaskinos at Karakallou. According to an inscription on the bottom, the icon of *St. Makarios*, was commissioned by *Hiero*-monk Nektarius; its patron and artist were both monks. However, the larger projects on Mount Athos received patronage from princes of Moldavia and Wallachia and support from the Phanariot families in Constantinople. The artistic style that was most appropriate for aristocratic patronage, while simultaneously adhering to the monastic artistic expression, was Palaiologan art. And so, at a critical moment for the artistic culture on Mount Athos, Palaiologan art experienced a revival. However, this revival was not a direct reversion to Palaiologan artistic practices. By the eighteenth century, new subjects had been adopted from the West, as with the Apocalypse Cycles, and popular movements on Mount Athos, such as the movement against the bathing scene of the Christ-child, were categorically inconsistent with original Palaiologan conventions. In the cultural context of its time, the eighteenth-century Palaiologan revival was deeply complicated by contemporary artistic currents.

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23. Ibid.

The artistic vocabulary employed by Dionysius is consistent with Palaiologan practices to a degree. The compositional similarity of St. Luke painted by Dionysius in the *Timios Prodromos* was shown to be analogous with the fresco of St. Luke in the Protaton. Elsewhere, however, Dionysius demonstrated a fair bit of stylistic deviation from Palaiologan models. In the icon of St. John the Baptist, for example, Dionysius included non-Palaiologan artistic vocabulary. [Figure 3.3.7]. This is most clearly demonstrated by the inclusion of a checkered floor in multiple scenes from the life of St. John – an element never seen in Palaiologan art. [Figure 3.3.8]. The Turkish and Western Baroque styles also featured in many of Dionysius's paintings, notably in the monochromatic representations of the fountain in the icon of the *Zoodochos Pege* and the throne in the icon of the enthroned Christ. [Figures 3.3.9 and 3.3.10]. Furthermore, stylistic deviation from Byzantine practices was facilitated by Dionysius in the *Hermeneia*. Dionysius describes two stylistic practices in addition to the one employed by Panselinos – the Muscovite style and the Cretan style – thereby leaving the reader or student free to choose a style based on personal preference.<sup>24</sup>

Given the critical state of artistic culture on Mount Athos, Dionysius addressed his audience by referencing the popular art of Panselinos. At the same

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24. Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual,'* 11-12.

time, Dionysius provided the reader or student with a variety of artistic vocabulary that allowed for fluid adoption of artistic currents while being conscious of past traditions and practices. Dionysius's own stylistic preferences expressed an amalgamation of practices – a method that brought Byzantine conventions into compatibility with contemporary artistic culture.

## Conclusion

The artistic styles that featured in Dionysius's work must be understood in terms of their cultural context and the monastic environment. Artists on Mount Athos consistently worked within stylistic parameters of the Orthodox Christian tradition. These parameters were not a strict set of rules; rather, they consisted of fluctuating commonly-understood principles that varied and shifted while being centered on Orthodox theology and liturgical practice.<sup>25</sup> Within the Orthodox artistic culture, this was referred to as the "living (or holy) tradition."<sup>26</sup> Such principles helped the art on Mount Athos retain Byzantinizing qualities and, at the same time, allowed for a degree of stylistic variance. Within the cultural circumstances on the peninsula, the variances were more subtle compared to post-Byzantine art outside its borders. Considering that Dionysius operated within this monastic artistic culture, his artistic vocabulary was largely determined by nuanced complexity, rather than outright exposition of personal preferences and ideologies.

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25. Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 197-198.

26. *Ibid*, 198.

Dionysius's paintings and the works of Europeanizing artists, such as Panagiotis Doxaras, cannot be compared by equivalent standards. Doxaras operated in a secular environment under Venetian rule while Dionysius lived and worked within monastic environments under the Ottoman governmental system. Similarly, the treatises that each of the artists wrote, having been composed in very different cultural locations, generally correspond to the respective audiences that received them. Taking this into account, there seems to have been very little common ground for a rhetorical dialectic between the two artists to take shape.

Some scholars suggest that Dionysius wrote the *Hermeneia* in response to and against Doxaras's *Peri Zographias*.<sup>27</sup> While this supposition might seem plausible on the surface, certain evidence suggests against it. Doxaras's treatise on art was not popular among artists working beyond the Venetian borders, and its distribution seems to have been limited only to the Ionian Islands. Dionysius made no indication of having read Doxaras's treatise, and nothing in his work indicates a direct response against the Westernizing tendencies promoted in *Peri Zographias*. On the contrary, Dionysius included a section in the *Hermeneia* titled

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27. Chrysa Damianaki, *Translation and Critical Reception of Leonardo da Vinci's Trattato della Pittura in Greece*, (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2003), 62-71.

“on the preparation of life-like colors and how to work with oil on cloth.”<sup>28</sup>

Dionysius then proceeded to explain certain techniques involving oil paints.

These techniques are not as complete as his instructions on painting with egg-tempera, and Dionysius had probably never made use of oil paints in his work.

However, the inclusion of this section in the *Hermeneia* demonstrates intent to provide the reader or student with the ability to render paintings in the *naturale* technique through the use of oil paints. While Dionysius and Doxaras approached religious art in very different ways, they cannot be said to have diametrically opposed each other. Such a supposition over-simplifies the complexity and the richness of Dionysius’s visual rhetoric.

In the introduction to the *Hermeneia*, Dionysius made a claim toward adherence with Palaiologan traditions. However, this adherence could never have been realized in the eighteenth century because of the complications facing the artistic culture on Mount Athos. The cultural environment for Palaiologan artists necessitated the reaffirmation of their Byzantine identities in opposition to the artistic progression in the West. In the eighteenth century, monks on Mount Athos faced a similar threat, and they too turned toward the past. However, three centuries of artistic development conflated their artistic practices with

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<sup>28</sup> Hetherington, *The ‘Painter’s Manual,’* 12.



contemporary currents. Dionysius addressed the issue of identity through the visual rhetoric in his work, and the answer that conclusively defines Dionysius's visual rhetoric is syncretism. Through his artistic expression, Dionysius demonstrated an extraordinary willingness to broaden the conventional approaches to Eastern Orthodox art. In this way, Dionysius struck a firm position in the middle ground between the contemporary artistic currents and the Orthodox artistic traditions of his cultural background. While he and others around him looked back in time for inspiration from Palaiologan models, Dionysius's primary aim was to look forward and to address the crisis of artistic culture at hand.

CHAPTER III

ARTISTIC VOCABULARY AS VISUAL RHETORIC

FIGURES

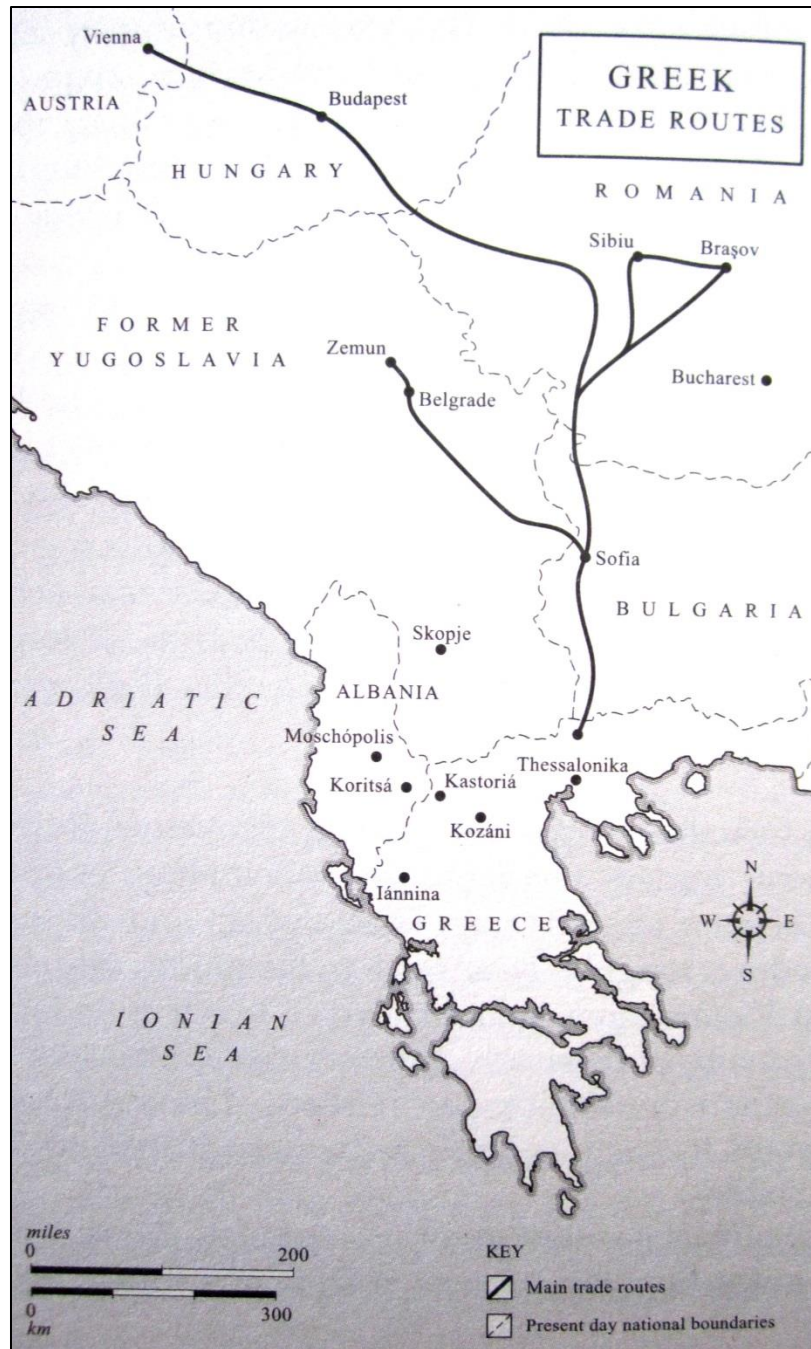


Figure 3.1.1

Map of the overland trade route to Thessaloniki.



Figure 3.2.1

*St. John of Damascus*, Manuel Panselinos,  
c.1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 3.2.2

*St. John of Damascus* (detail), Manuel Panselinos,  
c.1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.



Figure 3.2.3

*St. Artemios* (detail), Manuel Panselinos,  
c.1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 3.2.4

*Lamentation* (detail), Manuel Panselinos,  
c.1290,  
Protaton, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 3.2.5

*Lamentation* (detail), Giotto,  
c.1305,  
Arena Chapel, Padua.



Figure 3.3.1

*Dormition*, Domenikos Theotokopoulos,  
sixteenth century,  
Crete.





Figure 3.3.2

*The Adoration of the Magi*, Domenikos Theotokopoulos,  
c. 1565-1575,  
Crete.



Figure 3.3.3

*St. Theodore the Tiro, Angelos,  
fifteenth century,  
Athens, Byzantine Museum.*





Figure 3.3.4

*Noli Me Tangere* ("Touch Me not"), tempera on panel,  
Early-sixteenth century,  
Zakynthos, Crete.



Figure 3.3.5

*Μη μου άπτου* ("Touch Me not"), Theophanes Strelitzas, fresco,  
c.1546,  
Catholicon of Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos.





Figure 3.3.6

*St. Makarios the Roman,*  
eighteenth century,  
Skete of St. Anne, Mount Athos.



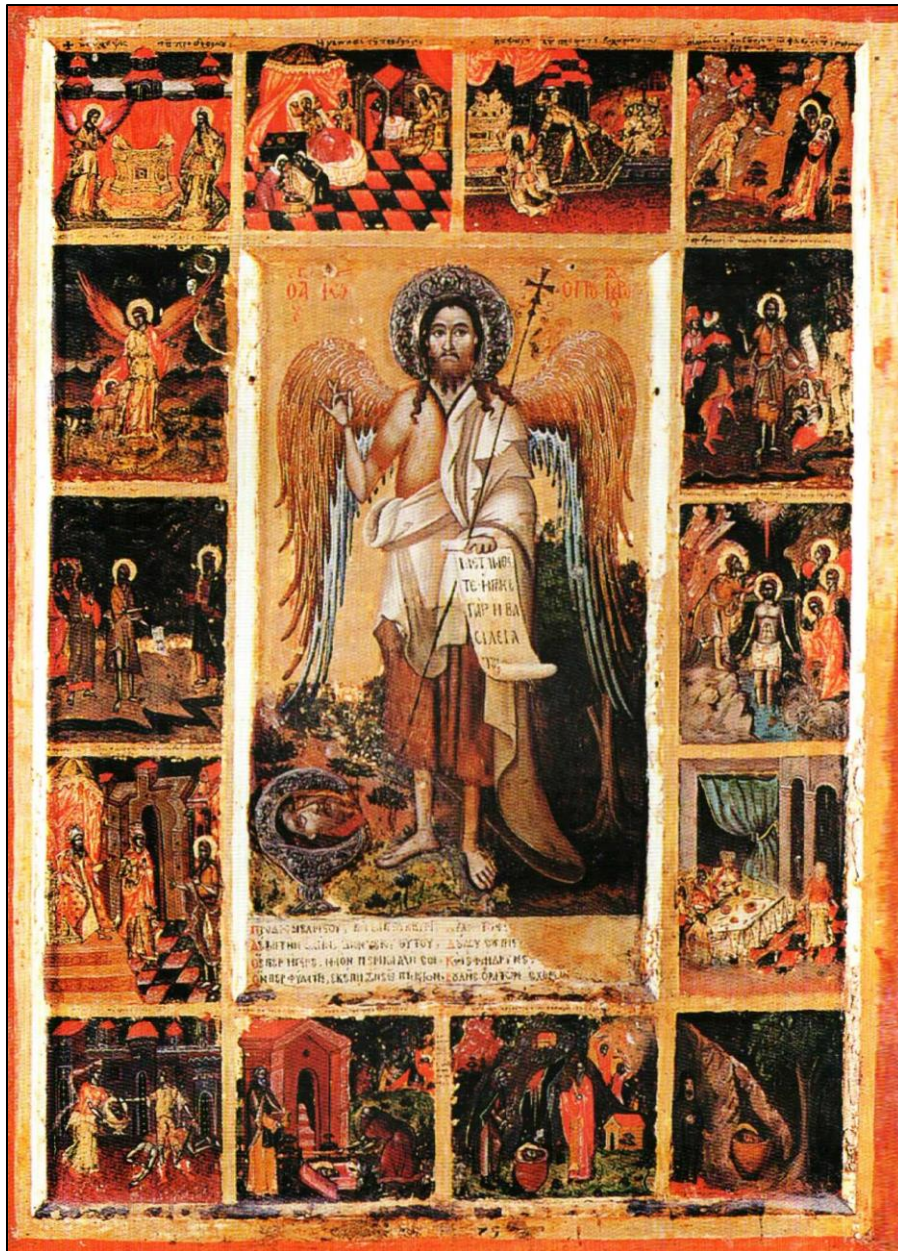


Figure 3.3.7

*St. John the Baptist, Dionysius of Fournia,  
1711,  
Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.*



Figure 3.3.8

*St. John the Baptist* (detail), Dionysius of Fournas,  
1711,  
Timios Prodromos, Karyes, Mount Athos.





Figure 3.3.9

*Zoodochos Pege*, Dionysius of Fourni,  
1737,  
Metamorphosis, Fourni.



Figure 3.3.10

*Christ Enthroned*, Dionysius of Fourni,  
1737,  
Metamorphosis, Fourni.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

### Conclusion: Artistic Identity through Visual Rhetoric

The intended objective of the work at hand has been to demonstrate the complexity of Dionysius's visual rhetoric based on a number of examples. While this work contains only a few of them, these examples must suffice to represent the entirety of the visual rhetoric in Dionysius's work. Furthermore, these examples were juxtaposed against the artistic culture in which Dionysius operated. This artistic culture was generally based on Byzantine practices, but, by the eighteenth century, it experienced many complicating currents.

Dionysius's sphere of operation facilitated artistic diversity, syncretism, and a progressive mentality. Some of his patrons were upper-class lords and princes who were well-disposed toward Western political and cultural mentalities. At the same time, Dionysius met opposition and ridicule from the *prohegoumenos* at the Karakallou monastery, suggesting, perhaps, that Dionysius's work was not compatible with the austere character of conservative art. While Dionysius seems to have written the *Hermeneia* in response to the cultural currents around him, his response was evidently based on the positive reception of his Phanariot patrons and the negative treatment he received from the conservative-minded monks of Karakallou.



Having painted a fresco of St. Luke in an analogous composition to the painting in the Protaton, Dionysius demonstrated a genuine regard for Manuel Panselinos and the art of the Palaiologan period. However, Dionysius reached for sources beyond that of Panselinos. The description in the *Hermeneia* on how to depict the iconographical type of St. Luke painting the Virgin is a practice that did not feature in Panselinos's work or the work of Palaiologan painters.

Dionysius used a variety sources, and a large number of these originated in the West. The Apocalypse Cycle included in the *Hermeneia* was based on prints by Hans Holbein the Younger and other engravers from Northern Europe. While Dionysius envisioned the scenes from the Apocalypse Cycle rendered in a Byzantinizing style, he revealed a very accepting attitude toward Western sources by including them in his work.

The Nativity scene that features in both the *Hermeneia* and in the icon painted by Dionysius on Mount Athos is compositionally and iconographically incongruent with Palaiologan models, despite the proliferation of these models in Orthodox artistic culture. Dionysius opted for iconography that was aligned with the contemporary movement on Mount Athos against depictions of the Christ-child's bathing scene. Significantly, Dionysius did not follow the model provided to him in the Protaton.

In terms of iconographical types, the Palaiologan models were too limiting, and they did not address the contemporary issues that Dionysius faced. Wishing to make his work relevant to contemporary painters, Dionysius opened his criteria for iconography to include non-Palaiologan and essentially non-Byzantine subjects.

Considering artistic vocabulary, Dionysius demonstrated conscious attempts to strike a balance between Palaiologan art and contemporary currents. While he treated the majority of his subjects with consciousness of Byzantine precedents, Dionysius's paintings contain details that appeal to the contemporary viewer. Dionysius also showed extraordinary effort to include art practices, such as instruction on painting with oils, that he himself probably never utilized. And so, Dionysius addressed the crisis of artistic culture in his monastic sphere by bringing new currents into compatibility with past practices. He incorporated them into his own works in order to update past traditions and to bring them into compatibility with contemporary artistic culture.

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The examples related to iconography and style merge to form a single and cohesive statement about Dionysius's artistic identity. The visual rhetoric in his work is a complex negotiation between the old and the new and between the

foreign and the domestic. At certain significant points in his life, Dionysius lived and operated in a traditional monastic environment. Therefore, the literal and artistic language with which Dionysius chose to communicate his visual rhetoric was based on his primary role – that of a *hieromonachos* and an artist who painted religious subjects with long-standing artistic and oral traditions. For this reason, he enveloped his visual rhetoric in Byzantine tradition. This traditional quality has been used in past scholarship to define Dionysius and his artistic identity completely, and, with such an approach, the Byzantine and foreign elements in Dionysius's work seemed to exist at odds with each other. However, Dionysius's visual rhetoric is much more complex, and his traditionalistic quality is only a small part of a larger strategically-composed statement. Having demonstrated the complex nature of his visual rhetoric, Dionysius's artistic identity is clearly shown to be characterized by conscious synthesis of modern practices with past traditions and by the fusion of contemporary currents with eighteenth-century Athonite monasticism in order to enrich and to contribute to the vibrancy of his artistic culture and to bring it up to date with contemporary conceptions of art.

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