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## Silverwork Produced in Ottoman Trikala (Thessaly): Problems of Taxonomy and Interpretation]

In the late 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, interest in Ottoman and post-Byzantine silverwork in Greece was sparked by the publication of material from the sacristies of major Greek Orthodox monasteries, as well as by exhibitions of liturgical silver from Greek museums (Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou 1988; Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou 1990; Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou 1991; Ballian 1991; Borboudakis 1994; Ballian 1998; Karakatsanis 1997). There were many reasons for this delayed interest. On the one hand, Ottoman metalwork had emerged as a distinct area of research in 1982, with Julian Raby and James Allan's contribution to *Tulips, Arabesques and Turbans* (Raby and Allan 1982). Various styles of 16th-century Ottoman metalwork were identified and the issue of Balkan silver was presented for the first time. On the other hand, post-Byzantine metalwork, silverwork especially, was also an overlooked field. Unlike painting from Crete or mainland Greece which was feeding the ongoing quest for a Byzantine continuum, post-Byzantine silverwork did not on the whole fit into the context of 20th-century research interests and nationalistic historiography. Not much had survived from the 16th and 17th centuries (or had been identified as being from that time), and what had survived (mainly material dated to the 18th and 19th centuries) was not particularly appreciated owing to its heavy 'Ottoman Baroque' leanings, which were perceived as debased and lacking as regards ethnic purity.

### POST-BYZANTINE, OTTOMAN, AND BALKAN

At this point, it will be useful to spend a little time on terminology, because three different terms – post-Byzantine, Ottoman, and Balkan – are used in parallel to denote silverwork of the same period. Post-Byzantine is a much used and abused term, and, as is often the case, brings to light past and present difficulties in our understanding of history. In Greece, the term 'post-Byzantine' covers ecclesiastical art from 1453 onwards, and includes regions under Venetian rule, such as Crete, as well as the Ottoman-ruled areas in what is today mainland Greece (Gratziou 2005). This definition is an *ipso facto* acceptance of the conventional distinction between secular and religious art which although useful as a classification tool, is too restrictive and overlooks the frequent overlaps and convergences between these domains. Use of the term is justified in the context of ecclesiastical painting more than any other field because to a degree it is literal in reference not only to time frame (post Byzantium), but also to painting style and techniques. However, even in this case the term seems radically to cut art off from its historical environment, denoting instead a preoccupation with an idealised past. Furthermore, it encompasses a vast geographical and chronological span (up to 1669 for Venetian

Crete and 1821 for southern Greece), which has seen recent research cautiously opting for regional terms and a restricted time period.

In the fields of architecture and silverwork, although both served liturgical and devotional needs similar to those in the Byzantine period, the outcome, whether buildings or objects, does not bear the same Byzantine stylistic imprint as that borne by painting. There are, of course, several cases showing the persistence of Byzantine tradition, but overall local characteristics prevailed, and, most importantly, the introduction of new artistic idioms derived from secular art. Use of the term ‘ecclesiastical’ has therefore been chosen as in, for example, books on the history of ecclesiastical architecture ‘after the Fall’ or in ‘Crete in the Late Medieval Period’ (Bouras 2002; Gratziou 2010).

Debate about the term post-Byzantine has mainly centred on the arts; it has rarely affected the field of historical studies, regardless of whether those concerned are scholars of modern Greek history or of Ottoman history, the latter being an area of study that has grown dynamically in the last twenty years. One of the reasons for this differentiation is that those engaged in studying the arts after 1453 are drawn mostly from the area of Byzantine studies. They view the period’s monuments and other works of art through the eyes of the Byzantinist. What they are mainly interested in, and are readier to recognise, are persisting Byzantine stylistic elements, as well as those derived from the West. The search for, and identification of, Western influence constitutes a large part indeed of the study of the religious art of Orthodox Christians, not only those living in the Ottoman Empire, but also those under Venetian dominion. The key for interpretation here is that relations with Western Europe signify a distancing from the medieval Byzantine tradition, but also a passage into the modern era.

In metalwork studies, when elements that were neither Byzantine nor Western began to be identified, they became termed, collectively, Islamic. This was particularly common in the 1980s, but still lingers on in some publications, where this term is considered synonymous with Ottoman. This brings us to the term Ottoman, now commonly used in the work of Greek scholars, sometimes either simply substituting the older term *Tourkokratia* (the period of Turkish rule) or, more generally, denoting the multi-religious entity that defined the Ottoman state. On the whole, it is used to signify the historical period and the administrative environment; and also to describe decoration, style of building, or other defined art historical category. However, when ecclesiastical art is the focus of discussion, the term is used – if at all – to pinpoint individual Ottoman elements which are then smoothly incorporated into the body of ‘post-Byzantine’ or ecclesiastical art.

As it is, Ottoman and post-Byzantine art seem to reside on two parallel planes that only ever meet by accident, but the problem is only partly due to ideological biases. The case of metalwork is instructive. In theory, Ottoman and post-Byzantine silverwork can coincide in terms of time and place. They can overlap in the case of objects of mixed secular and ecclesiastical use such as censers or candlesticks; however, their content certainly appears to differ. In practice, Ottoman silverwork refers to Muslim artefacts, while post-Byzantine silverwork refers to those that are Christian. This is in accordance with one of two interpretations proposed by Maria Todorova in her seminal article on the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans. The first, the ‘separate or non-organic’ interpretation, posits two distinct spheres within the Ottoman presence in the Balkans, mechanically separating the indigenous, Christian element on the one hand and the foreign,

Ottoman element on the other.<sup>1</sup> This view rests on a long-standing belief regarding the incompatibility of the local Christian people and the alien Muslim conquerors, a strict division on religious lines that prevented integration of populations and thus artistic production.

The second, or ‘organic’, interpretation treats the Ottoman legacy ‘as the complex symbiosis of Turkish, Islamic and Byzantine/Balkan traditions’ (Todorova 1996: 48–49) that coexisted for centuries and must inevitably have produced a common legacy. This approach is backed by the syncretism of the early centuries of Ottoman expansion (the *istimalet* phase), when Byzantine or Balkan aristocrats and Christians peasants alike were incorporated into a highly inclusive early Ottoman society. The organic approach is best represented by institutions such as the Patriarchate that grew dynamically as part of the Ottoman administrative system. In fact, both interpretations when divested of nationalistic overtones can be applied as methodological or interpretative tools, either separately or in conjunction.

Turning to the term ‘Balkan’, despite the recent explosion of writings it raises more questions than it answers. A common Balkan identity is a puzzle in the world of nation-states. Nevertheless, a common Balkan mentality can perhaps be traced in the pre-nationalistic age, when Orthodox Christianity was the tie binding the Balkan peoples, creating a kind of Orthodox commonwealth in the bosom of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> But the term Balkan is applied to art only rarely or somewhat reluctantly; no people that has lived in the peninsula has called its art Balkan, and this includes the Turks and the Bulgarians, despite the circumstance that the last mentioned are, on the whole, very positive regarding their Balkan characteristics. On the level of folk art, the term Balkan has been used to describe traditional peasant jewellery or costume, or even secular architecture, but not the more official art of Church architecture or painting. Admittedly, it does, however, denote Ottoman (Todorova 1996: 46); the term is most often used to describe mosques or official Ottoman buildings (Kiel 1990; Hartmuth 2009).

In silverwork, the material referred to as Balkan is a group of late 15th- and 16th-century bowls, jugs, and other items originating in the central Balkan lands and bearing fine Ottoman decoration and, in several cases, inscriptions in Greek or Slavonic. This material is best known on account of its rare, early Ottoman date, but can best be understood in its entirety, comprising as it does both secular and ecclesiastical silver mainly from the 16th and early 17th centuries and originating from the metal-rich areas of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, and Bulgaria.<sup>3</sup> From the 17th century onwards, surviving ecclesiastical silverware increases in quantity and originates in many places: besides the Balkans we have Istanbul, Anatolia, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and monastic and other areas of the Arabic-speaking world such as Mount Sinai or the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Armenian ecclesiastical silverwork follows a comparable course. All in all, regional variations and workshops can be identified, but there are no special Balkan features in this later material other than the geographical; nor is there any particular Balkan identity or peculiarity in the works.

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<sup>1</sup> Todorova 1996: 46–47. The article is included as the last chapter in Todorova 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Kitromilides 1996; also Kitromilides 2007: no. I.

<sup>3</sup> Radojković and Milovanović 1981; Sotirov 2001. For the association of mining prosperity and Christian patronage, see also Kiel 1985: 117–134; Ballian 1991.

As it is, the term Balkan silverwork omits the ecclesiastical character of the material, while the term post-Byzantine lacks the Ottoman dimension. It is true that so far little has come to light of Balkan Muslim production to enable comparisons; and, in any case, there is no such thing as sacred Muslim silver carefully kept in sacristies. Theoretically, ecclesiastical silver offers a panorama of Ottoman silverwork that does not exist elsewhere and can only be compared to secular Ottoman metalwork. But even in the case of Istanbul, from where much of the Muslim and Christian silverwork showing close stylistic associations originates, the two areas of research seem rarely to meet. Most of the time they appear as two parallel worlds that communicate through mutual influence, whereas in essence they may represent two workshops located side by side on a single street in the bazaar. There may well have been mixed workshops with both Christian and Muslim craftsmen, as was the case with the guilds (Laiou 2006–2007: 23; Faroqui and Deguilhem 2005: 15–16, 265–266). Could it be the case that mixed workshops existed, with Christian silversmiths specialising in iconography and Muslims in arabesques?

#### TRIKALA/TIRHALA: A PROVINCIAL CAPITAL AND ARTISTIC CENTRE

Far from providing an answer to this question, I shall continue with the case of Trikala, and its wider ecclesiastical region of Trikki and Thessaly, exploring its little-known silverwork production, the relationship with Balkan and Ottoman metalwork, and the historical circumstances which enabled this artistic production to grow. Trikala's special interest lies in its early documentation, indicating a mixed society and a shared world of artistic values reminiscent of, or perhaps the outcome of, the syncretism of the early Ottoman centuries.

Silverwork artefacts dating from the 16th century which can be attributed with certainty to a workshop located in what is today Greece are not known or have not yet been identified. They may have existed but were melted down later on, as painting and architecture flourished during this period, especially in the large monastic centres of Meteora and Mount Athos.<sup>4</sup> This flowering is associated with the so-called *pax ottomanica* in the time of Süleyman the Magnificent which created economic conditions favourable to the development of Christian patronage (Kiel 1992; Kiel, Agrafiotis, and Gouloulis 2002–2003).

Traditional historical accounts of the arts during the *Tourkokratia* steer research to mountain communities and villages that specialised in metalworking, painting, or building. Artisans would set out from these villages on their seasonal tours as itinerant craftsmen, travelling in a group or on their own whenever and wherever they were offered work. The idea of itinerant craftsmen from mountain villages is compatible with older theories from Greek historiography and that of other Balkan peoples, upholding the idea that the Christian peoples of the Balkans fled to the mountains after the Ottoman conquest to protect themselves from suffering and exploitation under the Ottoman yoke (Vakalopoulos 1963). According to this theory, the arts practised by the itinerant craftsmen were those

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<sup>4</sup> However, published ecclesiastical silver from Athos indicates that most 16th-century pieces come from the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia or other autonomous or semi-autonomous Christian Orthodox countries on the periphery of the Ottoman Empire; see Liakos 2012.

preserved from older, glorious times and cultivated in the isolation of mountain settlements. This, of course, was an endeavour to prove the purity and national character of this art, a theory, which although out of date following recent research, is still latent and unconsciously reproduced.

During the 16th century, Trikala was the largest urban centre in Thessaly. Located not far from the then flourishing monastic centre of Meteora, it lay in a lowland area that formed one of the largest plains in Greece. The town is a special case owing to the number and the early date of the sources available for it. These consist not only of Ottoman *defters*, census, and taxation records, but also of Greek ecclesiastical and other sources. From the early 14th century, Trikala was the most important town of Thessaly, the seat of the metropolitan of Larisa, and the capital of Serbian and Byzantine despots. The town's significance did not change following its capture by the Ottomans (which took place during the reign of Sultan Bayazid I, probably in 1395–1396): Trikala, or Tırhala as the Ottomans called it, was the capital of the Ottoman sanjak of Thessaly and remained the seat of the metropolitan.<sup>5</sup> Trikala's transition and transformation into an Ottoman town were apparently completed in fewer than fifty years, as shown by 15th-century Ottoman tax registers recording a mixed population, with Muslim and Christian households in almost equal number. The urban character of the town in the 15th and 16th centuries can best be demonstrated by the establishment and growth of several *wakf* foundations which altered its urban planning and economic profile and created new quarters and bazaars (Laiou 2007: 125–150).

The 1454–1455 and 1506 registers do not record the occupations of the Christian inhabitants, although they do show that the Muslims of the town counted among their number many merchants and artisans, including two goldsmiths (Beldiceanu and Năsturel 1983: 121–22, 139–40).

In 1484, the last will and testament of Turahanoğlu Ömer Bey, son of the conqueror of Thessaly and a major *timar* holder there, mentioned goldsmiths' workshops, a *subaşı* (overseer of the goldsmiths), and a neighbourhood named after Kuyumcu Hamza, or Hamza the Goldsmith.<sup>6</sup> The 16th century saw a sharp rise in the population of the town; rising populations were, in any case, a general phenomenon of the age. In the 17th century, Muslims were probably in the majority, but a shift is noticed in economic activity towards the non-Muslim population. A clear picture is given in the late 17th-century *cizye* (poll tax) registers where the occupation of the non-Muslims is recorded. Some 47 per cent of the non-Muslim taxpayers were artisans, craftsmen, and merchants, showing the distinct urban and industrial character of the town. After grocers and bakers, goldsmiths were the most common and well-to-do group of professionals; these persons were all recorded in the register in a manner implying guild organisation. No information is provided for Muslim guilds, although they must have existed, as either separate or mixed entities (Laiou 2006–2007: 16–17, 19–23). The only item of Muslim metalwork made in Trikala that we know of is the now-lost 650-kilogram watchtower bell, with an inscription indicating that it was made by Yusuf Senai, inhabitant of the castle there, in 1648 (Palioukas 2001: 61, n. 244).

Greek ecclesiastical sources complement the Ottoman registers. Starting in 1688, the manuscript codex of the metropolitan church of Trikki contains several

<sup>5</sup> Entry 'Tırhala' (A. Yerolimpos), *EF*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Farmakidis 1926: 280–320, more precisely 291, 295, 298, 305; Goulelis 2003: 63, 98.

official documents that refer to the guilds of the town. Explicitly mentioned are the guilds of the grocers, candle-makers, textile workers, and soap makers, the last mentioned being a guild exclusively for women. The codex also records in detail the movable and immovable property of the town's churches. For example, in 1694 a donation of two workshops is recorded, one in the neighbourhood of the textile craftsmen and one in the neighbourhood of the goldsmiths, data that allow us to tentatively conclude that the last mentioned, too, were organised into a guild.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, a founding inscription informs us that a goldsmith could acquire financial assets and a high social status, as was the case with 'the most important lord Kyr [Sir] Nikolaos the Goldsmith', who contributed to the building and painted decoration of the Church of St. John Prodromos in Trikala in 1674 (Giannopoulos 1926: 28).

The region's economic development is reflected in Church organisation and in its educational and intellectual activities. The flowering of monasticism at Meteora and other monasteries of the region must have promoted the development of professions related to the reconstruction and refurbishing of the churches. In the 16th century, intellectual activity revolved around the figure of Jeremias, bishop of Larisa and later patriarch (Demetrakopoulos 1985: 89–105), while in the 17th century scholars from Trikki such as Eugenios Giannoulis and Germanos Lokros participated in the Orthodox reform movement of the age. The latter is credited with supervising the translation of the Bible from Greek into Romanian.<sup>8</sup> The correspondence of the peripatetic Orthodox scholar Eugenios Giannoulis with notables and teachers in Trikki reveals a circle of people in the town who shared the same intellectual concerns as the Greeks of Wallachia and Istanbul. In 1678, one recipient of Giannoulis's letters was the brother of Germanos Lokros, Eustathios the Goldsmith, who was also the chief cantor of the metropolitan church of Trikala, and the maker of one of the works presented below (Paranikas 1987: 134; Karathanasis 1991: 38–40).

#### CHURCH SILVER SIGNED BY MASTERS OF TRIKALA AND ITS DISTRICT

##### *The ciborium of the Monastery of the Virgin as Life-Giving Source, Andros*

The first artefact considered here<sup>9</sup> is a church-shaped ciborium with a dedicatory inscription written in niello specifying that it belonged to the Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi ('Virgin as Life-Giving Source') on the island of Andros and was

<sup>7</sup> Giannoulis 1980: 29, 43–45, 74–77; for other records of goldsmiths and their shops, see 83 (1697), 33 (1727), 37 (1735), 40 (1776), 42 (1764).

<sup>8</sup> Kitromilides 1999: 142; also in Kitromilides 2007: no. II.

<sup>9</sup> Earlier known works are two crosses from the Great Meteoron dated 1594–1595 and 1609–1610 respectively, and a 1636 chalice made for Matei Basarab, voivode of Wallachia that is signed by Alexandros Akrivou from Trikki; see Chatzidakis and Sofianos 1990: 216–217 and Nicolescu 1968: 116–117, no. 104, fig. 72. The 1594–1595 Great Meteoron cross was made by the craftsman Ioannis of Fragege, from the village of Domenico in Thessaly, who also signed a cross at Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos; see Karakatsanis 1997, 344–45, no. 9.41 (Y. Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou).

made in the celebrated town of Trikki by the hand of Panagiotis from the village of Nomi in 165[4] or 165[8] (figs. 1–2).<sup>10</sup> The fortified monastery of Agia, as it is called locally, was the oldest and wealthiest monastery on Andros. Founded in the 16th century, it acquired extensive landed property and played an important economic and social role in the life of the island in the following centuries (Paschalis 2000; Kolovos 2006: 102–111).

The forerunners of the Andros ciborium can be found in Church-shaped containers from the second half of the 16th century originating mainly from monasteries in the regions of Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina and attributed to local workshops, although ultimately deriving from earlier Transylvanian models (Radojković and Milovanović 1981: 62–66, nos. 105–111; Radojković 1966: figs. 52, 58, 88–94; Nicolescu 1968: 170–171, no. 197; Kadas 1997: 122). They show a strong late Gothic character in their architectural design, combined in most cases with aniconic decoration, typically with pierced Ottoman split-leaf arabesques. On the Andros ciborium, the Gothic elements are weak and attenuated, the domes and rectangular turrets have acquired lanterns, and the slender conical towers have become cypress trees topped by birds. The most striking feature is the cast winged dragons which function as candlesticks with tulip-shaped candleholders. Dragons are often found in Ottoman metalwork, especially as handles or finials, and have a strong Timurid flavour, but they are normally not winged.<sup>11</sup>

The floral decoration is of two different styles. The pierced openwork arabesque on the turrets introduces the latest trend of floral baroque ornament with large open flowers and cross-hatched centres. This style, which derives from decoration on European watchcases, was already in vogue in Istanbul workshops by the middle of the century (Ballian 2011: 46, 47). The second style, known as ‘*saz* leaves and rosettes’, reproduces the Ottoman painting style of the second half of the 16th century and is typically contained within cast medallions on a background of green translucent *champlevé* enamel. Most often, this style is used in Church silver of the 17th century, in cast medallions and cartouches or friezes and border ornament.<sup>12</sup> In any case, what is significant is that the work of Panagiotis from Nomi, Trikala is neither provincial nor awkward. It shows knowledge of, and experience in, older and contemporary trends and styles.

### *The ‘artoklasia’ of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai*

An unexpectedly original vessel is the 1679 *artoklasia* made for the Monastery of Mount Sinai by the goldsmith Eustathios of Trikki, undoubtedly identical with the person of that name known from Giannoulis’s correspondence (fig. 3). This liturgical vessel is used in a special religious ceremony during which bread is blessed and distributed to the faithful together with portions of wine, wheat, and oil which are also blessed and then placed in spherical receptacles held by cast winged

<sup>10</sup> Fyssas 2007: 128, no. 47. Nomi is a village in the district of Trikki, which is a term referring indiscriminately to the town or the district.

<sup>11</sup> For a Timurid dragon candlestick, see Folsach 1996: 277–278, no. 256. For another version of a tulip-and-dragon candlestick, see Scovran 1980: pl. XIII.

<sup>12</sup> Raby and Allan 1982: 29–31, pls. 3, 5, 9, 51. For liturgical objects decorated with *saz* leaves and rosettes, see Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou 1990: fig. 26; Ballian 1998: 508, fig. 447; Karakatsanis 1997: 344, no. 9.40 (Y. Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou).

dragons with tulip candleholders.<sup>13</sup> The Sinai and Andros vessels show several similarities: the cypresses, the trilobed finials, and especially the dragons, the latter implying use of the same moulds but with different treatment of the chased details. The Sinai dragons are supplied with two feet ending in large claws which clearly betray their late Gothic origin, which is also evident in their serpent tail curling into a leaf. The spherical receptacles, on the other hand, are firmly within the Ottoman decorative realm, each one showing a different network of floral sprays, similar to contemporary censers.<sup>14</sup>

The vessel's most charming element is the representation of the fortified monastery of St. Catherine on a separate plate held aloft by three cast lions standing on their rear legs and bearing tulip candleholders on their heads. Under the plate, a picturesque camel caravan with its driver (fig. 4) is a clear indication of the goldsmith's models: 16th-century Western woodcuts and Cretan icons representing the biblical landscape and sacred topography of Mount Sinai.<sup>15</sup> From the second half of the 17th century, Greek prints take precedence; and while they reproduce the mountainous background, they are also crowded with sacred topographical details and incorporate camels into the retinue of a travelling archbishop (Papastratou 1986: vol. II, 337–359).

The goldsmith shows the monastery lying at the foot of two mountains: the Mount of St. Catherine, with the tomb of the saint flanked by angels, and the biblical Mount Horeb, the Holy Summit where Moses is shown on his knees receiving the Law from the hand of God which appears miraculously from a leaf-shaped cloud. The main church, the Justinianic basilica, is shown with a nielloed tiled roof and with particular (though imaginary) splendour, such as a pair of gilded peacocks above the entrance. The Chapel of the Burning Bush in the form of a flowery tree is, however, correctly situated at the back of the chancel between two side-chapels, as is the mosque in front of the entrance (fig. 5). The minaret, although nearly always shown on prints and icons, is missing here, but there is a startling detail not represented elsewhere. In front of the mosque stand two turbaned camel riders with their faces veiled who undoubtedly represent the Prophet Muhammad and his cousin the fourth caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. In 623 CE, the latter supposedly wrote the decree granting protection and privileges to the monastery which was then signed with the imprint of Muhammad's hand. This famous *ahiname* survives only in a later Ottoman copy, but the story obviously dates to an earlier period and was reported by Western travellers. The legend says that when Muhammad was still a young caravan cameleer, he travelled to Sinai and encamped outside the monastery's walls. There, his future was predicted by a monk who saw an eagle hovering over him. Muhammad was pleased and made promises which he later fulfilled. Moreover, according to the legend, Muhammad made a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of Moses, where the imprint of his camel's foot

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<sup>13</sup> Papamichalopoulos 1932: 353; Ikonomaki-Papadopoulou 1990: 275, fig. 33. [Here](#) I would like to acknowledge my debt to His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, abbot of the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, and to the Holy Brothers Michael and Justin. I am especially grateful to Father Justin for the pictures and for the pleasure of discussions with him.

<sup>14</sup> Ergin 2014; for dragons see Kovačević 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Dora 2010. The old view that German and Venetian woodcuts were the models of the nearly contemporaneous icons made by Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) is now contested. Perhaps the reverse was the case; see Stancioiu 2010 and figs. 172–176.



is preserved on a rock which has since become an object of veneration by Muslim pilgrims.<sup>16</sup>

Incorporating the Prophet into the sacred story of the convent justified its existence under a Muslim overlord and enhanced its fame among pilgrims, hence his representation on the *artoklasia*. However, his veiled image results from the goldsmith's awareness of his Ottoman environment. In all probability, Eustathios of Trikki had encountered religious manuscripts with the Life of the Prophet such as the *Siyar-i Nabi* or other illustrated biographies of saints and prophets (Garret Fisher 1984). He may have travelled to meet his brother in Istanbul or Wallachia, but Trikala should not be excluded as a place where such images could be seen. Also, countless single-page images of the *Miraj-nama* (the Prophet's heavenly ascension) were included at the beginning of epic, didactic, or historical works; all could have provided incentives for the craftsman. Veiled portraits of the Prophet and his close relatives emerge around 1500 in early Safavid manuscripts, normally surrounded by a flame halo, but towards the end of the 16th century their Ottoman version made these images particularly popular, especially with the production of the illustrated *Siyar-i Nabi* of 1594/5 in the court workshops. The popularity of such images may be associated with the need visually to differentiate the Muslim from the Christian, European, or Orthodox pictorial traditions (Gruber 2009: 250–254). In this context, by fashioning these unique statuettes, the goldsmith addressed an Ottoman public, both Muslim and Christian, since Western European pilgrims would have had difficulty grasping their meaning.

#### *Standing censers from Andros and Meteora*

The next two objects are nearly identical silver-gilt and niello standing censers of large dimensions, one from the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Sora, Andros, and the other from the Monastery of Varlaam in Meteora (figs. 6–9–6). They were initially dedicated to two churches in Trikala named after St. Paraskevi and St. Dimitrios respectively; the saints are depicted at the end of the leaf-shaped handles.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of shape and construction, the censers share with Byzantine standing censers a similar type of shallow cast bowl, a broad handle made of two separate silver sheets attached by round-headed nails, and a long hollow tube which lengthens and supports the handle.<sup>18</sup> The finely engraved decoration on the handles consists of winding floral baroque scrolls in the 'watchcase style' mentioned above and a central medallion on which is affixed a cast bust of the Virgin praying with Christ at her bosom. The sole remaining cover (fig. 9) of the Varlaam censer shows similar floral decoration contained within openwork medallions.

<sup>16</sup> Henniker 1823: 234; Morison 1704: 94. For the Holy Summit in Sinai during the early Islamic period, see Magginis 2010: 151–153.

<sup>17</sup> Varlaam, l. 45.7 cm, h. 11.3 cm; Andros l. 49.5 or 48.8 cm, h. 4.4 cm. The latter was first published in *Drandakis* 1963: 306. Both censers were among the material collected by the late Laskarina Boura and were kindly given to me by Prof. Charalambos Bouras.

<sup>18</sup> Evans 2004: 128–129, no. 65 (A. Ballian). Tubular handles became popular in the case of Ottoman standing censers; see Ergin 2014: figs. 20, 21, 23. There is a curving variant made in Braşov (Nicolescu 1968: no. 249), and another in a *tombak* mount for a Kütahya censer at the Benaki Museum (Ballian 2011: 52).

The dedicatory inscription on the censer from Meteora (figs. 8–9) specifies that it belonged to the Church of St. Dimitrios thanks to a contribution by the proto-*apostolarios* Ioannis Karvounis and that it was made by Nikolaos Lambadarios of Trikki in 1663.<sup>19</sup> Another inscription on the back states that the censer was bought from the Church of St. Dimitrios, Trikala by the abbot of Varlaam, Father Anatolios of Trikki, in 1781. A 1785 note in a manuscript in the monastery’s library confirms that the cost of purchase was 180 *gurus*.<sup>20</sup> The inscription on the Andros censer declares that it belonged to the Church of St. Paraskevi in the town of Trikki in 1664 (Paschalis 1962: 17; Fyssas 2007: 99, no. Θ30), but how it came to the island is not clear.<sup>21</sup> Both censers are thus from Trikala and were probably made there by the craftsman Nikolaos Lambadarios, whom it is tempting to identify with the lord Kyr Nikolaos the Goldsmith of the 1674 foundation inscription mentioned above.

#### *A group of Gospel covers associated with Meteora*

A group of Gospel covers will now be considered which share similar or identical features, mainly cast-silver fittings, either plaquettes or medallions, depicting religious themes. The most impressive is the 1664 cover of a manuscript Gospel kept in the Monastery of Agia on Andros (figs. 10–12). Plaquettes with the Twelve Great Feasts, saints under arches, and the symbols of the Evangelists, all inscribed in Greek, are riveted on the cover boards while the background is covered by *champlevé* or floral filigree enamel in green and turquoise, cherubs, seraphs, and double-headed eagles. Semi-precious and glass paste stones in claw mounts complete the multi-coloured bejewelled display. The inscription on the obverse indicates that the manuscript Gospel comes from Kastri (the Castle of Trikala), from the Church of St. Dimitrios there, and that it was made by the hand of Demos from Retz(i)ani (today Metaxochori in the Agia region of Thessaly) in the year of Christ 1664.<sup>22</sup>

This type of Gospel cover with cast plaquettes and enamelled decoration is attested from the second half of the 17th century until the mid-18th. Some twenty or more pieces are kept in Orthodox monasteries and museums across the Balkans and the Middle East.<sup>23</sup> The plaquettes were made in moulds which were used to produce a number of book covers in varied combinations, thus enabling us to define groups and families of similar pieces which can be attributed to particular places or workshops. Of course, it is possible that moulds were circulated from one place to another, transported by the craftsman in question; they could have been copied or

<sup>19</sup> The terms *lambadarios* and *apostolarios* refer to ecclesiastical offices. Together with Eustathios Protopsaltis (= First Cantor), the names indicate three officials of the Trikala church involved in making or purchasing silverwork.

<sup>20</sup> Veis 1984: 148. For the Church of St Dimitrios, see Giannopoulos 1926: 19–20; Giannoulis 1980: 29, 72. In the 16th century, a quarter in the town was named after St. Dimitrios; Laiou 2011: 125.

<sup>21</sup> Possibly, it was transferred from the Monastery of St. Paraskevi on the Sea of Marmara island of Aloni/Paşalimani, which was the property of the Monastery of St. Nicholas from 1790 onwards; see Kolovos 2006: 110, n. 362. In 1776, a silver-gilt standing censer (possibly the one considered here) was still in the possession of the Church of St. Paraskevi in Trikala; see Giannoulis 1980: 39.

<sup>22</sup> Fyssas 2007: 132, no. 65. Retziani is wrongly read as Retvani. For Retziani in Ottoman documents, see Kiel, Agrafiotis, and Gouloulis 2002–2003: 93–97.

<sup>23</sup> Ballian 2011: 76–77, no. 9; Tzaferis 1985: 59. An unpublished Sinai Gospel cover dated 1636 was donated by [Matei Basarab, voivode of Wallachia](#).

inherited and may have been used for long periods of time and thus show signs of wear, consequently obscuring their original provenance.

In the case of the Andros Gospel cover, there are two groups of related pieces so far: one from the region of Agia in Thessaly, the place of origin of Demos the craftsman, and the other from the Monastery of Bachkovo, Bulgaria. The first group consists of three similar pieces that have only recently become known, one of which, signed by Demos and dated 1663, is nearly identical with the Andros cover, and comes from the local Church of St. George in Retziani.<sup>24</sup> The second group consists of two book covers kept in the Bachkovo museum; one, indeed, is very similar to the Andros cover, although judging by the photograph no filigree enamel is used, a detail which may indicate an earlier date.<sup>25</sup> The second cover in Bachkovo, dated 1686, uses similar plaquettes, but differs in the central scene and in the exuberant use of filigree enamel (Drumev 1976: 159, fig. 31). Bachkovo's and the Plovdiv area's close association with Greek Orthodox Christians and the Greek Phanariote circles of Constantinople is very well attested. For example, members of the wealthy Sloutziari family, which had branches living in Phanari/Fener, were linked with Thessaly (their birthplace), Wallachia, and Moldavia, where they held offices at the court of the voivode, and also Bachkovo; two members of this family are shown as donors in full, glittering Ottoman attire on the 1643 wall paintings of the Bachkovo narthex. The same donors are depicted in two humble churches in their home town and its vicinity, in the region of Agrafa, Thessaly.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Trikala silverwork has also been found in Tarnovo in the form of an enamelled cover of different style, signed by the craftsman Georgakis in Trikala in 1696 (Drumev 1976: pls. 86–87).

Thessaly, and more precisely Meteora, is the provenance of a related group of Gospel covers that similarly have cast fittings riveted onto their wooden boards, albeit no (or only sparing) use of enamel. This group is probably chronologically earlier than the mid-17th century, with its production overlapping for a time with that of the cast-cum-filigree group. The reverse of the Andros cover (fig. 11–12) shares similar plaquettes with two Gospel covers in the Varlaam monastery at Meteora and represents standing saints, including the Virgin and St. John the Baptist, under a lobed pointed arch. Most of the figures are turned towards the enthroned Christ Pantokrator in Glory depicted in the central plaquette surrounded by a *mandorla* filled with cherubs and held by the symbols of the Evangelists. One of the Varlaam book covers (fig. 13–14) appears worn, or the moulds used may have been worn; and it seems that the silver plaquettes have been removed from a different book cover and reused on a larger cover with the insertion of plain bands, a floral border, and a row of medallions.<sup>27</sup> This may also be the case for the second

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.eleftheria.gr/index.asp?cat=7&aid=40500>. I owe this information to Dr. Stavroula Sdrolia, whom I warmly thank.

<sup>25</sup> Drumev 1976: 158, fig. 30. There is a better picture in Sotirov 2001: 103, fig. 44. Eleven of the plaquettes with religious scenes are similar and thus were made from the same moulds; the twelfth differs: it shows the Entry into Jerusalem instead of the Presentation in the Temple. Also differing are the medallions that depict busts of the Evangelists instead of their symbols and the border decoration which is cast with an Ottoman rinceau.

<sup>26</sup> Apostolidis 1936: 69–71; Sdrolia 2000. For the many Greek inhabitants in the area of Plovdiv, see Detrez 2003

<sup>27</sup> The Gospel book was printed in Venice in 1539 by Stefanos Sabios and comes from the library of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Meteora.

Varlaam book cover, with red velvet revetment (fig. 15–16), because the filigree enamelled border does not seem to have been made to order, but consists of oblong fittings of various sizes meeting awkwardly at the corners. It preserves, however, the best-worked plaquettes with standing saints reminiscent of painted representations of the *Great Deisis* on wooden iconostases or icons.<sup>28</sup> With the exception of the Pantokrator plaquette, which is different in style and inscribed in Greek, the inscriptions are in Church Slavonic. We thus have the same type of cast plaquettes inscribed in either Slavonic or Greek (as on the Andros cover). Another example inscribed in Slavonic is found on a 1662 Gospel cover from the Monastery of Hopovo in the monastic area of Fruška Gora, Serbia. There are two similar plaquettes with the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, and the cover is thought to have been remodelled using a variety of old and new plaquettes or moulds by a craftsman in Bečkerek, Serbia.<sup>29</sup> Several other groups of covers with cast fittings were made in Herzegovina, but none is related to the Thessalian groups.<sup>30</sup> Where the original moulds were made is not yet easy to tell, although the quantitative evidence points towards Thessaly. The undeniable fact is that they circulated across the Balkans along with craftsmen, traders, and Orthodox clerics.

The objects shown herein and the particular mixture of styles evident are clearly a product of their age: Ottoman, post-Byzantine, and Balkan. This complementary interpretation seems plausible while a classification solely in any one of these categories appears extremely restrictive. Although most pieces are dated to the second half of the 17th century, they reflect and continue to embody a climate of symbiosis and co-existence from earlier centuries. In the 18th century, the outlook changed drastically, as did the economy of the region. By 1739, the seat of the metropolitan had moved to Larisa. Following this development, the town of Trikala declined in importance, and Larisa became the largest and most important town in Thessaly.

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<sup>28</sup> There are two types of background, ring-punched on the upper half of the plaquettes and plain gilt ground on the lower half – on which some of the saints walk on tiptoe – which in painting is normally covered with sheet gold, thus betraying the painted prototypes of the craftsman; see Drandaki 2002: 214–225, nos. 51–54.

<sup>29</sup> Radojković 1966: fig. 115; Radojković and Milovanović 1981: 62, no. 104 (not illustrated).

<sup>30</sup> There is yet another group of Gospel covers with cast fittings made in Thessaly that will be treated in a separate publication. Several examples are kept in the Meteora treasuries and at the Benaki Museum.

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detail

Figs 1 - 2. Ciborium made in Trikki (Trikala), 165[4] or 165[8].  
Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi (Virgin as Life-Giving Source), Andros.





detail

Figs 3-4. *Artoklasia* made in 1679 by the goldsmith Eustathios of Trikki. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt (photo Father Justin of Sinai)



Fig. 5. *Artoklasia*, detail with the mosque and the veiled camel riders. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt (photo Father Justin of Sinai)



Detail of handle

Figs 6-7. Standing censer, once possession of the church of Saint Paraskevi, Trikala. Monastery of Saint Nikolaos in Sora, Andros





Detail with handle



Detail with incense bowl and cover

Figs 8-9. Standing censer.  
 Made by Nikolaos Lambadarios of Trikki in 1663.  
 Monastery of Varlaam, Meteora



obverse



reverse

Figs 10-11. Gospel cover made by Demos from Retziani in 1664  
 Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi, Andros



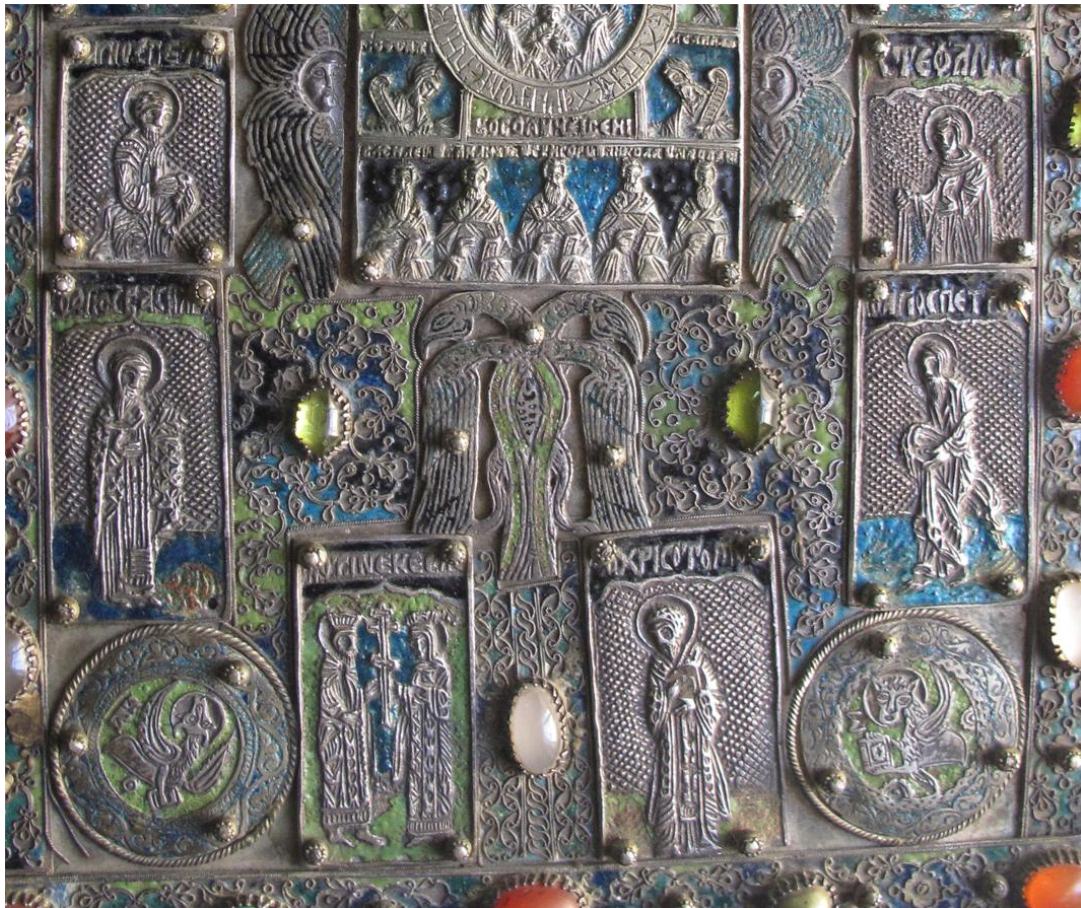


Fig. 12. Detail of fig 11.





Detail

Figs 13-14. Book cover originally belonging to the Holy Trinity Monastery, Meteora Monastery of Varlaam, Meteora



Detail

Figs 15-16. Book cover  
Monastery of Varlaam, Meteora