Figures of mounted warrior saints in medieval Crete.
The representation of the equestrian Saint George
“Thalassoperatis” at Diavaide in Heraklion

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In the church of Saint George Sfakiotis, built on the outskirts of the settlement Diavaide in the Prefecture of Heraklion in Crete, narrative interest is focused on the large painting with the mounted figures of the military saints George and Demetrios. Saint George is shown together with the young pillion rider, whereas the element of water on the lower part of the scene establishes a connection between the episode of the slave's release and a rarer variant according to which the liberator saint crosses the sea (‘thalassoperatis’, trans. he who crosses the sea). The iconographic and stylistic analysis of the representation of Saint George as well that of Saint Demetrios at Diavaide reflects the artistic environment of the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly that of Cyprus, where images of equestrian military saints form part of the tradition of the island.

Key words: Thalassoperatis, Saint George, Saint Demetrios, mounted military saints, Cyprus, Crete, Diavaide

In 1950 and 1951 the renowned Cretan academic Manolis Chatzidakis conducted two surveys on the island of Crete in order to inspect the mural decoration of some monuments of the island and ensure their conservation and rescue. He thus visited and briefly recorded the churches at the east and west part of the Cretan countryside and published the findings of his research in the journal Kretika Chronika of 1952, including iconographic and stylistic analyses of the Cretan painting during the Palaeologan era. Chatzidakis explored Pediada District and among other monuments he visited the church of Saint George Sfakiotis at Diavaide. The large representation of Saints George and Demetrios (fig. 1) on horseback seems to have captured his attention. In his study reference is made to the fact that the two equestrian saints were depicted walking on the sea while he drew comparisons with the wall painting of Saint George Diasoritis from the church of Archangel Michael at Pedoulas in Cyprus dating from the 15th century.

The church of Saint George Sfakiotis is built on the outskirts of the settlement Diavaide, within short distance of the nearest village Kastelli, a large village of Pediada which constituted one of the most significant provinces in Venetian Crete. The iconographic programme of the church at Diavaide, which is typically encountered in the churches of the island, includes representations of the Dodekaorton, narrative scenes from the life of Saint George and standing saints, dated to the end of the 13th/early 14th century according to Manolis Bormpoudakis. In the church of Sfakiotis narrative interest is focused on the large painting that occupies the south wall of the church with the mounted figures of the two military saints George and Demetrios galloping left, beneath scenes from the biographical cycle of Saint George (fig. 1). To our right is depicted the mounted Saint Demetrios (Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΔΗΜΗC [ΤΡΙΟC], portrayed with his head in a three-quarters turn riding on a chestnut-red horse with lavish tack. The saint wears his hair long and is dressed in long dark red sleeved tunic, ornamented with a pearl-embroidered band, scale breastplate, girdled high just below the chest, whereas the ochre mantle, which is decorated with heart-shaped patterns, flutters behind him. He holds a spear in his right hand and the horse's reins in his left hand while he carries a round shield with radial decoration. The figure of Saint George, to whom the church is consecrated, shown clad in military attire riding on a white horse with rich tack, will be the focus of this study. The saint is frontally depicted, with lightly oval face, large finely outlined almond eyes, short curly hair crowned with diadem decorated with pearls and a large semiprecious gemstone in the centre (stemmatogyrion). He wears next
to his skin a shirt, from which only the wristbands are shown, long dark red sleeved tunic, and deep blue leggings embellished with an oblique checkerboard ornament under red boots. His breastplate, which is belted high around the chest, is covered by scales, rectangular in cross-section, ending in lappets around the thighs. A large round shield with a diagonal checkerboard pattern painted red and blue hangs from his right side and a red ample chlamys billows behind him. In his right hand he grabs the reins of his horse, while in his left hand he holds a lance and simultaneously embraces a boy who sits on the horse’s croup. The youth is shown carrying a small pitcher in his right hand and a cup in his raised left hand whereas he wears an eastern type headgear. On the lower part of the representation (fig. 4) the sea waves are indicated by semicircles tangent to each other, arranged in three parallel rows, whereas fish and sea creatures, such as crabs, cuttlefish and moray eels, complete the decoration.

The representation illustrates one of the most popular pairs of military saints on horseback, depicted either individually or one next to the other in churches of the Cretan countryside in the 14th and the 15th centuries, with the earliest representations being found sporadically in churches dating from the 13th century. The figures of the equestrian saints, which have been linked with the Byzantine tradition, are encountered in numerous mural paintings of the Christian East during the Middle Byzantine period, whereas from the 13th century onwards...

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8 For military costume v. Μ. Parani, Reconstructing the reality of images. Byzantine material culture and religious iconography 11th–15th centuries, Leiden–Boston 2003, 101–158.
9 For the figure of Saint George v. C. Walter, The warrior saints in Byzantine art and tradition, Aldershot–Burlington 2003, 109–144.
they appear mainly in regions under Latin rule, namely in the Holy Land,14 Cyprus15 and the Latin-occupied the Peloponnese.16 Figures of military saints on horseback are also portrayed in a series of icons of the 13th, the 14th and the 15th century which have been associated with the so-called ‘Crusader art’ and the artistic environment are found in the art of Cappadocia and Georgia (N. Iamanitze, Saint cavaliers. Calle et images en Géorgie aux IVe–XVe siècle, Weisbaden 2016; also A. Nicolaïdès, The murals of the narthex. The paintings of the twelfth century, in: Asmou across time. Studies in the architecture and murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus, ed. A. Weyl Carr, A. Nicolaïdès, Washington, DC 2012, 99, note 19). During the Middle Byzantine period paintings of mounted saints are rarely found in the mural decorations of the Greek lands/territories (v. M. Arémandou-Poutamánoú, Άγιος Παιργός ο Διασωτής της Κέτου. Οι τοιχογραφίες του 11ου αιώνα, Αθήνα 2016, 103).

Presented to Malcom Barber of Christ. Essays on the history of the crusades and Knights Templar.17 R. Cormack, S. Mihalarias, A crusader painting of St. George. ‘Maniera greca’ or ‘lingua franca’?, The Burlington Magazine 126 (1984) 132–141; Folda, Mounted warrior saints, 87–104; Π. Βοκοτόπουλος, Κυπριακές εικόνες στην Πάτμο, in: Αφιέρωμα στον ακαδημαϊκό Παναγιώτη Λ. Βοκοτόπουλο, ed. Β. Κατσαρός, Α. Τούρτα, Αθήνα 2015, 539–546.

Fig. 2. Mounted Saint George from the Church of Saint George at Sklavopoula in Selino, Prefecture of Chania. Photographic archive Ephorate of Antiquities of Chania

of the Eastern Mediterranean,17 with the icons from Sinai being prime examples.18

Saint George on horseback has been a favourite subject matter in the decoration of the churches of the Cretan countryside. In the church of Saint George Stákiotis, the namesake saint is shown together with the young pillon rider, an element that establishes a link between the Cretan representation and a relevant variation of the Syxaarion of the saint referring to his posthumous miracles, according to which Saint George rescued from captivity a boy from Mytilene that had been abducted by the Saracen pirates of Crete during the feast day of the saint and who was brought back home across the sea.19 The
episode of the young prisoner’s rescue is illustrated as a narrative scene already since the 11th century in the art of Georgia, whereas from the 13th century the known fresco of Saint George rescuing the youth from Mytilene is found in the church of Saint George Ikvi at Kartli dated to the 11th c. In the church of Saint Eirene dated to the 12th c. and the church of Saint George at Otrauni appears a plainer representation of the episode which consists of the joint depiction (symplegma) of the mounted saint and the youth (v. Velmans, Une image rare de saint cavalier à Chypre, 235–236, fig. 2, 6–7).

21 For examples on the subject v. Βοκοτόπουλος, Κυπριακές εικόνες στην Αμοργό, 225 ff; Θ. Αρχοντόπουλος, Ο ναός της Αγίας Αικατερίνης στην πόλη της Ρόδου και η ζωγραφική του ύστερου μεσαίωνα στα Δωδεκάνησα (1309–1453), Ρόδος–Αθήνα 2010, 138–140, 153–155, fig. 32. For the episode of the child’s rescue and the depiction of Saint George “in parade” v. N. Chatzidakis, Saint George on horseback in “parade”. A fifteenth century icon in the Benaki Museum, in: Θυμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα, Αθήνα 1994, 62.

22 In the churches of Saint Theodore at Bahdeidat (1250–1270) and Saints Nohra and Sophia in Dmalsa in the County of Tripoli (Immerzeel, Holy horseman and crusader banners, 55), in the chapel of the castle of Crac des Chevaliers dated to the 13th c. [J. Folda, Crusader frescoes at Crac des chevaliers and Masqab castle, DOP 26 (1982) 194, no. 63a, fig. 22] and in the church of Saint Moses from Ethiopia at Mara Musa al-Habashi near Nebek at Syria [E. Cruikshank Dodd, The monastery of Mara Musa al-Habashi, near Nebek, Syria, Arte Medievale 6/1 (1992) 86–87, fig. 29; T. Velmans, Observations sur quelques peintures murales en Syrie et Palestine et leur composante byzantine...
saint carrying the young prisoner was popular, as it has already been recorded in thirteen churches of the Cretan countryside, most of which are situated in the west part of the island\(^{23}\) and date back to the 14th century predominately. Distinctive examples among them are the badly preserved representation of Saint George on horseback in the homonymous church at Sklavopoula in the Province of Selino in Chania Prefecture (fig. 2),\(^{24}\) dating between 1290 and 1291,\(^{25}\) and also the depictions in the church of Archangel Michael at Sarakina in Selino dated to the early 14th c.\(^{26}\) (fig. 3) and at Plemeniana in Selino (1409/10).\(^{27}\)

Nevertheless, the element of water on the lower part of the scene at Diavaide (fig. 4) establishes a connection between the episode of the slave’s release and a rarer variant according to which the liberator saint crosses the sea. This iconographic type was first identified and studied by Georgios Dimitrokallis who bestowed on the saint the epithet ‘thalassoperatis’ (trans. he who crosses the sea).\(^{28}\) In particular the type of Saint George on horseback with the child of Mytilene appears in the church of Saint George at Vathiaiko of Amari, at Skakia of Skatia, and at Nispat in Rethymnon [K. Kalokyris, Αι βυζαντιναί τοιχογραφίαι της Κρήτης, Ι Παναγία (Κιόρο) της Κέρκυρας, ΚΕ 6 (1952) 248, n. 154], in the church of Saint Paraskevi outside the village of Meronas in Amari (Spatharakis, Essenberg, Amari Province, fig. 453), of Saint George Anydriotis, Anydri (1323) (K. Kalokyris, Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete, New York 1973, BW 108), of Panagia in Saitoures, Rethymnon Prefecture dated at around 1300 (I. Spatharakis, Byzantine wall paintings of Crete I, Rethymnon province, London 1999, 231–232, fig. 290, of the Saint Michael in Sarakina at Chania (1348/9) [Borboudakis, Gallas, Wessel, Byzantinisches Kreta, fig. 159; K. Lassiotioudakis, Εκκλησίες της Δυτικής Κρήτης, ΚΧ 22 (1970) 145], of the Virgin in Spilia, Kissamos (14th c.) (Kαλοκύρης, Αι βυζαντιναί τοιχογραφίαι της Κρήτης, 121), of Saint Athanasios at Kephali of Kissamos (1393) (K. Lassiotioudakis, Εκκλησίες της Δυτικής Κρήτης, ΚΧ 21 (1969) 218, fig. 74), in the church of Saint George of Selino (1409–1410) [idem, Εκκλησίες της Δυτικής Κρήτης (1970) 207, fig. 294; Borboudakis, Gallas, Wessel, Byzantinisches Kreta, 218–219, fig. 168], at Panagia at Lakkoi (Karanou), Κύδωνια [Αι λαοτιμικές τοιχογραφίες της Δυτικής Κρήτης (1969) 463, fig. 109], Saint Anna Anissaraki, Kandanos (1352) (Καλοκύρης, Αι βυζαντιναί τοιχογραφίαι της Κρήτης, 108, pl. LXX; Borboudakis, Gallas, Wessel, Βyzantinisches Kreta, 221; Οι βυζαντινές εκκλησίες της Καντάνου, Χανιών 1999, 57) and in the church of the Virgin at Thronos, Amari (Spatharakis, Essenberg, Amari Province, fig. 571). The type is also depicted in Cretan icon painting, as in the icon of the Historical Museum of Moscow dated to the 15th c. (Εικόνες της Κρητικής τέχνης, Από τον Άνδρα με τη Μούμια της Καταρρίπτουσα της Ιεράς Μελαντείας του Χριστού, Εκκλησία της Βασιλικής Κοίμησης της Παναγίας της Κρήτης, Ι Παναγία (Κιόρο) της Κέρκυρας, ΚΕ 6 (1952) 399, n. 37 (entry Kyzalosa) or in the icon at Corfu dated at 1500 (Π. Βοκοτόπουλος, Εικόνες της Κέρκυρας, Αθήνα 1990, 22–24, fig. 12, idem, Κυπριακές εικόνες στην Αμοργό, ΚΧ Αι βυζαντιναί τοιχογραφίαι της Κρήτης (1970) 137, 77, no 53).

Among them is the crusader icon inv. no 357 of the 13th century that, according to Folda, conforms to the Franco-Byzantine style.\(^{36}\)

The wall painting in the church of Saint George Sfakiotis bears resemblance to the icon inv. no 357 of Sinai and that of Saint George the Cappadocian, now displayed at the Byzantine Museum of the Metropolis of Paphos,\(^{37}\) which are both related to the art of the Eastern Mediterranean during the Crusader period. To be more specific, in all three representations the element of water is clearly denoted on the lower part of the composition with fish and sea creatures imparting a naturalistic and charming flavour to the scene. In addition, the equestrian saint is frontally depicted in all three examples, looking straight out towards the viewer,\(^{38}\) crowned with a jewelled crown, and in the church of Saint George Sfakiotis, the saint is also depicted with a horseman banner bearing crusader’s arms.

Moreover, a series of early images of Thalassoperatis reflect the spread of this particular variation across the Eastern Mediterranean during the 13th and the 14th century. More specifically, in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and in the church of Saint Sabbas at Edde al–Batrum (Lebanon) are preserved fragments of a wall painting that depict a portion of a horse and a marine environment with fish (1264).\(^{32}\) Research has identified the figure of Saint George on horseback crossing the sea. Furthermore, in Christian Egypt, at the Convent of Saint Mercurius (Deir Abu Sayfayn), in Cairo, a Coptic temple episoteleia dating to the 13th century is preserved on which ten equestrian saints are depicted encompassed in arched compartments, including Saint George Thalassoperatis.\(^{35}\)

The subject is also encountered in the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai where four icons have been recorded,\(^{34}\) possibly of the 13th, the 14th and the 15th century, and one diptych with the figure of Saint George Thalassoperatis portrayed on one of the panels whereas the second panel is occupied by Saint John the Baptist.\(^{35}\) Among them is the crusader icon inv. no 357 of the 13th century that, according to Folda, conforms to the Franco-Byzantine style.\(^{36}\)

23 Folda, Mounted warrior saints, 194, no 63a, fig. 22.

24 Cruiskbank Dodd, The monastery of Mara Musa al-Habashi, 89, 126–127, 86–87, fig. 29. Velmans, Observations, 134–135, fig. 12.

25 Α. Παπαγεωργίου, Εικόνες της Κύπρου, Αθήνα 1990, 77, 79, no 53.

26 Immerzeel, Holy horseman and crusader banners, 33 pls. 6. 7.

27 Z. Skalova, G. Gabra, Icons of the Nile Valley, Cairo 2006, 184–185.

28 Michigan Inventory Number 357, The Sinai Icon Collection, http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/6141. Michigan Inventory Number 299, The Sinai Icon Collection, http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/6106. Michigan Inventory Number 348, The Sinai Icon Collection, http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/6134.

29 Michigan Inventory Number 845, The Sinai Icon Collection, http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/7535.

30 Cormack, Milhalaria, A crusader painting of St. George, 137, fig. 8. Folda, Mounted warrior saints, 93.

31 Παπαγεωργίου, Εικόνες της Κύπρου, 77, 79, no 53.

32 Bormpoudaki M.: Figures of mounted warrior Saints in medieval Crete, Athens 2005, 122–123, fig. 12. Cormack, Milhalaria, A crusader painting of St. George, 132 ff.

33 In this study Dimitrokallis reported ten representations dated between the 12th and the 17th century, including the one under consideration at Diavaide, and expressed the view that the theme originates in the southern Greek mainland and the islands. However, he acknowledged that the earliest preserved depictions appear in the “crusader East” and referred to the wall paintings of Saint George Thalassoperatis that decorated the chapel of the crusader castle at Crac de Chevaliers (1170–1200)\(^{29}\) and the church of Saint Moses the Black (the Ethiopian) at Mar Musa al– Habashi near Nebek in Syria (1192–1193 or 1208).\(^{30}\) In the earlier icons of this type he also included the icon of Saint George of Cappadocia from the church of Saint Marina Philousa, now at the Byzantine Museum of the Metropolis of Paphos, which dates back to the 13th century.\(^{31}\)
diadem decorated with pearls and a large ornament in the centre, clad in military attire belted high around the chest and holding a spear vertically with the spearhead upwards as in a military parade, since he is not shown slaying a serpent, carrying a round shield, wearing red billowing mantle that takes the form of a seashell. Furthermore, Saint George keeps his leg thrust forward through his long tunic in a posture favored by Latin horsemen, wears spurs on his boots and supports his feet on a triangular stirrup adhering to the western fashion, recalling knight seals of the 12th and the 13th century with that of Florent of Hainault being a prime example. The aforementioned elements are particularly popular in the iconography of equestrian military saints in a series of icons, especially from Sinai and Cyprus, that have been attributed to what “crusader artists” who combine Byzantine and other traditions. Meanwhile certain iconographic characteristics of our Saint, like the pose of the body, the military attire and the tack of the horse, have also been identified in regions associated with the Latin conquest and they are encountered in wall paintings of the 13th and the 14th century. In the Greek mainland and especially in the Peloponnese they are found in a series of frescoes in the Orthodox churches of the region with the painting of the equestrian George in the church of Saint John Chrysostom at Geraki (13th century) being a prime example. In Crete the figure of mounted George with the outstretched leg, the red billowing cloak and the rendering of the military costume appears on the lower decorative register in small Orthodox churches of the island as, for instance, in the churches of Archangel Michael at Sarakina in Chania (fig. 3), and Panagia at Platania (early 14th c.). In addition, as in the first paint layer in the church of Saint Marina at Chalepa, Mylopotamos (Spatharakis, Mylopotamos Province, 131, fig. 149), in the central aisle of the Panagia Kera of Kritsa, Merambello province (Μπορμπουδάκης, Παναγιά Κέρα, fig. 26) (fig. 19), the church of Saint Paraskevi at Meros (1300) (Spatharakis, Eisenberg, Amari Province, fig 453) and at Saint George at Sklavopoula in Selino (Spatharakis, Dated Byzantine wall paintings of Crete, 12–13, fig. 6). However in the aforementioned depictions the saint is not portrayed crossing the sea neither having the youth of Mytilene mounted on his horse. This decorative motif is usually depicted in the Cretan churches, as in the fresco of the Annunciation in the church of Saint Nicholas at Kyriakoselia of Apocoronas (unpublished painting), ν. Μ. Μπορμπουδάκης, Ο ναός του Αγίου Νικολάου στις Κυριακοσέλια της Αμοργού, άνωθεν Απόκορωνοι, ιν: Πεπραγμένα του Ι’ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου (Χανιά, 1–8 Οκτωβρίου 2006) Π/3, Χανιά 2010, 298. Also in the painting of the Ascension in the church of the Virgin Kardiotissa in Pediada District (Bormpoudaki 2010, fig. 1) and in the church of Saint George Ankyriotis (1323) (Kalokyris, The Byzantine wall paintings of Crete, BW 113).

39 These iconographic details recur also in later depictions of Saint George Thalassoperatis, with the representations from the church of the Archangel Michael at Pedoulas in Cyprus (1474) (Σωτηρίου, Βυζαντινά Μνημεία της Κύπρου, pl. 103; Dimitrokallis, Saint Georges passant sur la mer, 369, fig. 3) and the church of Saint Catherine in Rhodes being characteristic examples (Αργυρούπολος, Ο ναός της Αγίας Αικατερίνης στην πόλη της Ρόδου, 138–140, 153–155).

40 Gerstel, Art and identity, 168–272.
41 Weitzmann, Icon painting in the Crusader Kingdom, 71–73; Cormack, Michalarias, A crusader painting of St. George, 132–141; Fodda, Mounted warrior saints, 96–97.
42 The icon of Saint George Valsamitis from the Monastery of Hozoviotissa of Amorgos dated to the 14th c. (Βοκοτόπουλος, Κυπριακές εικόνες στην Αμοργό, 225 ff.) has been related to Cyprus as well as the icon of Saint George Polivariotis from the island of Patmos (Κατσιώτη, Άγιος Νικόλαος ο Παλαιοσάφης, 539–546).
43 These iconographic details recur also in later depictions of Saint George Thalassoperatis, with the representations from the church of the Archangel Michael at Pedoulas in Cyprus (1474) (Σωτηρίου, Βυζαντινά Μνημεία της Κύπρου, pl. 103; Dimitrokallis, Saint Georges passant sur la mer, 369, fig. 3) and the church of Saint Catherine in Rhodes being characteristic examples (Αργυρούπολος, Ο ναός της Αγίας Αικατερίνης στην πόλη της Ρόδου, 138–140, 153–155).

44 Gerstel, Art and identity, 168–272.
45 Ν. Μητσόπουλος, Γ. Δημητροκάλλης, Πράκτορες των εκκλησιών του οικισμού Θεσσαλονίκης 1981, 40–41, figs. 65–66)
46 Kalokyris, The Byzantine wall paintings of Crete, pl. C24; Spatharakis, Eisenberg, Amari Province, 518. The same imagery is used for the equestrian Saint George in the church of Saint Marina at Mourne in Hagios Basileios Province dated to the beginning of the 14th c. (Ι. Spatharakis, Byzantine wall paintings of Crete IV, Αγίος Βασιλείους προϊστάμενοι, Λειδί 2015, fig. 407) and the church of the Virgin at Aliakmons in Apokoronas (1315/6, work attributed to the painter Pagomenos) [Αντωνιάδης, Εικονοκρατία της Δυτικής Κρήτης (1969) 489, fig. 155] or for the figure of Saint Demetrios and of Saint George in the church of Saint George Apodoulou dated to the beginning of the 14th c. (Spatharakis, Eisenberg, Amari Province, fig. 70, 72) and the one of the Virgin at Platania, Amari Province (beginning of the 14th, fig. 143).
the round shield of Saint George in the Cretan church at Diavaide is decorated with a diagonal checkerboard motif with small crosses inscribed in squares—a direct reference to a coat of arms of the time period—which according to the western tradition alludes possibly to the kteōr (founder) of the church or most probably draws attention to the cultural identity of the Venetian landlord of the fief, without excluding influence exerted by the iconographic model of the representation.48

Some of the details of the tack illustrated on the fresco of Saint George at Diavaide have been identified in representations of military saints related to "crusader works" or are found in areas under Crusader control, such as the jewelled saddle, with the tall western cantle, decorated with a diamond checkerboard pattern, the double crupper with a bow on the rear part of the harness, but also the wide girth with the angular black and white motif fastened around the barrel of the horse of Saint George.50 The horse of Saint Demetrios at Diavaide bears similarities whereas the covering of his horse's body with faint round scales, as on the murals that depict the same subject matter found in Crete, Rhodes, Chalki and Aegina, is rendered in a naturalistic manner indicating the chainmail barding that protected the body of the crusaders' horses.53 It is also striking that the image of Saint Sergius at Diavaide bears additional iconographic similarities to crusader icons and especially that of Saint Sergius with a female donor from Sinai, attributed to a Cypriot-influenced Syrian artist as argued by L.A. Hunt,54 M. Immerzeel55 and J. Folda56 in respect of the facial features that the painter at Diavaide was trained in the region of Crete.

To the representations of Thalassoperatis which are encountered in the art of the Cretan countryside is added one more scene from the church of Archangel Michael Astragatos, a dependency (metochion) of the Holy Monastery of Saint George Epanosafis, at Agalantes, also in Heraklion Prefecture, where all of the examples of this iconographic type are found.58 Fish and sea creatures which are noticed on the lower part of the partially preserved scene that constitutes the second paint layer of the church dating to the early 14th century, and also the leg of the figure which is shown sitting on the horse's hindquarters indicate that it is a representation of Saint George Thalassoperatis carrying the young captive from Mytilene. What is more, in the country church of Saint Marina outside the village Panagia at the site Hani Moulefe in Arkalochori, among the wall paintings dating from the first half of the 14th century, lies one more representation of Saint George crossing the sea, next to an unidentified figure of an equestrian saint.59 On the lower part of the obscure mural and below the legs of the horse of Saint George, the sea waves and fish within a semicircular rocky landscape are similarly rendered as on the Sinai icon inv. no

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52 For examples from the islands of Rhodes, Aegina and Chalki v. Katoumi, Άγιος Παύλος ο Πελαθράδης, 539.
53 Ibid., 540.
54 L. A. Hunt, A woman's prayer to St Sergios in Latin Syria. Interpreting a thirteenth-century icon at Mount Sinai, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 15 (1991) 96–145.
55 Immerzeel, Holy horseman and crusader banners, 39–53.
56 Folda, Mounted warrior saints, 91.
57 Π. Επιτροπάκης, Γ. Κατολής, Ο ναός του Μιχαήλ Αρχαγγέλου στο Μεσόπτωμα Αργύριου στην Ιερά Μονή Μονής Αγίου Παύλου Αρχασ- σάφη Πατρών, Απολογιστικό Έργο Ναού Αγίου Παύλου Πατρών, Τόμος Ι: Αρχαγγέλος Μιχαήλ, Καθηγήτρια Μιχαήλ Αρχαγγέλου, Η Εξευτελισμένη Αρχαγγελίδα Μιχαήλ, Καθηγήτρια Ευεξία Μητροπολίτικης Ευεξίας. Αρχαγγελεία Κρήτης, 1996.
58 My warmest thanks to the archaeologist Paris Epitropakis from the Ministry of Culture for sharing information with me about the church of Archangel Michael Astragatos as well as to George Katsalis from the Ephorate of Antiquities of Heraklion. For the Church of Archangel Michael v. Π. Επιτροπάκης, Μονόσπιον καμαροσπάστας βασιλέως με προσέκοπτη γαλαή εγγάρια κλίτος, ιδιόμορφα "ανατηρη- στήγανη" της πρώιμης Ενετοκρατίας στην Κρήτη, in: Αντιπάλoδoς, Μελέτες βωμονομίας και μεταβωμονομίας αρχαιολογικών και γεωγραφικών πραγμάτων της καθηγήτριας Ευεξίας Μητροπολίτικης Ευεξίας Αρχαγγέλου, Καθηγήτρια της Ευεξίας Αρχαγγελίδας, Αρχιερεία Αρχαγγελίδας Μιχαήλ, Καθηγήτρια Τονός Αρχαγγελίδας, Ευεξία Τονός, 147.
59 Ανδρανικός, Γιάννης Παππιτζόγλου, Χριστιανικά Μνημεία της Κρήτης. Παραγγελία Κρήτης, Τόμος II: Παραγγελία Κρήτης, Παραγγελία Κρήτης, Τόμος Ι: Παραγγελία Κρήτης, Παραγγελία Κρήτης, 2016, 229–230, figs 13–14. I would like to warmly thank Mrs. Helen Kanaki from the Ephorate of Antiquities of Heraklion who informed me of the scene. Also I would like to express my gratitude to Kostis Giapetzoglou from the Ephorate of Antiques of Rethymnon for providing me with a photo of the scene from Mouloufe.
Fig. 5. Mounted Saint George with the boy from Mytilene in the Church of Saint George at Apostoloi, Pediada District
of the church, but also the style in which the figure has been rendered suggesting a Cypriot model, suggest that the painter in the village of Apostoloi assimilated foreign elements which are incorporated within the artistic language of the Eastern Mediterranean and particularly Cyprus. Moreover, the representation on the lower part of the scene with the continuous circles that are tangent to one another, possibly indicate the sea waves, although the poor preservation state of the paint layer and the absence of fish that would normally suggest marine environment do not allow a positive identification.

The iconographic analysis of the representation of Saint George as well that of Saint Demetrios at Dia-viade reflects the artistic environment of the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly that of Cyprus, where images of equestrian military saints form part of the tradition of the island. The type of Thalassoperatis appears on a total of four representations on the island of Cyprus, both icons and frescoes dating from the 13th to the 16th century, although it cannot be excluded that a greater number of images have been produced. It is possible that the image of the mounted George from the church of Saint Nicholas tès Steges in Kakopetria (1300) can be identified with the type of Thalassoperatis since the figure of the equestrian saint seems to have been combined with sea waves on the lower part of the painting. The partly preserved mural of the equestrian saint from the church of Panagia Aphen-trika (12th–13th c.) at the Monastery of Saint Chryso tomos at Koutsovendis in Cyprus during the period of the Lusignans could possibly be considered as depicting the same subject matter. It has been maintained that a marine environment is illustrated beneath the horse’s legs, although the poor state of preservation of the wall painting does not allow reliable identification with the iconographic type of Thalassoperatis. On the other hand, the image of Saint George Thalassoperatis is also identified in the churches of Rhodes which however are later in date, with the frescoes of Saint George Diasoritis in the church of Saint Nicholas at Fountouki (1497/8) and of Saint George Kamarotis in the church of Saint Catherine (Ilk

60 Skalova, Gabra, Icons of the Nile Valley, 184–185.
61 M. Μπρούμπουδακά, Η τοιχογραφική διακόσμηση της εκκλησίας του Αγίου Γεωργίου στον Πύργο Μονοκειμένου, 2014 (doctoral dissertation, University of Ioanna), 138–145.
62 M. S. Frinta, Relief decoration in gilded pastiglia on the Cypriot icons, in: Πρακτικά του Δεύτερου Διεθνούς Κυπριολογικού Συνεδρίου, 20–25 Απριλίου 1982, 541; Ch. Chiotakozoglou, Reconsidering the 13th century painting in Cyprus, in: Maniessa Cypria. The Cypriot painting of the 13th century between two worlds, ed. I. Elades, Nicosia 2017, 22.
63 The emblem on the shield of Saint George resembles that of the Ordre des Hospitaliers (H. Κώλλας, Η μεσαιωνική πόλη της Ρόδου και το παλάτι του Μεγάλου Μαγκάρη) in: Αθήνα 1994, 39; Κώστακη, Κατάλογος των τριγώνων της Ρόδου, 214–219).
64 The triangular western shield is usually encountered in the monumental paintings of Crete. Cfr. E. Θεοχαροπούλου, Οι τοιχογραφίες του ναού των Αγίων Πατρών και Κωνσταντίνου στον Πύργο Μανο- φατού, ΑΑ 57 (2002) Melétes, 293.
65 Images of equestrian military saints are usually depicted in Cretan fresco paintings of the 13th, the 14th and the 15th c. and share a number of iconographic traits with the representation of the Thalassoperatis from Dia-viade, e.g. in the churches of Saint George at Sklavopoula, Selino (1290–1) (Εικόνες της Κύπρου, 1994, 39; Κώστακη, Κατάλογος των τριγώνων της Ρόδου, 214–219), and of Saint Demetrios at Diasoritis in the church of Saint Nicholas at Fountouki (1497/8) and of Saint George Kamarotis in the church of Saint Catherine (Ilk...
Venetian documents. This hagionym is also referred to in Crete or elsewhere, but is found as a surname in the epigraphy of the church. As far as I am aware, the epithet Sfakiotis is not encountered in any other representative (or dedicators) of the church. For example, the name of the donors Markos, Georgios and their spouses are still legible: ΟικοΔΟΜΗΘ[η και εικΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΗ[θη ο πα]ΝΔΕΠΤΩΣ [και θείο]C ΝΑΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΠΙΟΥ Κ[αι] ΕΝΔ[αι]όν μέγαλο]ΜΑΡΤΙΡΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΙΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΟΦΑΚ[ιώτη...] Κ[αι] ΜΑΡΚΟΥ ΚΕ ΤΗΣ ΧΗΝΒΙΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ. ΓΕΩΡΙΤΟΥ ΚΕ ΤΗΣ ΧΗΝΒΙΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ. ΑΜΗΝ ΜΗΝ[...].K. EE...E. Meanwhile, a graffito with the date 1414 on the north wall establishes a terminus ante quem for the execution of the murals of the church. Since the last letters of the inscription that would refer to the year in which the church was decorated have not been preserved, the wall paintings at Diavaide can be dated, judging solely by stylistic criteria, to around 1300. Hence, we can observe that despite the damages which the paint layer has suffered in places and the disparity in the way the scenes have been treated that could be attributed to the presence of two painters, at Diavaide shading has been employed in combination with the linear rendering, particularly of details, especially for the modeling of the saints of the lower zone. Nevertheless, the linear treatment has been decreased compared to earlier paintings that belong to the 13th century. The faces, which are marked by contour lines, are modelled with brown underpaint with superimposed broad brushstrokes of ochre for rendering brighter passages, restricted areas of green shadows, whereas a few highlights of white paint emphasize the linear features. The figures are stiff, portrayed in restrained postures and movement, and cannot be compared with the figures in monuments of the mid-14th century in Cretan painting, shown full of vitality and vibrancy. Meanwhile, concerning the style in the firmly frontal figure of the equestrian Saint George the strong linearity, the two-dimensional drawing style as well as the motionless and austere pose of the saint bears similarities to images from monumental painting of Crete dating to the 13th century, such as the equestrian Saint George from Sklavopoula in Selinou (1291) (fig. 2) and that from Panagia Kera, at Mirabello Province (13th c.). It should be noted, however, that the technique which is employed on the garments and the anatomical details shown through the robes is purely linear, on the flesh parts the figure of George (fig. 6) is enlivened by the use of green shadow on the cheeks, ochre for the brighter portions and a few white highlights, thus indicating that the mural at Diavaide should be dated after the fresco of Saint George at Sklavopoula (fig. 2) and in particular around 1300 up to the first decade of the 14th century, along with the rest of the decoration at the church of Sfakiotis. Meanwhile, stylistic affinities can be traced with the icons of Saints Sergius and Bacchus on horseback and the one of Saint Sergius, both in the collection of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, dated to the middle of the 13th century and attributed to the so-called “workshop of the soldier saints”, which is believed to reveal a number of similarities with Cypriot painting. Although the images are dissimilar in details and quality, with the icon of Saint Sergius revealing a superior artistic quality, the figures in the two icons as well as the fresco at Diavaide have heads which are large in relation to their short and two-dimensional bodies. The faces, sophisticated and elegant, are further enhanced with a linear treatment revealing the facial features and in particular the eyes. Meanwhile the rendering of the horses which is, however, characterized by a rather flattened and schematic rendering at Diavaide, displays their close resemblance. At the same time the image of our Saint finds close parallels with the figure of Saint George on horseback from Panagia Asinou in Cyprus dating possibly to the late 12th century, regarding the design of the details of the face with the large almond eyes and the flat and linear modelling. Yet, besides the above mentioned stylistic affinities which could be attributed to a Cypriot model, the fresco at Diavaide reveals clearly that it was created by a local Cretan artist.

Based on the aforementioned the following remarks can be extracted: The image of Saint George Thalassoperatis at Diavaide is rare in the painting of Venetian-occupied Crete and constitutes one of the earliest representations of the subject in the Greek lands/ territories, predated only by the icon of Saint George of Cappadocia dating to the 13th century at the church of Saint Marina Philousa, now exhibited at the Byzantine Museum of the Metropolis of Paphos. Two more wall paintings of Saint George crossing the sea have been recorded in the art of the Cretan countryside, at the church of Saint Marina in the settlement Panagia in Hani Moulefe of Arkalochori.
and the church of Archangel Michael, Astratigos, dependency (metochion) of the Holy Monastery of Saint George Epanosis, all dating from the beginning of the 14th century. The representation in the church of Saint George at Apostoloi in Pediada cannot be safely identified, yet it belongs to the depictions of the miracle of the rescue of the young captive by Saint George, which is found in approximately thirteen churches of the island and in a limited number of Cretan icons. Based on the iconographic and stylistic analysis that was attempted in this study, it is believed that the model of the mural should be sought in the artistic environment of the Eastern Mediterranean, where the subject of the equestrian military saints was particularly widespread, and possibly in an icon of the 13th century from Cyprus or by a Cypriot painter. Meanwhile mounted warrior saints, bearing iconographic similarities to the figure of George at Diavaide are encountered in a series of churches on the island of Crete dated to around 1300 and during the 14th century.

The representation at Diavaide demonstrates the familiarity of our painter with the art of the Eastern Mediterranean and particularly Cyprus, whereas the possible circulation of such works in Venetian-occupied Crete cannot be excluded. The icon of a Cretan collector, now kept at the Benaki Museum, leads us to this assumption, as it suggests that the icon was influenced by the workshops of the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly via Cyprus. The icon depicts the Virgin Dexiokratousa with figures of saints on the carved frame, and, according to Nano Chatzidakis, it is believed that it was produced in Crete during the 13th century by a painter who maintained obvious ties with the crusader environment. In addition, the abovementioned figure of Saint George on horseback from the church at Apostoloi in Pediada Province (fig. 5) seems to have been produced by a painter who reproduced a Cypriot model or whose origins were traced in the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly Cyprus, to which a large number of the workshops of the East had been relocated shortly before, but also after the fall of Acre in 1291. It is also possible that artists from the East were active in Venetian Crete too. Information on the import of icons or the arrival of artists from Cyprus or the Eastern Mediterranean in Crete during the time period have poorly been attested by the sources as far as I am aware, except in the case of the Cypriot painter Baylianus Catellanus who was traveling to Crete from Cyprus with the Constantinopolitan artist George Chryssokefalos in 1357. Meanwhile, the close connections between the Monastery of Sinai, Cyprus and Crete is suggested by the bull of Pope Honorius III of 1217 addressed to Symeon in which all the possessions

80 Folda, Crusader art, 122–127; idem, Mounted warrior saints, 91.
81 N. Chatzidakis, A Byzantine icon of dexiokratousa Hodigitria from Crete at the Benaki Museum, in: Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium, ed. M. Vassilaki, London 2005, 337–350; eadem, Ο χαρακτήρας της ζωγραφικής εικόνων από λατινοκρατούμενες περιοχές της επιρροτικής Ελλάδας και των νησιών, in: Η βυζαντινή τέχνη μετά την τέταρτη Σταυροφορία. Η τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και οι επιπτώσεις της. Διεθνές Συνέδριο (Ακαδημία Αθηνών, 9–12 Μαρτίου 2004), ed. Π. Λ. Βοκοτόπουλος, Αθήνα 2007, 127–128.
82 Mouriki, Thirteenth-century icon painting in Cyprus, 71; D. Jacoby, The eastern Mediterranean in the later Middle Ages. An island world?, in: Byzantines, Latins and Turks in the eastern Mediterranean world after 1150, ed. J. Harris, C. Holmes, E. Russel, Oxford 2012, 97; A. Weyl Carr, Iconography and identity. Syrian elements in the art of crusader Cyprus, Church History and Religious Culture 89/1–3 (2009) 127–151.
83 M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, Viaggi di pittori tra Costantinopoli e Candia. Documenti d’archivio e influenze sull’arte (XIV–XV sec.), in: Βενετοκρατούμενος Ελληνισμός. Άνθρωποι, χώρος, ιδέες (13ος–18ος αι.), Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου (Βενετία, 3–7 λευκόμης), ed. X. Maltezou, Α. Τζαβάρα, Δ. Βλάση, Venezia 2009, 709–831, 711.
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Βομπούδακη Μ.: Figures of mounted warrior Saints in medieval Cret

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у Астратигосу са почетка XIV века, метоха манастирскої наилазимо у уметности руралног Крита треба прешао море. Приказима Таласоператиса на прешао море, па се отуд назива “таласоператис” (онај који прешао море). Приказима Таласоператиса на метохи он је прешао море, а елемент воде Димитрије, усмерени налево. У седлу иза светог Георгије и свети Јоан Касандин у јужном зиду цркве, на којој су приказана два света

Фигуре светих коњаника на средњовековном Криту.
Представа светог Георгија „Таласоператиса“ на коњу у Диавандеу у Ираклиону

Марија Борбудаки
Музеј византијске и хришћанске уметности, Атина

У цркви Светог Георгија Сфакијског у предграђу насеља Диаванде, у критском округу Ираклион, највећу пажњу привлачи монументална представа на јужном зиду цркве, на којој су приказана два света ратника на коњима у галопу, свети Георгије и свети Димитрије, усмерени налево. У седлу иза светог Георгија налази се још један млади јахач, а елемент воде у донjem делу сцене прешао је са излазком на море “таласоператис” (онај који је прешао море). Приказима Таласоператиса на који наилазимо у уметности руралног Крита треба додати и сцену из цркве Светог арханђела Михаила у Астратигосу са почетка XIV века, метоха маистра Светограђана свете Монахије у Кампунду, Атина 1935.

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