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Imagined Images: Visions of Salvation and Intercession in a Double-Sided Icon from Poganovo

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To the memory of my father

Of the many icons created during the Palaiologan period, perhaps the most arresting and enigmatic is the double-sided panel from the monastery of Poganovo in southeastern Serbia. The fourteenth-century icon shows a vision of Christ in Majesty; he sits on a rainbow set within an aureole of blue light (Fig. 1). The four mythical symbols of the Evangelists emerge from the mandorla. A mountainous terrain and a lake appear below the vision of Christ. To the left stands the prophet Ezekiel with hands raised in a gesture of amazement, while to the right the prophet Habakkuk sits on the rocks and holds an open book on his lap. The Theophany is paired with another enigmatic scene on the other side of the icon. Here the Virgin, mournful and silent, casts her gaze toward the gesturing hand of the aged John the Theologian (Fig. 2). The disciple, while engaging the Mother of God in conversation, addresses the viewer with his eyes and body. A dedicatory inscription is placed on the gold background between the two figures.

The scenes are painted on a large wood panel, which is more than three feet high (93 × 61.5 cm). The background and beveled frame are entirely covered with gold leaf. A hole on the lower edge of the panel suggests that the icon was carried in processions affixed to a pole. The panel was transferred from Poganovo to Sofia, Bulgaria, before the outbreak of World War I. It is currently displayed in the crypt of the cathedral of Alexander Nevsky.

Many studies have been dedicated to the iconography of the scenes and the identity of the donor.¹ The Theophany has been treated by most scholars as a copy of the fifth-century mosaic in the apse of the church of Hosios David at the Latomos monastery in Thessalonike. The scene on the other side has been interpreted as a Crucifixion. André

I am grateful to my advisor Ioli Kalavrezou for her insightful comments, to Nicholas Conostas for providing me with references for the liturgical texts, and to Christina Maranci for encouraging me to write about this icon and for greatly improving the style of the paper. I have also benefited from the comments of Elka Bakalova at the Frick Symposium, 9 April 1999, where I presented parts of this research, and to Christo Matanov, Liliana Mavrodinova, and Georgy Gerov, with whom I discussed many of the problematic issues involved with the donor of the icon.

¹Several studies concentrated on the identity of the donor in the dedicatory inscription. Todor Gerasimov argued that the panel was commissioned in 1395 by Helena Dragaš, wife of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425) to commemorate the death of her father, Constantine Dejan in 1394. Gerasimov supported his theory with the evidence of two stone inscriptions in the church of Poganovo mentioning the names of a

Grabar argued that the two sides were unified by the idea of Christ as the life-giving spring.² According to his interpretation, the image of the Virgin and John alluded to the moment of the Crucifixion when the Evangelist proclaimed the water and blood spurting from Christ's wound as the life-giving spring. Gordana Babić suggested that the Theophany represented the Second Coming, or the Parousia, of Christ.³ Another approach was offered by André Xyngopoulos, who explored the connection between the Poganovo icon and the art of Thessalonike.⁴ He argued that the Theophany did not directly copy the prototype at Hosios David but was modeled after some hypothetical miniature of the twelfth-century *Diegesis* text, which told the story of the miraculous appearance of the mosaic at Latomos. Xyngopoulos also contended that the name Virgin Kataphyge, meaning "refuge," referred to the homonymous *hypogoeum* in Thessalonike where St. Demetrios found his violent death. The iconography of the Poganovo panel has also been discussed

certain Constantine and Helena. Based on the previous research of Krüstju Mijatev, Gerasimov argued that the icon was commissioned for the family monastery of the Dragaši at Poganovo. T. Gerasimov, "L'icône bilatérale de Poganovo au Musée archéologique de Sofia," *CahArch* 10 (1959): 279–88; K. Mijatev, *Poganovski-jat Manastir* (Sofia, 1936), 20.

Mijatev's and Gerasimov's theory is now considered problematic, since the monastery and the land around Poganovo probably did not belong to the Dragaš family. While Christo Matanov has argued in his earlier studies that the Poganovo monastery was included in the territory of Constantine Dragaš, he has recently abandoned this position. He discovered that the lands around Poganovo were not recorded as part of the domain of Dragaši in the 16th-century Ottoman defter, *Sükraten timarski opis na Kjustendilski sandžak ot 1517 godina: Tapu defter 74*, microfilm in the Oriental Department of the Bulgarian National Library Sts. Kiril and Methodii. I am grateful to professor Matanov for sharing this information with me. For his earlier theory, see C. Matanov, *Jugozapadnite bŭlgarski zemi prez XIV vek* (Sofia, 1986), 122; and idem, *Knjažestvoto na Dragaši. Kŭm istorijata na severoiztočna Makedonia v predosmanskata epoha* (Sofia, 1997), 177.

André Xyngopoulos proposed another donor for the Poganovo icon: Helena, the wife of John V Palaiologos. In Xyngopoulos's view, she commissioned only the obverse of the icon with the vision of Christ during her sojourn in Thessalonike in 1354, while the other side of the icon was painted at a later date. Xyngopoulos's theory was immediately rejected by André Grabar, first because it did not account for the name of Constantine, who was among the donors of the Poganovo monastery, and, second, because technical analysis proved that the two sides of the panel were painted at the same time. A. Xyngopoulos, "Sur l'icône bilatérale de Poganovo," *CahArch* 12 (1961): 341–50, esp. 348; A. Grabar "Sur les sources des peintres byzantins des XIIIe et XIVe siècle," *CahArch* 12 (1961): 351–89, esp. 363, 366, 372.

An important hypothesis about the identity of the donor was later offered by Gordana Babić. She argued that the title *basilissa* used in the inscription could not refer to a Constantinopolitan empress but instead was applied to a wife of a despot. Therefore, Babić proposed that Helena Uglješa of Serres commissioned the icon in 1371 to commemorate both her dead son and husband. Babić then tried to interpret the iconography of the scenes in connection with the life of Helena Uglješa. G. Babić, "Sur l'icône de Poganovo et la vasilissa Hélène," *L'art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle: Recueil des rapports du IVe colloque serbo-grec, Belgrade, 1985*, Institut des études balkaniques, Édition spéciale 31 (Belgrade, 1987), 57–66. The same idea has been further developed by Goiko Subotić, "Ikona vasilise Jelene i osnivači manastira Poganova," *Saopštenja—Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture Srbije* 25 (1993): 25–40.

Recently, Ivan Djurić offered another hypothesis for the identity of the donor; he proposed reading the name as Eudokia and argued that the donor was the second wife of Constantine Dragaš, Eudokia Komnene. I. Djurić, "Evdokija Komnina i nein muž Konstantin Dragaš," *ZRVI* 12 (1983): 259–72.

The problem surrounding the identity of the donor cannot be resolved because paint losses at exactly this spot on the inscription render the name of the donor illegible. Even the recent infrared photographs cannot help clarify the name definitively. However, the faint traces of two letters "NH" support a reading of EAENH.

²A. Grabar, "A propos d'une icône byzantine du XIVe siècle au Musée de Sofia," *CahArch* 10 (1959): 289–304; idem, "Sur les sources des peintres byzantins," 351–89.

³Babić, "Sur l'icône de Poganovo," 63–66.

⁴Xyngopoulos, "Sur l'icône bilatérale de Poganovo," 341–50.

in connection with the liturgy. Demetrios Pallas argued that the images relate to the symbolism of the Easter celebrations.⁵ Similarly, Edmond Voordeckers linked the scenes on the icon to another liturgical feast, the Metastasis, or Assumption, of John the Evangelist.⁶ He argued that the figure of John was prominent, that this side of the icon should be considered as the front, and that the panel was set on the iconostasis as a title icon, since the monastery itself was dedicated to John the Evangelist.

This paper reconsiders previous interpretations. The latter assumed that the iconography of the Poganovo icon could be understood in terms of standard compositions such as the Crucifixion and the Second Coming of Christ. Yet, the images are not so explicit; they only allude to these normative scenes. I argue that the ambiguous and opaque representations of the Poganovo icon give only visual clues that are meant to stimulate the viewer to recall a series of standard scenes. The understanding of the icon thus depends on visions imagined and remembered. I explore how meaning is created out of this interaction between represented and imagined images. The broad spectrum of associations triggered by the two scenes shows that the icon had a complex liturgical use. In addition to the celebrations of Easter and the Metastasis of John, I argue that the panel was also involved in the commemorative services for the dead donors. Finally, on the basis of the evidence from monastic *typika*, I insert the Poganovo icon in the broader context of other panels with a similar liturgical function.

EASTER SYMBOLISM

The visions depicted on the two sides of the icon evoke the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ without actually reproducing the standard iconography characteristic of these scenes. By alluding to the Passion, the Poganovo images respond to the liturgical role of the icon during Easter celebrations.

The Virgin and John the Evangelist are identified by red inscriptions placed on the gold background (Fig. 2). Mary appears as Mother of God with the name *Kataphyge*,⁷ while John is identified as the Theologian.⁸ In addition, a dedicatory inscription on the gold background between the two figures reads “[Helena ?] the pious *basilissa* in Christ the God.”⁹

The pairing of the Virgin and John the Evangelist recalls the iconography of the Crucifixion. An early example in which the two figures stand next to each other under the same arm of the cross is offered by the tenth-century fresco at the apse of the New Church at Tokali Kilise (Fig. 3).¹⁰ Christ is nailed to the cross; his right side is pierced and spurts blood. The Mother of God raises her covered hands, while John the Evangelist places his right hand in front of his chest in a gesture of prayer and reverence. His figure resembles closely that of John on the Poganovo icon.

In the more common depictions of the Crucifixion, the Virgin and John flank Christ,

⁵D. Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi*, MiscByzMonac 2 (Munich, 1965), 147–60.

⁶E. Voordeckers, “L’interprétation liturgique de quelques icônes byzantines,” *Byzantion* 53.1 (1983): 52–68, esp. 59–62.

⁷ΜΡΘΥ Η ΚΑΤΑΦΥΓΗ (Μήτηρ Θεοῦ ἡ Καταφυγή).

⁸Ο ΑΓ ΙΩ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ (ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Θεόλογος).

⁹[Ἐλένη] ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὴ βασίλισσα, from Gerasimov, “Licône bilatérale de Poganovo,” 284.

¹⁰A. W. Epstein, *Tokali Kilise: Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia*, DOS 22 (Washington, D.C., 1986), 73–74, figs. 83–87, color pl. 5.

as in a fourteenth-century icon at the Byzantine Museum in Athens (Fig. 4).¹¹ Christ's dead body hangs from the cross. The Virgin stands on the left side. Her hands rest underneath her chin; one is covered in the cloth, the other clasped on top. Her head inclines toward Christ, but her face is downcast. On the right side of the cross, John is depicted in a mournful gesture, his right hand resting on his cheek. His other arm droops down heavily. His whole body sags under the weight of mourning.

The figure of the Virgin on the Athens icon is similar to the Theotokos of the Poganovo panel; both are attenuated, completely wrapped in their garments, and self-controlled in their deep sorrow. They place their hands in the same modest and vulnerable gesture. In both cases, the delicate body of the Virgin is contrasted to the corpulent figure of John. However, the two icons differ in the depiction of the Evangelist; in the Athens panel he is a mournful youth, but in the Poganovo icon John has an aged face and makes a gesture of speech. I will return to the meaning of this departure in the section on John's Metastasis below.

Many years ago, Grabar observed that the figures of the Virgin and the evangelist were "cut out" of a Crucifixion scene.¹² The cross is no longer there, yet, the two figures remain standing; the Virgin has preserved her posture and gestures of mourning. The pairing of the grieving Theotokos and John immediately triggers the memory of the original setting from which the two images have been taken. We perceive the Poganovo scene as a Crucifixion; yet, there is no cross. Its very absence relates symbolically to the loss that occurs with death.

While the side with John and the Virgin alludes to a Crucifixion scene, the other face of the icon presents an image that relates symbolically to the Resurrection. Christ sits on the rays of a gold rainbow in an aureole of blue light (Fig. 1). Youthful,¹³ he wears a golden *chiton* and raises his right arm while holding an open scroll in his left hand. His scroll reads, "Behold our God in whom we hope and rejoice in our salvation, he will give rest to this house" (Isa. 25:9).¹⁴ His hands and feet bear the marks of the Crucifixion. Next to his head is the inscription, "Jesus Christ of the miracle of Latomos."¹⁵

The halo of blue light surrounding his figure is composed of seven rings. The four apocalyptic symbols of the Evangelists emerge from the fifth ring of the mandorla. Clockwise from the top left, these are Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark; their initials are inscribed above their heads.¹⁶

Below this vision is a mountainous landscape that gradually descends into a water basin, where seven fish swim. On the two sides of the rocks stand the figures of the prophets Ezekiel and Habakkuk, identified by inscriptions above their heads.¹⁷ Ezekiel is

¹¹The icon measures 103 × 84 cm. *Conversation with God: Icons from the Byzantine Museum in Athens (9th–10th centuries)*, exh. cat., The Hellenic Center, London, 22 May–20 June 1998, ed. C. Baltoyanni (Athens, 1998), 76–79, with the most recent bibliography.

¹²Grabar, "A propos d'une icône," 300. Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi*, 91–97.

¹³On the reappearance of the youthful Christ in the scenes of Majesty in the 11th century and its meaning, see A. W. Carr, "Gospel Frontispieces from the Comnenian Period," *Gesta* 21.1 (1982): 3–20, esp. 7–10.

¹⁴Ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐφ' ᾧ ἐλπίζομεν καὶ ἠγαλλιώμεθα ἐπὶ τῇ σωτηρίᾳ ἡμῶν αὐτὸς δώσει ἀνάπαυσιν τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ.

¹⁵[τ]ὸ ἐν Λατόμου θαῦμα.

¹⁶ΙΩ[άννης], Μ[άρκος], Μ[ατθαῖος], and Λ[ουκάς].

¹⁷ΠΡΟ[φήτ]Η[ς] ΙΕΖΕΚΙΗΛ and [προφήτης] ΑΒΒΑΚΟΥΜ.

depicted as an elderly man dressed in a *chiton*, standing with arms raised and palms open to the viewer in a gesture of awe and amazement. Habakkuk is represented as a youth seated on the rocks; he has propped his chin in his right hand and on his lap holds an open book with the written message, “Son of Man, eat this scroll” (Ezek. 3:1).¹⁸ The whole scene is imbued with a blue light that emanates from the halo above and highlights the draperies, the rocky mountains, and the waters. The setting, lyrical with gold and blue light, conveys the essence of the scene: a theophany.

As noted above, the vision of Christ copies the mosaic in the church of Hosios David of the monastery of Latomos in Thessalonike (Fig. 5).¹⁹ The connection between the two works is revealed not only through their similar iconography but also in the inscription of the Poganovo icon, which identifies the vision as that “of the miracle of Latomos.”²⁰

In the prototype, Christ appears in an aureole of light, seated on a rainbow.²¹ He also holds a scroll with a similar inscription, reading, “Behold our God, in whom we hope and rejoice in our salvation, that he may grant rest to this house.”²² There also we find the four mythical beasts and the two prophets.

The mosaic relies heavily on the visions of Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Isaiah, Joel, and Zacharias.²³ Yet, the theophany cannot be securely associated with any particular prophetic account. The ambiguity stems from the mosaic’s lack of identifying inscriptions above the two figures flanking Christ. Grabar interpreted these prophets as Ezekiel and Zacharias;²⁴ later on he proposed that the two figures were Peter and Paul.²⁵ James Snyder argued that the standing prophet is Ezekiel, while the seated is John the Evangelist.²⁶

Unlike the mosaic, the Poganovo icon clearly identifies the vision as that of Ezekiel and Habakkuk (Fig. 1). This clarity of authorship together with the Crucifixion marks on Christ’s hands and feet and the written command “Eat this scroll” on the open book create a new meaning for the scene. Babić has proposed that the wounds signify that Christ is depicted after the Resurrection in his *Parousia*, or Second Coming.²⁷

¹⁸ Ἰὲ ἀνθρώπου κατάφαγε τὴν κεφαλίδα ταύτην.

¹⁹ Grabar, “A propos d’une icône,” 289–304. R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London, 1985), 132–33; and E. Tsingaridas, *Latomou Monastery: The Church of Hosios David* (Thessalonike, 1988), 85–86. For a discussion of the aureole of light and the ambiguous gender of the face of Christ, see T. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, 1993), 116–23.

²⁰ The miracle refers to the supernatural appearances of the mosaic image of Christ in the apse, as related in Ignatios’ 12th-century text, *Diegesis*. According to this text, Theodora, the daughter of the emperor Maximianus, secretly converted a bath on the imperial properties into a church and displayed a mosaic of the Virgin in the apse. This mosaic miraculously transformed itself into an image of Christ in Majesty. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, ed., *Varia graeca sacra* (St. Petersburg, 1909; repr. Leipzig, 1975), 102–13, esp. 107. For a discussion of the date of the text, see V. Grumel, “La mosaïque du Dieu Sauveur au Monastère de Latome à Salonique,” *EO* 33 (1930): 157–75; and Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, 132–33.

²¹ On the significance of the rainbow and divinely generated light, see L. James, *Light and Color in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1996), 91–109.

²² ἰδοὺ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐφ’ ᾧ ἐλπίζομεν καὶ ἠγαλλιώμεθα ἐπὶ τῇ σωτηρίᾳ ἡμῶν ὅτι ἀνάπαυσιν δώσει ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦτον, from Tsingaridas, *Latomou Monastery*, 37.

²³ Isa. 12:3, 25:9, 44:3; Ezek. 3:1, 2:10, 47:9; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8.

²⁴ A. Grabar, *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1943–46), 2:201.

²⁵ Grabar, “A propos d’une icône,” 289.

²⁶ J. Snyder, “The Meaning of ‘Maiestas Domini’ in Hosios David,” *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 143–52, esp. 150–53. Snyder’s theory is not supported by the evidence, especially since the text of the Apocalypse did not enter the Byzantine liturgy; it existed only in separate commented versions.

²⁷ Babić, “Sur l’icône de Poganovo,” 63.

Alternately, the vision can be interpreted as a Resurrection, an association also triggered by the presence of the two prophets. Habakkuk's vision is linked to Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, as demonstrated by Gregory of Nazianzus' Second Oration for Easter. A miniature from the ninth-century manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, cod. gr. 510, folio 285r, shows Habakkuk standing to the right and pointing to a vision of a youthful angelic creature surrounded by the rays of a mandorla and flanked by the Heavenly Host (Fig. 6).²⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus stands next to Habakkuk and gestures in amazement. On the left are two female figures: St. Paraskeve holding the instruments of the Passion and the empress Helena carrying a miniature model of the tomb of Christ.²⁹ The lances, the sponge, and gall, and the tomb all evoke the Crucifixion and implicitly anticipate the Resurrection. Thus, they influence the perception of the divine creature in the mandorla as a prefiguration of the Resurrected Christ.

The miniature gives a visual interpretation of Gregory's homily, which starts with a quotation from Habakkuk:

I will stand upon my watch, saith the venerable Habakkuk; and I will take my post beside him today. . . . Well, I have taken my stand and looked forth; and behold a man riding on the clouds and he is very high, and his countenance is as the countenance of an Angel, and his vesture as the brightness of piercing lightning; and he lifts his hand towards the east and cries with a loud voice. His voice is the voice of a trumpet; and round about him is, as it were, a multitude of the Heavenly Host; and he saith, "Today is salvation come into the world, to that which is visible and to that which is invisible. Christ is risen from the dead, rise ye with Him. Christ has returned again to himself, return ye."³⁰

Habakkuk foretells the Resurrection of Christ, and his quoted words at the beginning of Gregory's homily became firmly associated with Easter symbolism. For this reason Habakkuk's portrait became a standard element of the iconography of preface miniatures to Gregory's Second Oration for Easter.³¹ This homily made popular Habakkuk's vision of the Resurrection of Christ among the Byzantine audience. Therefore, the prophet's presence on the Poganovo icon prompted the Byzantine viewer to perceive the Theophany as a vision of Christ's Resurrection.³²

The figure of Ezekiel offers a similar association with the Passion of Christ. Since his prophecy is read on Holy Monday and Holy Wednesday,³³ his Theophany is assimilated within the Easter symbolism. At a point during his prophecy, Ezekiel is ordered to eat

²⁸L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1999), 205–7, 284–86; eadem, "Politics, Patronage, and Art in Ninth-Century Byzantium: The Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus in Paris (B.N. Gr. 510)," *DOP* 39 (1985): 1–13, esp. 10; S. Der Nersessian, "The Illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, Paris gr. 510: A Study of the Connection between Text and Image," *DOP* 16 (1962): 197–228, esp. 201; H. Omont, *Miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque nationale du VI^e au XIV^e siècle* (Paris, 1929), pl. XLIII; and Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi*, 154.

²⁹Brubaker, "Politics, Patronage, and Art in Ninth-Century Byzantium," 10.

³⁰PG 36:624A-B, translation from Der Nersessian, "The Illustrations," 201.

³¹Brubaker, "Politics, Patronage, and Art in Ninth-Century Byzantium," 10; G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus*, Studies in Manuscript Illumination 6 (Princeton, 1969), 120–25.

³²Grabar interpreted the scene as a theophany of Ezekiel, and this concept has persisted to the extent that the icon is even identified under the name of "The Vision of Ezekiel." As Pallas has shown the image is equally tied to the prophecy of Habakkuk; Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi*, 152–55.

³³*Ibid.*, 155–56; and *The Lenten Triodion*, trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware (London-Boston, 1977; repr. 1984), 517, 541.

the scroll with the revelations. By consuming it, he gains the power to prophesy. The same command, “Eat this scroll,” appears on the icon and alludes to Ezekiel’s act of conceiving and conveying the vision of the Resurrected Christ.

The two sides of the Poganovo icon, then, represent the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The allusion to the Crucifixion is not unusual; in fact, many of the extant bilateral icons represent this moment of Christ’s life.³⁴ Pallas counted fifty-two existing double-sided panels, of which half include a Crucifixion or such related scenes as a Deposition, *Basileus tes doxas*, or a Hetoimasia on the reverse.³⁵ Pallas linked this particular choice of subject-matter to the role of bilateral icons in the liturgical celebrations of Pascha. Similarly, by alluding to Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection, the images of the Poganovo panel responded to the Easter symbolism.

THE METASTASIS OF JOHN

In addition to their associations with Easter, the images on the two sides of the Poganovo icon also relate to the Metastasis of John.³⁶ Voordeckers has convincingly argued that John is the principal figure of the panel and that his aged face and designation as “Theologian” signify that he is represented in his role as the author of both the Gospel and the Apocalypse.³⁷ It is now necessary to explore further how John’s preeminence is conveyed through the visual clues. Without diminishing its associations with Easter, the Theophany of Christ represented on the icon’s other side can also be read as a scene of the Assumption of John the Evangelist. The two faces of the panel can thus be viewed as a diptych, with an author-portrait on one side and his vision on the other. In this way, the icon also partakes in the liturgical celebration of the Metastasis of John.

John’s importance is expressed by simple visual clues: the Evangelist addresses the viewer with direct eye contact, and his figure, unlike the unlit figure of the Virgin, is bathed in light (Fig. 2). A similar contrast is conveyed through the two figures’ postures. John’s head gently tilts to the Virgin, while his face and heavy body are directly frontal. His *contrapposto* stance expresses energy and movement. By contrast, the Virgin is static, her entire columnlike body is enveloped in cloth. An opposition is also established through their faces and expressions. John has a wrinkled countenance, bald head, and a long, curly grey beard; his appearance conveys serenity and wisdom. By contrast, the face of the Virgin is youthful and emanates a suppressed and pensive sorrow. While the

³⁴Grabar, “Sur les sources des peintres byzantins,” 366–80.

³⁵Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi*, 308–23. The Hodegetria icon in Constantinople with the Virgin and Child on the front and the Crucifixion on the back probably served as a model for these bilateral icons. Several 14th-century icons with the Virgin and Child on the front and the Crucifixion on the back survive in Ohrid and Athens. V. Djurić, *Icônes de Yougoslavie* (Belgrade, 1961), 85–86, pl. 4; *Trésors médiévaux de la république de Macédoine*, exh. cat., Paris, Musée national du Moyen Age, Thermes de Cluny, 9 February–3 May 1999 (Paris, 1999), 62–63, with the most recent bibliography; W. Volbach and J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Byzanz und der christliche Osten*, Propuläen Kunstgeschichte 3 (Berlin, 1968), 238, pl. 26; and *Conversation with God: Icons from the Byzantine Museum in Athens*, 76–82, 96–102.

³⁶Voordeckers, “L’interprétation liturgique,” 58–62.

³⁷Subotić has argued that John is represented in his role of author. Yet, Subotić never analyzed how this meaning is conveyed through such visual clues as the aged face of the Evangelist; Subotić, “Ikona vasilise Jelene,” 30–32.

Virgin is passive and withdrawn, John is active, open, and direct. Therefore, he becomes the figure singled out to address the viewer and to lead him/her into the icon.

The Evangelist is given a position of prominence because the panel was meant to be used in the celebrations of his Metastasis. John's feast, celebrated on September 26, commemorates his death and Assumption.³⁸ Ioannis Spatharakis and Emanuel Klinkenberg have argued that because there was no established iconographic model for representing the Evangelist's ascension many different representations were employed.³⁹ In one, for example, on a sixteenth-century Cretan icon (Fig. 7),⁴⁰ John is represented in a mandorla of light, being lifted up to Heaven by angelic creatures. The visual formula resembles the standard way of depicting Christ's ascension within a mandorla of light lifted by angels. Such iconographic similarities made the Assumption of John analogous to that of Christ. For this reason, the Poganovo Theophany, by representing Christ in a mandorla of light hovering over the mountainous landscape, alludes to the representations of John's Assumption.

In addition to these purely iconographic parallels between the ascensions of Christ and John, the two figures were also very closely linked in Byzantine theology. John is assimilated into Christ at the moment of the Crucifixion. Christ addresses his mother and asks her to receive John as her only son: her Christ. Similarly, he commands John to accept Mary as his mother. The moment of adoption is manifested in the words that often accompany representations of the Crucifixion, as, for example, in the Tokali fresco (Fig. 3). The standard address reads, "Mother, behold your son! Son, behold your Mother!"

The transformation of John at the Crucifixion was discussed by Origen already in the third century:

We might dare say, then, that the Gospels are the first fruits of all Scriptures, but that the first fruits of the Gospels is that according to John, whose meaning no one can understand who has not leaned on Jesus' breast nor received Mary from Jesus to be his mother also. But he who would be another John must also become such as John, to be shown to be Jesus, so to speak. For if Mary has no son except Jesus, in accordance with those who hold a sound opinion of her, and Jesus says to his mother, "Behold your son," and not "Behold, this man also is your son," he has said equally, "Behold, this is Jesus whom you bore." For indeed everyone who has been perfected "no longer lives, but Christ lives in him," and since "Christ lives in him," it is said to Mary, "Behold your son, the Christ."⁴¹

Origen argues that of all the disciples, John was the closest to Christ and thus became assimilated to him at the moment of the Crucifixion. Since the two figures of the Virgin and John on the Poganovo icon are excerpted from a Crucifixion scene, they evoke in the mind of the viewer the particular moment when John is perfected and becomes Christ.

The aged face of John the Evangelist is another significant element in his portrayal. One would expect to see the youthful Evangelist at the scene of the Crucifixion. The old

³⁸M. Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge* (Vatican City, 1944), 710–26. Synaxarion of September 26 in *Menaion tou Ianouariou [-Dekemvriou]*, 12 vols. (Venice, 1852), 2:445–58, esp. 453. Voordeckers, "L'interprétation liturgique," 58–62.

³⁹I. Spatharakis and E. Klinkenberg, "The Pictorial Cycle of the Life of St. John the Evangelist in Crete," *BZ* 89.2 (1996): 420–40.

⁴⁰*To kallos tes morphes metabyzantines eikones, 15–18 aionon, apo tis sylloges ton poleon Moscha, Sergieph Posant (Zagorsk), Tver kai Riazan*, ed. E. Ankroskina et al. (Athens, 1995), 192–93, icon 6.

⁴¹Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, trans. R. E. Heine, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1993), 1:38.

John on the Poganovo icon represents a departure from the standard iconography. This change signifies that he is portrayed as the author of the Gospel and Revelation.⁴² His aged face alludes to the scenes in which the apostle dictates his Gospel to Prochoros at Patmos, as represented, for example, in the late tenth-century miniature from a manuscript in the Dionysiou monastery at Mount Athos (Dionysiou cod. gr. 588, fol. 225v) (Fig. 8).⁴³

The viewer's perception of this image of John as author of the Gospel was also supported by the liturgy. Lections from his writings were read during Easter and placed at the beginning of the *Synaxarion*.⁴⁴ The liturgical celebration of Christ's Passion thus drew on the Gospel of John. Since the icon alludes to both the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and was used in the Easter celebrations, the portrait of John could be easily perceived as the witness to Christ's Passion.⁴⁵

His aged face and upright standing pose further portray John as the prophetic writer of the Apocalypse. A more explicit pairing of the text of Revelation with a portrait of the old John is offered by a miniature from a twelfth-century manuscript with the Gospels, psalter, and odes in Moscow (State Historical Museum gr. 407, fol. 288v).⁴⁶ Fourteenth-century frontispieces were added to this codex; one of these inserted miniatures, portraying the old John, was placed at the beginning of the Apocalypse text (Fig. 9). In one sense, this image resembles John's frontispiece portrait at the beginning of his Gospel in the same manuscript, but in the Apocalypse frontispiece his standing position and the agitation and fervor in his posture and clothing have greater affinity with the portraits of the Old Testament prophets in the same codex. John is thus portrayed as a prophet of Revelation.

If John is depicted as the author of the Apocalypse, then the Theophany on the icon's other side can be understood as a representation of his Revelation. Moreover, the seven layers of the mandorla, the seven fish, and the four mythic creatures suggest an Apocalyptic scene.⁴⁷ The Theophany thus presents an image of the end of time uncovered and

⁴²Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi*, 149. N. Ševčenko, "The Cave of the Apocalypse," in *Praktika tou diethnous symposiou me thema: Hi. Mone Hag. Ioannou tou Theologou—900 Chronia historikes martyrias (1088–1988)* (= Hetaireia byzantinon kai metabyzantinon meleton, Diptychon Paraphylla 2) (Athens, 1989), 169–80. Ševčenko has argued that while the text tradition presented Patmos as the place where both the Apocalypse and the Gospel were written, the visual tradition continued to link Patmos and the cave exclusively with the Gospel text.

⁴³S. M. Pelekanides, *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts* (Athens, 1974–), 446–48, fig. 287; and A. A. Karakatsanis, ed., *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, 2nd ed. (Thessalonike, 1997), 228.

⁴⁴For a discussion of Byzantine lectionaries see, M.-L. Dolezal, "The Middle Byzantine Lectionary: Textual and Pictorial Expression of Liturgical Ritual" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1991).

⁴⁵Moreover, the image of John on the icon's back can be related to the Menologion section of a Gospel lectionary, which concentrates on the saints' feast days. In this way, the two sides of the Poganovo panel function as a visual Gospel lectionary, with its *Synaxarion* side bearing the Theophany and its *Menologion* side, the portrait of John.

⁴⁶John is portrayed once as the author of the Gospel and a second time as the prophetic writer of the Apocalypse. The second image places John in the ranks of the Old Testament prophets. V. Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina*, Biblioteca di storia dell'arte 7 (Turin, 1967), 371, figs. 509, 511; and A. Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters*, Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques 13 (Paris, 1984), no. 33. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out this reference to me.

⁴⁷Babić, "Sur l'icône de Poganovo," 63–64. According to the apocryphal accounts, John was believed to have remained alive until Christ's Second Coming. The same idea is expressed in the Gospel of John: "When Peter saw him [John] he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus said to him, 'if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple

recorded by John the Theologian. Similarly, the presence of Ezekiel and Habakkuk reveals the Old Testament sources on which John's prophetic vision draws.

The two faces of the icon function as a diptych depicting the author on one side and his vision on the other. The two sides are connected through the gesturing hand of John, a standard sign of both speech and direction. He points to the scene of the end of time and pronounces his prophecy. In addition, front and back are also united by the inscription written on the open book, commanding, "Son of Man, eat this scroll!" In a manner similar to Ezekiel, John is presented a scroll by an angel and asked to eat it (Rev. 10:9). By consuming it, he is given the knowledge to prophesy what is to come at the end of time. The command "Eat!" written on Habakkuk's open book can thus be perceived as an address to John as well. He is the one who both consumes the divine revelation and prophesies its contents.

In the prayers written in the fifteenth-century by Symeon of Thessalonike for the feast of the Metastasis, the Evangelist is eulogized for his prophecy about the end of time, the resurrection of the dead, and the salvation of the righteous.⁴⁸ The same concepts are expressed through the images of the Poganovo icon, which reveal the Apostle foretelling the end of time and offering the view of salvation in Christ. Symeon of Thessalonike's writings, like the Poganovo icon, record a contemporary perception of the prophetic role of John the Theologian. His cult intensified significantly during the Palaiologan period; many new sanctuaries were dedicated to the saint and more scenes of his life were represented in art.⁴⁹

A CALL FOR SALVATION

Along with its use during the celebrations of Easter and John's Metastasis, the Poganovo icon also played an important role as an intercessor for the salvation of its donors, and its images were designed to address this function. Both the Virgin and John the Evangelist were selected as ideal intercessors, forming a Deesis on the donors' behalf.

The Virgin is addressed as Kataphyge. This name has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Babić argued that it referred to the moment when the Mother of God sought refuge in John after Christ's death.⁵⁰ Other scholars have perceived the name as designating a particular iconographic type of the Theotokos. I do not believe that Kataphyge exemplifies John's act of offering refuge to the Virgin, but rather that the name is addressed to the Theotokos and qualifies her function as intercessor on behalf of the

would not die" (John 21:20–23). See also Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 711–26; and *Menaion tou Ianouariou [-Dekemvriou]*, 455–56.

⁴⁸ Νεκρῶν ἡ ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωὴν ἡμᾶς ἔγειρον, Ὡς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτε φωνῆ σου νεκροὺς ἐγείρεις καὶ κρίνεις ἅπαντας, εὐχαῖς τοῦ σοῦ ζῶντος μαθητοῦ τοῦ σέ καταγγείλαντος, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον: I. Phountoules, *Symeon archiepiskopou Thessalonikes: ta leitourgika syngrammata*, Etaireia makedonikon spoudon 10 (Thessalonike, 1968), 162; Θεατὴς ἐδείχθη τῶν ἀρρήτων, τῆς δόξης Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου Χριστοῦ, ἀγγέλοις ὠμίλησε, τὰ μέλλοντα ἔγνωκε, τὴν χάριν τὴν ἐπτάφωτον εἶδε τοῦ Πνεύματος, τῇ νεύσει τοῦ υἱοῦ σου, παρθένε, ὁ ἀποκαλύπτεις ἰδὼν μύστης καὶ φίλος: *ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁹ Many of the churches around Poganovo are also dedicated to the same saint. See L. Mavrodinova, *Zemenskata Zŭrkva* (Sofia, 1980). Spatharakis and Klinkenberg, "The Pictorial Cycle of the Life of St. John the Evangelist," 420–40. The intensification of the cult of John the Evangelist in the Palaiologan period is a phenomenon that needs further study.

⁵⁰ Babić, "Sur l'icône de Poganovo," 61; and Subotić, "Ikona vasilise Jelene," 29.

suffering and weak.⁵¹ The name does not identify any iconographic type of the Virgin and instead evokes an ideal quality of the Mother of God to offer refuge.⁵² The name appears very often in the Marian canons.⁵³ The earliest use of this word—as, the verb *katapheugo*—is attested in an early fourth-century prayer to the Virgin.⁵⁴ In addition, the Virgin is called Kataphyge in the liturgy for Holy Week.⁵⁵

It is also possible that Kataphyge refers to the famous sanctuaries of the Virgin. As mentioned earlier, the *hypogeum* in Thessalonike, where St. Demetrios was killed, was dedicated to the Virgin Kataphyge.⁵⁶ An even more illustrious religious site was the *kataphyge* of the Virgin Zoodochos Pege in Constantinople.⁵⁷ The sanctuary was restored and brought to prominence once again in the end of the thirteenth century. Most of the miracles performed at the shrine were healings through water and the intercession of the Virgin.⁵⁸ At the Constantinopolitan *kataphyge*, the power of the Virgin was clearly associated with healing waters. The Poganovo panel suggests a similar connection between the Mother of God and water through the image of the life-giving lake depicted on the icon's other side.

The Virgin is also a chosen intercessor because she has received proleptic immortality. The Mother of God bodily ascended to Heaven at her Koimesis, or Dormition. By seeking refuge in her, believers hope to find similar salvation. This desire is sometimes graphically represented in Palaiologan manuscripts. One of the most striking examples is offered by a late fourteenth-century psalter at Oxford (Christ Church gr. 61, fol. 102v) (Fig. 10). In this miniature, the Virgin actually pulls the monk and donor of the manuscript, Kaloeidas, from the grave, leading him to Christ represented on the next page. However, unlike the active and vigorous figure of the Virgin in the manuscript, Mary of the Poganovo icon is passive: a refuge of grief and a receptacle of internalized sorrow.

Like the Virgin, John is also an intercessor who has been given proleptic immortality, since he bodily ascended at his Metastasis. Thus both figures could be seen as witnesses to the Theophany depicted on the icon's other side. If we place the two faces of the icon on one plane in our mind's eye, the constructed image conjures up a Deesis scene with the Virgin and John standing beside the vision of Christ. An example of the standard

⁵¹A similar idea is suggested by Grabar, "A propos d'une icône byzantine," 302–4, and later on by E. Bakalova, "Aspekti na süotnoshenieto na slovesen text-izobrajenie v bülgarskoto srednovekovie," *Problemi v izkustvoto* 1 (1991): 3–20, esp. 14–17.

⁵²Grabar, "Les images de la Vierge de Tendresse: type iconographique et thème (à propos des deux icônes à Dečani)," *Zograf* 6 (1975): 25–30; idem, "Remarques sur l'iconographie byzantine de la Vierge," *CahArch* 26 (1977): 169–78, esp. 171, 176; both repr. in A. Grabar, *L'art paléochrétien et l'art byzantin* (London, 1979).

⁵³S. Eustratiades, *He Theotokos en te hymnographia* (Chennevières-sur-Marne, 1930), 33. The canons are published in idem, *Theotokarion* (Chennevières-sur-Marne, 1931). The Virgin is called Kataphyge in the following canons: 2:208, 10:149, 15:112, 18:20, 20:169, 38:202, 55:16, 67:9.

⁵⁴E. Mercenier, "L'antienne Mariale grecque: la plus ancienne," *Le Muséon* 52 (1939): 229–33; and O. Stegmüller, "Sub Tuum Praesidium: Bemerkung zur älteste Überlieferung," *Zeitschrift für Kirchliche Theologie* 74 (1952): 76–82; and G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexikon* (Oxford, 1961–68), 752.

⁵⁵*The Lenten Triodion*, 572–73.

⁵⁶Xyngopoulos, "Sur l'icône bilatérale de Poganovo," 347; and idem, *Symbolai eis ten topographian tes byzantines Thessalonikes, Etaireias Makedonikon Spoudon* 2 (Thessalonike, 1949), 7–20.

⁵⁷A.-M. Talbot, "Čudotvornye obrazy v Konstantinopol'skom khrame Životonosnogo istočnika," *Čudotvornaja Ikona v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, ed. A. M. Lidov (Moscow, 1996), 117–22; and eadem, "Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges and Its Art," *DOP* 48 (1994): 135–65.

⁵⁸AASS, Nov. 3: 885.

composition is offered by the fourteenth-century fresco in the parekklesion of Kariye Camii (Fig. 11).⁵⁹ Here Christ appears in an aureole of light, flanked by the Virgin and John the Baptist. In the Poganovo icon, the Evangelist has become the second mediator, replacing the Baptist. This substitution reveals once again the importance placed on John the Evangelist in the Poganovo panel.⁶⁰ Moreover, both the Virgin and John have been assimilated into the figure of Christ. For the Evangelist, this transformation occurs at the moment of the Crucifixion. For the Virgin, the change is associated with her image in the apse mosaic of the Latomos monastery. According to the *Diegesis*, the original representation of the Virgin in the church of Hosios David miraculously turned into an image of Christ.⁶¹ Christ's portrait on the Poganovo icon recalls this moment of transformation because it is identified as "the one of the miracle of Latomos." Thus the inscription calls forth the memory of the legendary metamorphosis of the image of the Virgin into one of Christ. Consequently, both the Mother of God and John, depicted on one side of the panel, could be perceived as assimilated into the One—into Christ in the mandorla of light shown on the other side.

By portraying the ideal intercessors, the Virgin and John the Evangelist, and by offering a vision of Christ as the savior and judge at the end of time, the Poganovo icon ideally fulfilled its function to intercede on behalf of the souls of the deceased donors. Furthermore, the vision of Christ at Latomos was specifically associated with funerary spaces already in the middle Byzantine period. The relationship is exemplified by the use of the Vision of Latomos scene in a twelfth-century fresco in the narthex of the ossuary of the monastery at Bačkovo.⁶² The functional meaning⁶³ of the Vision of Latomos was thus clearly associated with death and salvation. The presence of the same scene on the Poganovo icon would have immediately triggered the funerary connotations of the subject-matter.

The icon was the focus of litanies and prayers for the deceased, and its images played an active role. The panel gave a tangible form to ideas of death and salvation. The Poganovo icon not only shows Christ at the Second Coming, but presents John as the guide who will lead the viewer to the Theophany. Salvation is conveyed through visible form: the figure of John, his gesture, and his vision. In a recent study, Marie-José Mondzain has argued that the difference between theology and *economy*, or God's salvific plan, is the difference between believing without seeing versus believing while seeing.⁶⁴ The Po-

⁵⁹P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, 4 vols. (New York–Princeton, 1966–75), 1:202 and 3:374.

⁶⁰While John the Baptist judges the human race sternly and harshly, John the Evangelist appears to be a more sensitive and empathetic figure. In the visual tradition, he is the apostle who mourns Christ at the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and the Lamentation; similarly, he is the figure most emotionally engaged at the Koimesis of the Virgin, leaning over her bier to kiss the dead body.

⁶¹καὶ ἐν πρὸς ἀνατολᾶς ἀψίδι γραφῆναι τὴν ἀγνὴν Θεομήτορα, τὴν τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν δηλονότι μεσίτην καὶ σώτειραν. γραφομένης οὖν τῆς εἰκόνας καὶ ἤδη πρὸς πέρας τοῦ ἔργου βλέποντος, ὡς τῆ ὑστεραία ὁ γράφων παραγένετο, ἢ καὶ πέρας ἐπιθήσειν τῇ γραφῇ ἐβουλεύετο [. . .] ὁρᾷ γραφῆν ἐτέραν καὶ οὐ τὴν αὐτήν, πολὺ τὸ διάφορον ἔχουσαν καὶ παρηλλαγμένον ἀπὸ τῆς ὁμοιότητος, ἐν εἶδει ἀνδρικῶ τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐπὶ νεφέλης φωτεινῆς καὶ ἐπὶ πτερύγων ἀνέμων ὀχούμενον καὶ περιπατοῦντα: *Varia Graeca Sacra*, 107 (see above, note 20).

⁶²E. Bakalova, *Bačkovskata kostniža* (Sofia 1977), 67–72, figs. 34–37.

⁶³H. Belting, "An Image and Its Function in the Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium," *DOP* 34/35 (1980–81): 1–16.

⁶⁴M.-J. Mondzain, *Image, icône, économie: les sources byzantines de l'image contemporain* (Paris, 1996), 40.

ganovo icon participates in the *economy*, because it offers a visible manifestation of the promise of salvation.

Since the salvific plan is revealed at the Annunciation, it is the female body that allows for the transformation of the invisible divine into the visible human form. Therefore, the *economy* relates to the female body of the Virgin.⁶⁵ The Poganovo icon extends this idea to include John as well. Both the Virgin and John have consumed the invisible divine Word. The Virgin is the receptacle where Christ acquires a human form, while John, by consuming the Word, becomes the container of the prophecy of salvation at the end of time. Each has given a visible form to the divine Logos and, thus, has made manifest the salvific plan to the human race.

It is this assurance in the coming salvation that is expressed in John's sad but knowing face. The Virgin's inconsolable grief is juxtaposed with John's sorrow transfigured by knowledge. While for John the "Word is God" (John 1:1), and this Word—Christ—becomes manifest again at the time of the Last Judgment, for the Virgin the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14), and she relates to Christ in human terms as her child. Her maternal relationship to Christ is contrasted to the theological relationship defined by John. The two figures express the dichotomy of human suffering at the loss of a loved one and the religious dogma of salvation: feeling is superseded by understanding. Just as the eyes of the Virgin follow the gesturing hand of John, so the believers/viewers are asked to follow and accept the vision of salvation represented on the icon's other side.

THE ICON IN THE CELEBRATIONS OF LITURGICAL FEASTS

The complex iconography of the Poganovo icon and the interaction of the images on the two sides unveil a variety of meanings: the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, the Metastasis of John, and a Deesis with the Virgin Kataphyge and John the Theologian. These scenes speak directly to the icon's use during the celebrations of Easter, the Metastasis of the monastery's patron saint, John the Evangelist, and the commemorative services conducted on the death anniversaries of the donors. Viewers engaged the icon in both the public sphere, as the visual focus of the main feast days of the monastery, and in the private sphere, as a site for personal contemplation of death and salvation.⁶⁶

The double function of the Poganovo icon is characteristic of a number of other panels, as attested by the foundation documents of several earlier monasteries. The liturgical use of icons is discussed at great length in the *typika* of the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople founded by Emperor John II Komnenos (1118–43)⁶⁷ and the Kosmosteira monastery at Pherrai built by the emperor's brother, Isaakios Komnenos.⁶⁸ The

⁶⁵Mondzain, *Image, icône, économie*, 199 ff.

⁶⁶Carr, "The Vita Icon of St. Basil: Note on a Byzantine Object," in *Four Icons in the Menil Collection*, ed. B. Davezac, Menil Collection Monographs 1 (Houston, 1992), 94–105, esp. 102.

⁶⁷*Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of Surviving Founder's Typika and Testaments*, ed. J. Thomas and A. C. Hero (Washington, D.C., 2000), 725–81. None of the later *typika* of the 14th and 15th centuries provides information on the subject. They focus on the administration and the economic structure of the monastery rather than on the way the church and its icons were prepared and used during the important feast days.

⁶⁸*Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 782–858.

texts specify how the icons were prepared for the special celebrations and in what services they were employed. On important feast days, the principal icons of the church were to be provided with additional oil lamps and candles.⁶⁹ The light reflected from their gold backgrounds further increased the icons' radiance. Such illumination would have played an important role in the perception of the Poganovo panel, because it would have enhanced the experience of the divine vision of Christ emerging out of the radiance of a gold and blue aureole. Light is also symbolic of salvation and thus associated with the idea of Christ offering his Grace.

The icons were carried in procession during the celebration of Easter and the feast days of the patron saints, as attested in the *typikon* of the Kosmosoteira:

However, since I am never satiated in my longing for an honorable and comprehensive performance with regard to the feast of my benefactress, I wish, over and above all that has been said, for the following: after matins on that day on which we celebrate the Dormition, I wish for a number of priests and deacons to don the priestly vestments. The superior with them should carry in his hands the Gospel, the other in line the icon of the Mother of God, and another the great cross which is set at the sanctuary. The appropriate *ektenes* having been celebrated therein, the priests should come out of the church bearing these objects, with appropriate illumination preceding them, and go out the gate of the enclosure in a procession. They should go down to the cemetery of the monks, and circle thus towards the other entrance. . . . They should enter the church and return the sacred objects they have been carrying to their required holy places.⁷⁰

On Easter Day, the day of the Resurrection of Christ, my God, there must be a procession like the one proposed for the Dormition of my ever-pure Lady, Mother of God.⁷¹

The Kosmosoteira monastery was dedicated to the Virgin. On her main feast day, the Koimesis, the icon of the Virgin was taken in procession together with the cross and Gospel book. An identical ceremony was also performed at Easter. Since the Poganovo monastery was dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, its double-sided panel was most likely involved in similar processions on the patron's feast day, the Metastasis of John, and at Easter.

Finally, the *typika* also prescribe the role icons played in commemorative rites. In both the Pantokrator and the Kosmosoteira monasteries, the icons became the focus of prayers and active intercession on behalf of the souls of the deceased. In the Pantokrator monastery, processional icons, or *signa*,⁷² were brought to the tomb at the *heron*.⁷³ The commemorative services at this monastery were very elaborate, befitting the imperial status of its patrons. By contrast, at the Kosmosoteira monastery a more personal commemorative rite was performed that probably more closely reflects the services at the Poganovo monastery. The *typikon* of the Kosmosoteira records the following:

⁶⁹ Ibid., 753 (Pantokrator), 802 (Kosmosoteira).

⁷⁰ Ibid., 827.

⁷¹ Ibid., 843.

⁷² For a discussion of the meaning of the word *signon*, see, N. P. Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy," *DOP* 45 (1991): 45–57, esp. 46; and M. N. Butyrskij, "Vizantijskoe bogosluženie u ikony soglasno tipiku monastyrja Pantokratora 1136 goda," in Lidov, *Čudotvornaja Ikona v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi* (as above, note 57), 145–58.

⁷³ *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 739, 755. For a discussion of the development of the imperial commemorative cult at the Pantokrator monastery out of the traditional Friday night *presbeia* in the Blacher-nai and the Friday monastic memorial services, see, N. Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy," 52 ff.

Instead of any kind of adornment of fantastic glory to my tomb, [I want] the icon from Rhaidestos of the Mother of God as the *Kosmosoteira*, [which was] sent down to me from heaven, and which I framed with ornament of gold and silver. [I want it] to be placed at one end of my tomb in its projected form. It should remain resting at that spot throughout all time, preserved without change, to mediate for my wretched soul. Furthermore, I wish [the icon of] Christ, which is the same size, to rest alongside it, the placement of these icons being appropriate for them, and pleasing as well, and illumination suitable. . . .

At any rate I wish the tomb to be divided from the entire narthex by the bronze railing I mentioned earlier, but the access to the tomb [should be] through [this railing]. Every evening, after the dismissal of vespers, I want the superior and the rest of the monks to enter, and in front of the holy icons standing there to pronounce the *trisagion* and say a certain number of *Kyrie eleisons* for mercy upon my soul. They [must] not fail to make the dismissal in this way, but [must] propitiate God and the Mother of God for me, with these [prayers].⁷⁴

In the Kosmosoteira monastery the icons of the Virgin Kosmosoteira from Rhaidestos and the icon of Christ were moved from the iconostasis and set permanently on the donor's tomb.⁷⁵ The supplications were performed in front of these two panels.

There is no surviving evidence about the location of the Poganovo icon in the church. Grabar suggested that the panel was placed behind the altar,⁷⁶ while Voordeckers argued that it was set in the iconostasis next to the despotic icons.⁷⁷ By contrast, I believe that the Poganovo panel functioned as a *signon*; it was placed on a *proskynetarion*, a stand in front of the iconostasis, and on special occasions moved to the donor's tomb.⁷⁸ The icon was thus in public view, while remaining accessible for personal contemplation.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

The scenes of the Poganovo icon trigger the recollection of numerous images in the mind of the viewer. This process is further stimulated by the texts of the liturgical rites in which the icon had an active role. The allusions to the Crucifixion and Resurrection are prompted by the liturgy for Easter, while John's apocalyptic vision and his proleptic immortality are called forth during the celebration of his Metastasis. Similarly, associations with the Parousia of Christ, the Deesis, and the life-giving waters are alluded to in the commemorative services held on the death anniversaries of the donors. The Poganovo panel offers a visual focus for these liturgical celebrations. The enigma of its elusive images dissipates once the icon becomes part of the liturgical rite, the processions, and prayers. On these occasions, the images represented and the images imagined merge to form a vision of salvation.

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⁷⁴ *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 839.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 802.

⁷⁶ Grabar, "A propos d'une icône," 299.

⁷⁷ Voordeckers, "L'interprétation liturgique," 62.

⁷⁸ This hypothesis is supported by the evidence of similar icons at the Pantokrator and the Kosmosoteira monasteries, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 739, 753–56, 839.

⁷⁹ Carr, "The Vita Icon of St. Basil," 102.

