

REPRESENTATIONS OF DONORS IN THE MONUMENTAL ART OF VENETIAN CRETE

(Taf. 63–68, Abb. 1–9; Map 1)

Abstract

The monumental art of Venetian Crete (1211–1669) provides rich and informative material for the study of late and post-Byzantine wall paintings. A number of these churches include portraits of the donors that financed their erection and/or decoration. Using as a starting point the depiction of the donors of the Church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana in Chania, dated 1327/28, this paper will attempt to offer a general survey through selected representative examples on the depiction of Cretan donors by focusing on their placement within the iconographic programme of the church and their appearance. Furthermore, it will try to assess to what extent the representation of the donors reflect the Cretan society of their time and the cross-cultural interaction between the native Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic colonists population.

In the year 1327/28 the families of Theotokis Kotzis, Manuel Melisourgos, and Nikitas and Demetrios Sideris, residents of the village of Kavalariana, in the former province of Selino, prefecture of Chania, in south western Crete, combined their finances in order to erect and decorate a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael (Abb. 1–2 and Map 1)¹. The use of the verb *εγγώνει* (was made/built) in the dedicatory inscription that accompanies their portraits², suggests that the erection and decoration of this edifice was a direct product of the wish of this group of donors – in other words they did not renovate an already existing church (as the use of the verb *ανακενύσται* [renovated] in other dedicatory inscriptions probably indicates)³. In this inscription, unusually, the Venetians are addressed as ‘great’ and ‘masters’⁴.

At the time these three Cretan families decided to execute their wish to build a church dedicated to the Archangel Michael, their island had been under Venetian rule for just over a century, since 1211. The Venetians held on firmly to their precious possession in the Mediterranean for a further three-and-a-half centuries, until 1669, when they were forced to hand it over to the Ottoman Turks at the end of a prolonged war that led the Republic almost to financial ruin⁵. The rule of the Venetians over Crete is culturally one of the most prolific periods in the long history of the island and with over eight-hundred surviving churches built and/or decorated between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries it has created a visual paradise for any researcher who wishes to engage with late Byzantine monumental decoration.

¹ LyMBEROPOULOU 2006, 204–217. Please note that in 1997 the Greek government introduced a compulsory merging of small local authorities with a programme bearing the symbolic name ‘Ioannis Kapodistrias’. Under this initiative the geographical qualification between prefecture and province became obsolete. Until this development took place, however, the division of the island in four prefectures with a total of twenty provinces had changed very little since the fourteenth century, when it was introduced by the Venetians (LyMBEROPOULOU 2010a, 160 f.). I have deemed necessary to mention the former provinces in my present paper, since the majority of existing publications on the monumental art of the island refer to them.

² LyMBEROPOULOU 2006, 194 f.

³ The verb is included in a large number of church inscriptions recorded by GIUSEPPE GEROLA: Gerola 1932, 390–595.

⁴ Gerola 1932, 453 f. no. 28; LyMBEROPOULOU 2006, 194 f.; LyMBEROPOULOU 2013, 61–63.

⁵ For a concise summary on the history of the island under the Venetians see Maltezou 1988; Maltezou 1991.

Historical Context and Cultural Interaction on Crete

Like all imposed rules, Venetian domination was initially opposed by the native Cretans. The predominant opinion is that the local population remained hostile towards the colonists until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, that until then there was no in-depth cultural interaction between the two sets of the island's inhabitants⁶. The unique formula that the Kavalariana inscription uses, where the Venetians are addressed as 'great' and 'masters', has been interpreted many a time as an exception that proves this rule.

Historically speaking, the building of the Church of the Archangel Michael falls between two major events that seem to mark shifts in Veneto-Cretan relations. Twenty-eight years before, in 1299, the Venetians negotiated a treaty with probably the most powerful Cretan aristocrat and landowner, Alexios Kallergis, who had led an uprising against the colonists since 1283⁷. Kallergis, driven by personal goals and gain, mainly to maintain land, possessions and a position of standing within Cretan society, pressurized the Venetian authorities to such an extent that by 1299, they were willing to negotiate and to settle in order to safeguard their control over the island. The treaty demonstrated that by the thirteenth century the Cretan nobility, as long as their status was guaranteed, did not show a preference for either the emperor in Constantinople or the doge in Venice.

About forty years after the completion of the church, between 1363 and 1367, the island witnessed the violent Saint Titus uprising, in which Venetian settlers joined forces with the native population against the rule of the central government in Venice⁸. The attack by Venetians against the mother city meant that the Republic was not interested in a settlement in this case: The rebellion was crushed and the leaders beheaded. The Serenissima's different approach towards this rebellion is irrelevant for the purpose of this paper; what should be underlined is that, clearly, a number of Cretans were not opposed to political collaboration with Venetian settlers, about a century-and-a-half after their arrival.

The interaction between the native inhabitants and Venetians during these two uprisings suggests that the romantic notion of a struggle between Cretans and their foreign rulers should be taken with a grain of salt.

The Kavalariana donors are not the only group of local inhabitants who joined forces to build and decorate a church in their village. Evidence for the collaboration of individuals, families or even whole villages can be found in a number of churches in the form of inscriptions and/or in the still surviving portraits of their patrons⁹. The large number of churches dated or datable between the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century, suggests a degree of prosperity in their relevant communities, as well as a degree of political stability. In both cases – that is financially and politically – it would be incorrect to ignore the role of the Venetians, who via trade and sustained rule established and facilitated these conditions on Crete¹⁰. The Venetians traded extensively wine, cheese, honey, wood and later olive oil – products that must have contributed to improving the financial situation of the rural Cretan communities. And after the violent ending of the Saint Titus uprising in 1367, there is no further mention in the sources of any major rebellions against the Venetian rule on the island, which indicates a relative political stability that, in its turn, would have improved conditions for trade even further¹¹.

The image we have of Cretan church decoration from the Venetian period is by necessity incomplete. Due to urban redevelopment in the major cities on the north coast of Crete – Chania, Rethymnon, Herakleion and Siteia (Map 1) the majority of the churches that once stood in these cities have been lost. Nonetheless, and as mentioned above, Cretan regional monumental decoration offers rich material. Yet, it was only in the mid-1990's that this art begun to be studied systematically. As a consequence, there is not as yet a comprehensive secondary literature on the subjects presented by these wall paintings, such as donor portraits¹². This paper

⁶ Lymberopoulou 2013, 62.

⁷ On the treaty: Mertzios 1949; McKee 2000, 74–86.

⁸ McKee 1994.

⁹ Gerola 1932, 390–595.

¹⁰ Lymberopoulou 2010a, 162–164; Lymberopoulou 2013, 79–81.

¹¹ The rebellion of Saint Titus is the last mentioned in the Venetian documents as *guerra publica occurrente* (open war) between Venice and the Cretans: Maltezou 1988, 126.

¹² Valuable information is available but scattered in various publications. For a reference to this literature see Lymberopoulou 2010b, 370. To these Spatharakis 2010; Spatharakis 2012 and Spatharakis 2015 should be added.

will compare the way the Kavalariana donors have been portrayed in their church to other representations of donors in the island. The choice of the Kavalariana donors as my starting point, is not a coincidence: their church was the subject of my Ph.D thesis and the subsequent monograph based on it¹³; I am therefore not only familiar with this particular and rather intriguing group, but also very fond of them.

The Kavalariana Donors

The Church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana is a single nave, barrel-vaulted building, with three blind arches in each of the long walls (north and south)¹⁴. The sanctuary is situated on the east side, while the original west wall has been demolished in order for a modern extension to be added, a sort of narthex. The church also features a number of further modern additions, such as an iconostasis, a chandelier, and newly fitted floor and windows. The original architecture and dimensions of the edifice are similar to those of the majority of the surviving rural churches on the island¹⁵. The same is valid for the Byzantine iconography and style of the programme executed by the painter Ioannis (John), as the dedicatory inscription informs us: the Byzantine character and, by Palaiologan standards, conservative nature of the wall paintings also fall within the parameters that we are presented with in this part of the island, in the far south-west, at a fair distance from the nearest major town in the north coast, Chania, and even further away from the capital Candia – present-day Herakleion (Map 1)¹⁶. Despite the conventional dimensions and decoration, the way the donors are portrayed at Kavalariana is positively intriguing.

In total, fourteen donor portraits are found in the church, divided in two groups of seven and placed symmetrically in the central blind arches of the north and south walls (Abb. 1–2). The dedicatory inscription forms part of this diptych, situated in the middle of the nave without interrupting its religious iconographic programme, while at the same time adding a distinctive secular dimension to it (Abb. 2). On the north wall the upper part of the blind arch is occupied by the Archangel Michael who blesses the donors depicted underneath with extended arms (Abb. 1). Starting on the left, these are: a young woman, whose name has not survived; Anna Kotzena; a male child called Manouel; Theotokis Kotzis; and Theodore. On the west reveal the donor George is depicted, while on the east reveal the donor Michael has been placed (Abb. 1 a, and 1 b)¹⁷. In all likelihood this consists a family portrait of the Theotokis Kotzis family: himself and his wife Anna in the middle, portrayed in the familiar way of couples, who, as we shall see, are depicted offering a model of their sponsored church between them; here, however, the couple is in supplication towards the patron saint, Archangel Michael; between them stands what must have been their youngest son, Manouel, while the rest of the family comprises three young men, Theodoros (Theodore), Georgios (George) and Michael and a young woman/girl.

Its counterpart, the middle blind arch on the south wall, has been divided in three sections, in order to accommodate the inscription at the top, which, as we have seen, praises the Venetians and their rule (Abb. 2). In the middle row to the left the space is once more occupied by the patron saint, the Archangel Michael, while to the right the Archangel Raphael is depicted. Underneath, the portraits of the remaining seven donors have been placed, who starting on the left are: a female child; Manouel Melisourgos; Nikitas Sideris; Katerina (Catherine); and Demetrios. Two further female donors, whose names do not survive, have been placed on the east and west reveals respectively (Abb. 2 a, and 2 b)¹⁸. In this part of the wall we have three further families: Manouel Melisourgos with his wife and young daughter; Nikitas Sideris with his wife Catherine; and Demetrios Sideris with his wife. The placement of Demetrios' name in the inscription, after that of Nikitas Sideris and without a surname, suggests that Demetrios' surname was also Sideris. Furthermore, it indicates that he was not the head of the Sideris family, a role clearly held by Nikitas; Demetrios may have been either his eldest son, or his younger brother, or his paternal cousin. Unlike the three young

¹³ Lymberopoulou 2006.

¹⁴ On the architecture of the church see Lymberopoulou 2006, 14–18.

¹⁵ On Cretan architecture in general see Gallas 1983.

¹⁶ Lymberopoulou 2006, 181–193.

¹⁷ Lymberopoulou 2006, 204–206, 208.

¹⁸ Lymberopoulou 2006, 206–209.

male Kotzis family members on the blind arch on the opposite wall, Demetrios' married status qualified him as a male adult and earned him a place in the inscription.

The attire of the females in this group portrait follows the Byzantine fashion for women, which consisted of a *hypokamison* and *kamision*, a long dress and a mantle, featuring in other surviving portraits on the island¹⁹. Their heads and hair are covered by *phakiolia*, a headgear often encountered in other female portraits in Cretan examples²⁰. In general, covered heads suggest women of a mature age, usually married and/or widowed. At the same time, it seems that young girls and female children, as those seen at Kavalariana, had the right to keep their hair loose²¹.

The wardrobe of the Kavalariana men is more diversified: Theotokis Kotzis is the only one who has opted for Byzantine attire, with the *hypokamison* and a garment on top. A number of other portraits of men from Cretan churches display garments of Byzantine origins, similar to those worn by the donor Kotzis, with inner and outer layers, the outer layer with buttons stitched on (Abb. 3)²². All six of the remaining Kavalariana men have chosen to wear garments with red and white checkered patterns, as is the case in the attires of Theodore, George and Michael Kotzis and Demetrios Sideris (Abb. 1–2); or with diagonally alternating stripes, as in the case of Manouel Melisourgos (Abb. 2); or with horizontally alternating stripes as in the case of Nikitas Sideris (Abb. 2). These garments are known as multi-coloured or *mi-partie*; they refer to heraldic colours and it is generally accepted that they point to a western custom that was followed by other Cretan male donors²³.

The late STAVROS MADERAKIS, in one of his numerous publications on Cretan wall paintings, argued that in cases where the donors are depicted wearing garments pointing to western fashion, this fashion is not directly inspired by Venetian examples²⁴. For him this constituted a further indication of the hostility of the native population towards their colonists²⁵. Based on the examples discussed in ROSITA LEVI-PISETZKY's monumental work on Italian costume²⁶ there is little evidence regarding Italian fashion from any city dating from the fourteenth century. In other words, it would be impossible to verify MADERAKIS' claim. Yet it is, indeed, unlikely that the shape of the *mi-partie* garments worn by the Cretan donors was inspired directly by Venetian fashion. Nevertheless, and while a substantial amount of research still needs to be carried out on the attire of Cretan donors, it would be difficult to argue in favour of MADERAKIS' position. The presence of Venetian glasses in the murals depicting Herod's Feast and the Last Supper at Panagia Kera at Kritsa, dated to the fourteenth century, for example, suggest that there may have been a diffusion of Venetian material culture on Crete and that patrons certainly did not shy away from incorporating such Venetian references in church wall paintings²⁷.

Class and Ethnic Background of the Donors

Based on the surviving dedicatory inscriptions and representations of donors, in the majority of the cases the erection and/or decoration of churches were the result of a collective donation, which involved either the whole or a part of the community²⁸. The inscription at Kavalariana is once more exceptional in that it records the donors alphabetically. In general, the majority of the surviving inscriptions do not reveal any particular plan or apparent order in presenting names. Probably because of their standing in the local communities, priests tend to be among the first mentioned. Nevertheless, individuals may well appear next to families, priests next to widows. While in certain cases the inscriptions suggest that the finances of certain individu-

¹⁹ Lymberopoulou 2006, 216 f.

²⁰ Spatharakis 2001, 75.

²¹ Lymberopoulou 2006, 216.

²² Lymberopoulou 2006, 213 f.

²³ Lymberopoulou 2006, 214–216 fig. 121.

²⁴ Maderakis 1988, 42–44, 47–48.

²⁵ Maderakis 2008, 194.

²⁶ Levi-Pisetzky 1964–1969. For a brief description of the dress code of men and women of Sfakia on Crete see Vecellio 1598 (2008), 476–477.

²⁷ Lymberopoulou 2007.

²⁸ Gerola 1932, 390–595; see also Kalopissi-Verti 2012. See also Lymberopoulou a.

als/families were better than others²⁹, there is no indication that any of these people belong to the ‘upper class’. ‘Priest’, ‘deacon’, ‘monk’, ‘nun’ and ‘nomikos’ (lawyer) are among the titles that accompany donors’ names.

As SALLY MCKEE has pointed out, in case of Venetian Crete, it would be misleading to make assumptions regarding the ethnic origin on the basis of surnames³⁰. While it is safe to assume that the donors of the Cretan rural Byzantine churches were in their majority of Greek Orthodox origin, at the same time the possibility that Venetian Catholic settlers chipped in for erection of some of these churches cannot be excluded. Evidence suggests that these settlers were, actually, attending Orthodox services in regional Crete, due to shortage of Catholic priests³¹. Furthermore, an inscription in the Church of the Holy Apostles at the village of Prines, in the former province of Selino, prefecture of Chania, dated to the fourteenth century, emphasizes specifically that the donors were Orthodox, which suggests they may not all have been so in other instances³². Moreover, the inclusion of Saint Francis in the iconographic programmes of four Cretan Orthodox churches, may offer additional indication of Catholic involvement in their decoration³³. Whatever the ethnic origins of the donors who paid for the edifice and its decoration, it is likely that those who had their portraits painted within it represented the most important contributors and/or those who held the most important social position within the community (such as priests).

Arrangements of Donors’ Portraits within Cretan Iconographic Programmes

Representations of donors depicted offering a church are relatively common, not only on Crete but throughout the Byzantine world³⁴. On Crete, a number of churches where portraits of the donors are included show the model of the church being held and offered by a couple. In the case of the Church of Christ at Myrthios, in the former province of Hagios Vasileios, prefecture of Rethymnon, dated to the fourteenth century³⁵, it would be safe to assume that the placement of the couple’s young daughter directly under the church model, was probably intentional on her parents’ behalf, since it symbolically constitutes a protective roof over the child’s head (Abb. 4).

In the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin at Roussospiti in the former province of Rethymnon, prefecture of Rethymnon, dated to the beginning of the fourteenth century (Abb. 5), the couple who presents the church is placed against the background of a tree, indicative of Paradise³⁶. The ultimate destination for a faithful Christian is to be admitted in Paradise after death. However, according to the Gospel of Saint Luke (23, 42–43) the good thief, who was crucified with Christ, is the only one who has the certainty of entering Paradise. In the words of Christ: ‘Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise’. No other Christian has this assurance. All they could do is strive to achieve it through good deeds. The act of sponsoring a church by contributing towards its erection and/or decoration would have been considered as a mighty aid in achieving this goal. This particular deed, therefore, may well have been encouraged by the local community and its priests as an incentive to further church construction. A number of Cretan examples portray exactly this wish – or even conviction – on behalf of the donors by depicting them among vegetation that stands for Paradise (Abb. 3. 5). It is assumed that when the donors are depicted with their hands crossed over their chest, as for example the child Manouel of the Kotzis family at Kavalariana (Abb. 1) or the male donor in the church of the Saviour at Akoumia, in the former province of Hagios Vasileios, prefecture of Rethymnon, dated 1389 (Abb. 3)³⁷, it is an indication that they were already deceased by the time their

²⁹ For example, in the Church of Saint Nicholas in the village of Maza, in the former province of Apokoronas, in the prefecture of Chania, dated 1325/26 and painted by Ioannis (John) Pagomenos: Lymberopoulou 2006, 176 f.; Lymberopoulou a.

³⁰ McKee 1998, 1, xii.

³¹ Lymberopoulou 2006, 9.

³² Gerola 1932, 466 f. no. 47.

³³ Lymberopoulou 2013, 65 note 17; see also Ranoutsaki 2011.

³⁴ One of the best known and most frequently quoted examples is the mosaic depicting Theodore Metochitis in his sponsored Chora monastery, completed by 1321: Underwood 1966, 2. 26.

³⁵ Gerola-Lassithiotakis 1961, 57 no. 301.

³⁶ Spatharakis 1999, 171–178 no. 17.

³⁷ Spatharakis 2001, 127–132 no. 45; see also Konstantoudaki-Kitromelidou 2014.

portrait was completed. There is a parallel in western art in images of donors depicted with arms crossed over their chest in their tombs³⁸.

The depiction of the deceased donor and priest Georgios (George) Klados in the Church of Saint John the Evangelist at Margarites, in the former province of Mylopotamos, prefecture of Rethymnon, dated 1383 (Abb. 6) could be interpreted as rather daring and beyond expressing the conviction that the priest has reached Paradise³⁹. Klados has been placed in the *Deesis* to the left side of Christ, replacing the customary presence of Saint John the Baptist (or John the Evangelist, who as the patron saint of this church could have stood in the place of the Baptist here). Hence it is suggested that not only he has reached Paradise, but also once there he acts as an intercessor for the souls of other humans, especially those of his local community.

A number of Cretan wall paintings offer us examples of donors depicted either kneeling or standing in supplication in the proximity of the enthroned Virgin and Child, Christ, the patron saint of the church, or other saints⁴⁰. Numerous examples survive and the assumption is that these donors have sponsored the particular painting in the proximity of which they are depicted. For example, in the case of the Church of Saint Nicholas at Maza in the former province of Apokoronas, prefecture of Chania, dated 1325/26 and signed by the painter Ioannis (John) Pagomenos, it would be safe to assume that the male donor depicted to the left of the patron saint of the church – who is dressed in *mi-patrie* garments, similar to those worn by Niketas Sideris at Kavalariana (Abb. 2) – was probably called Nicholas and sponsored or substantially contributed to this particular wall painting depicting the patron saint of the church, who was in all probability also his own patron and protector (Abb. 7)⁴¹.

It may be interesting to note here, that in the material I have explored so far, I have not yet found any examples of donors presented to the Virgin and Child by a patron saint, a practice common in western iconography⁴². The donors may be depicted either kneeling or standing in supplication in proximity to holy figures, probably an indication of a personal relation with and devotion to the particular saint. However, visually they do not seem to be placed under their direct protection, which could suggest a different approach to donor portraiture between Byzantine Cretan and western art.

The donors at Kavalariana are depicted neither offering a model of their church to the Archangel Michael, nor in Paradise. Nevertheless, they are depicted standing in supplication towards the Archangel. Due to Michael's crucial role in the Last Judgement, as the one responsible for weighing the souls, the dedication to him by this group of donors is probably indicative that the Kavalariana church was intended as their burial place⁴³. There is still a cemetery outside the church today, although this does not prove that there was one also in the fourteenth century. When examined in relation to other Cretan examples, the presentation of the Kavalariana donors suggests a co-ordinated and well-orchestrated plan. They are all grouped together in perfect symmetry and placed in the middle of the nave, effectively forming part of the iconographic programme, something which is unparalleled on Crete. Examples where, perhaps a specific planning in their presentation within the church could be detected, are offered by the donors in Saint George at Komitades in the former province of Sfakia, dated 1313/14 and painted by Ioannis (John) Pagomenos (Abb. 8)⁴⁴, and by those in Saint Anne at Anisaraki in the former province of Selino, dated 1457 (Abb. 9 a–c), both in the prefecture of Chania⁴⁵. One could argue that in both these cases the donors made a similar attempt at giving themselves an important presence within the iconographic programme of their churches. At Komitades (Abb. 8), the portraits of the two main donors occupy a large section of the north wall. They are depicted kneeling back-to-back underneath a blessing Saint Sophia. VASILIKI TSAMAKDA has argued that

³⁸ See, for example, Richardson 2007, 210 pl. 6, 2; 234 pl. 6, 24; 239 pl. 6, 28.

³⁹ Spatharakis 2010, 215–228 no. 23 figs. 333–336.

⁴⁰ As seen, for example, in the Church of the Virgin in the village of Kakodiki, in the former province of Selino, prefecture of Chania, dated 1331/32 and painted by Ioannis (John) Pagomenos: Lymberopoulou 2006, figs. 126, 128; Tsamakda 2012, figs. 16, 24, 25.

⁴¹ Lymberopoulou 2006, 175–177; Spatharakis 2001, 70–72 no. 23.

⁴² A number of western examples, where the patron saints present the donors to the Virgin and Child are illustrated in Velden 2000.

⁴³ Lymberopoulou 2006, 102–105.

⁴⁴ Lymberopoulou 2006, 171–173; Spatharakis 2001, 33–35 no. 11.

⁴⁵ Spatharakis 2001, 207–210 no. 68.

this is a representation of God's divine wisdom rather than of the Orthodox female saint⁴⁶; in this case, the two male donors visually convey their belief that God's wisdom is upon them. In Anisarakí (Abb. 9 a–c), one could argue that there is a movement from right to left, since two sets of donors flank the entrance door on the west wall, while a third set is depicted in the western blind arch of the south wall, and a final donor (dressed in *mi-partie* garments) depicted to the right of the blind arch⁴⁷. Still neither reaches the well-orchestrated level of the church at Kavalariana, where the display in the form of a diptych remains as unique as the Venetophile inscription that accompanies it. The exceptionally prominent placement of the Kavalariana donors in the middle of the sacred space, surrounded by holy events and persons – effectively surrounded by Paradise – perhaps reflects how secure they felt in their conviction that when the time came, they were all destined for Heaven⁴⁸.

Portraiture

The late STAVROS MADERAKIS suggested that the donors depicted in Cretan churches retain their facial characteristics in order to be identified and differentiated from the saintly persons with whom they share sacred space⁴⁹. The differentiation of facial characteristics is not *per se* necessary for such identification – the crucial element being the presence of a halo. None of the surviving portraits of Cretan donors, including those depicted amidst paradisiacal vegetation, are depicted with haloes. It is difficult to make a case for individualization among female donors, whose faces seem to have been comprised using the same basic characteristics regardless of the period and the area: round faces dominated by large, mostly almond-shaped eyes defined by black eyebrows, long noses ending in bulging tips with bulging nostrils and fleshy, well-formed lips. The facial characteristics of the female donors depicted in the church of Kavalariana do not show any attempt at individualization (Abb. 1 and 2). As mentioned above, covered/uncovered heads could be indicative of age of the female donors.

The faces of the male donors, too, display the aforementioned characteristics. However, in their portraits, there is some differentiation in the manner their hair and beards are styled. Obviously, the presence or absence of a beard is indicative of age. For example, at Kavalariana all the male donors whose names are mentioned in the inscription, are heads of families and married, hence of mature age, are depicted bearded; the rest are portrayed as beardless, young men (Abb. 1 and 2). Despite these indications of status within the family, it would be difficult to argue for real portraiture in these wall paintings. IOANNIS SPARTHARAKIS has suggested that the donor George Klados in the Church of Saint John the Evangelist at Margarites (Abb. 6) is a genuine portrait of the priest⁵⁰. However, the similarity of his facial modelling to that of the enthroned Christ nearby makes this suggestion doubtful. Both faces demonstrate the same thick, arched eyebrows; big, almond-shaped eyes accentuated by a thin line at their corners; bulging tip of the noses and nostrils; short, fleshy lips; dropping moustache; thinly modelled beard with a slim partition in its lower middle part.

The portraiture of the Cretan donors raises a number of issues that require further research in order to be answered: who were these donors and what do we know about them (e.g. socially, financially)? What was the process of deciding to build and decorate a church? How was the level of the financial contributions by the various donors agreed? How was the artist chosen and approached? How was the iconographic programme decided⁵¹? Such research will also lead to the revelation of further vital aspects of the Veneto-Cretan society.

⁴⁶ Tsamakda 2008, 223–225. For the female saint (Saint Sophia), see Lymberopoulou 2006, 105 f.

⁴⁷ Spatharakis 2001, 209. On the west wall to the right of the entrance door (as we face it) the donor Michael with his wife presenting a model of the church are depicted; behind Michael is the donor Nikolaos (Nicholas) (Abb. 9 a). On the west wall to the left of the entrance door the donor Georgios (George) and his wife presenting a model of the church are depicted (Abb. 9 b). On the western blind arch on the south wall the donor priest Ioannis (John) with his wife presenting a model of the church are depicted; behind the female donor, stands the donor Vasileios (Basil), son of Petros (Peter). A final donor dressed in *mi-partie* garments in the style worn by Niketas Sideris at Kavalariana (Abb. 2), is depicted to the right of the blind arch (as we face it; Abb. 9 c).

⁴⁸ Lymberopoulou 2018.

⁴⁹ Maderakis 1988, 39–40.

⁵⁰ Spatharakis 2010, 228, figs. 335. 336.

⁵¹ Financial issues and building processes are examined in Lymberopoulou 2010a; Lymberopoulou 2013; Tsamakda 2012.

The level of interaction, of receptiveness and of rejection between the two different sets of inhabitants – native Greek Orthodox and Venetian Roman Catholic – defined their ethnic identity. On the one hand, we need to explore and assess the cultural dialogue, both socially and economically. On the other, we need to address the rift caused and maintained by religious beliefs. Addressing together the various facets of life on Venetian Crete could provide a true insight into this society, so rich in cross-cultural interaction that would also help us understand present-day issues of multiculturalism. And what better examples to provide such insight than those offered by the actual humans who lived during the era and left us their albeit cryptic, testimonies to decipher.

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Gerola-Lassithiotakis 1961

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Abbildungen

Map 1: Map of Crete (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU and REMBRANDT DUTTS)

Abb. 1: Painter Ioannis (John), Church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania, 1327/1328, middle blind arch of the north wall, donors: (left to right) young woman; Anna Kotzena; child Manouel; Theotokis Kotzis; Theodoros (Theodore) (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU)

Abb. 1 a: Painter Ioannis (John), Church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania, 1327/1328, middle blind arch of the north wall, west reveal, donor Georgios (George) (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU)

Abb. 1 b: Painter Ioannis (John), Church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania, 1327/1328, middle blind arch of the north wall, east reveal, donor Michael (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU)

Abb. 2: Painter Ioannis (John), Church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania, 1327/1328, middle blind arch of the south wall, donors: (left to right) female child; Manouel Melisourgos; Nikitas Sideris; Katerina (Catherine Sideri); Demetrios (Sideris) (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU)

Abb. 2 a: Painter Ioannis (John), Church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania, 1327/1328, middle blind arch of the south wall, east reveal, female donor (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU)

Abb. 2 b: Painter Ioannis (John), Church of the Archangel Michael, Kavalariana, Chania, 1327/1328, middle blind arch of the south wall, west reveal, female donor (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU)

Abb. 3: Church of the Saviour, Akoumia, Rethymnon, 1389, west wall, male donor (© REMBRANDT DUTTS)

Abb. 4: Church of Christ, Myrthios, Rethymnon, fourteenth century, south wall, family of donors (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU and VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)

Abb. 5: Church of the Presentation of the Virgin, Roussospiti, Rethymnon, beginning of the fourteenth century, south wall, donors (© REMBRANDT DUTTS)

Abb. 6: Church of Saint John the Evangelist, Margarites, Rethymnon, 1383, east blind arch on the north wall, donor Georgios (George) Klados part of the Deesis (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU and VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)

Abb. 7: Ioannis (John) Pagomenos, Church of Saint Nicholas, Maza, Chania, 1325/1326, north wall, male donor in the proximity of Saint Nicholas (© REMBRANDT DUTTS)

Abb. 8: Ioannis (John) Pagomenos, Church of Saint George, Komitades, Chania, 1313/1314, south wall, two kneeling male donors, Manuel Skordilis (left) and Gerasimos Fourgiorgis (right) (© ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULOU and VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)

Abb. 9: Church of Saint Anne, Anisaraki, Chania, 1457 (© VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)

Abb. 9 a: West wall, right of the entrance door (as we face it), donor Michael with his wife presenting a model of their church; behind Michael, donor Nikolaos (Nicholas) (© VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)

Abb. 9 b: West wall, left of the entrance door (as we face it), donor Georgios (George) with his wife presenting a model of the church (© VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)

Abb. 9 c: Western blind arch on the south wall, donor priest Ioannis (John) with his wife presenting a model of the church; behind the female donor stands donor Vasileios, son of Petros (Basil, son of Peter); to the right of the blind arch (as we face it) male donor (© VASILIKI TSAMAKDA)