

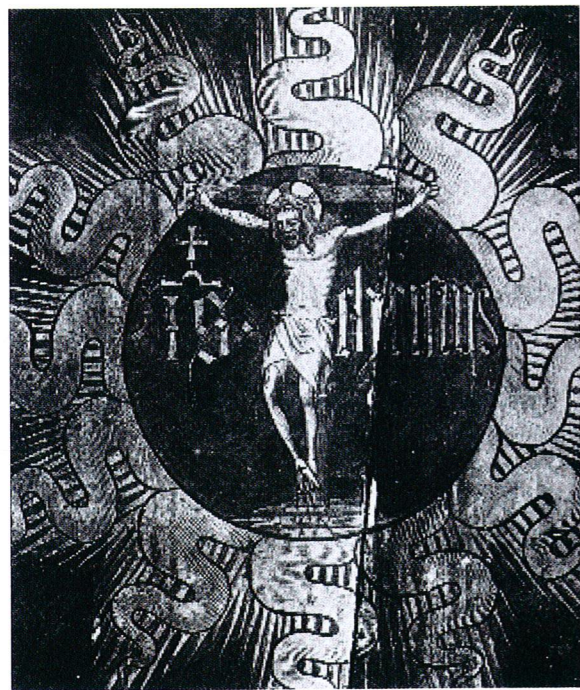
Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean

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The present article focuses on a Cretan icon dating from the third quarter of the fifteenth century and signed by Andreas Ritzos, which stands out for its unusual combination of Italian and Byzantine visual elements. It displays an awkward “iconized” version of the standard Gothic abbreviation for the Holy Name of Jesus – the *IHS* monogram associated with the preaching of St. Bernardine of Siena – the letters of which are decorated with the scenes of Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection and accompanied by a Greek inscription taken after the ritual formulas of Orthodox Sunday Matins. The object is analysed against the background of Veneto-Greek interactions in fifteenth-century Crete and of contemporary discussions about the use of the *IHS* as an alternative to image worship.

/Keywords/ Holy Name of Jesus, Observance, Venetian Crete, Image theory, Icon painting, Andreas Ritzos

1/ Orazio di Giacomo, panel with the Crucifix and the Holy Name of Jesus, Bologna, San Petronio, ca. 1431

# The Holy Name of Jesus in Venetian-Ruled Crete

Michele Bacci

As several scholars have remarked, a distinctive aspect of Medieval painting in Venetian-ruled Crete is the integration of the image of Saint Francis into the monumental decoration of a number of Byzantine-rite churches. The earliest representation is encountered in an early 14<sup>th</sup> century fresco in the Panagia Kera church in Kritsa Mirabellou /Fig. 2/. The Poverello appears again, in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the murals of the Zoodochos Pege in Sampas and the Panagia church at Sklaverochori; another early image, now disappeared, was seen by Giuseppe Gerola, at the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a small church at Astrakoi. Strikingly enough, in all of these buildings Francis is included in the lower register of the nave, reserved for the most eminent saints of the Byzantine church; he is shown haloed and bearing the stigmata, whereas in Sampas he is represented in front of the Seraph seen on Mount Verna, i.e. in the very moment as he receives the imprints of Christ’s wounds on his hands, feet and chest. In Sklaverochori the saint is shown in his visual interaction with a fragmentary Virgin of Mercy, i.e. with another theme of Western origins which became relatively widespread in the Levant in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>.

The display of images honouring such a distinctively Latin saint in Byzantine-rite churches implies only that Francis of Assisi enjoyed a high reputation in the eyes of Cretan Greeks and that local believers could use it as a visual counterpart to their prayers and supplications. Yet, this did not prevent them from

publicly manifesting their aversion to the promoters of Saint Francis’ worship in the island: the Minor friars were namely represented among the damned in Last Judgment scenes, as is witnessed by the 14<sup>th</sup> century cycles in the Prodomos church in the same village of Kritsa and in the church of Saint John in Deliana near Chania /Fig. 3/. In the latter a painter working around 1340 worked out a very unusual scheme, which seems to have been meant to ridicule the members of the Franciscan order: he represented namely three friars, marked by their distinctively unshaven chins, that make gestures of astonishment while looking at the monstrous figure of the Leviathan in the very moment as it devours a man<sup>2</sup>.

1 On the topic see Kostas E. Lassithiotakis, “Ο Άγιος Φραγκίσκος και η Κορήτη”, in *Πεπραγμένα του Δ’ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Ηράκλειο, 29 Αυγ.-3 Σεπτ. 1976*, vol. II, Athens 1981, pp. 146–154; Chryssa Ranoutsaki, “Απεικονίσεις του Φραγκίσκου της Ασίζης στις εκκλησίες της Κορήτης”, in *Πεπραγμένα του I’ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Χανιά, 1–8 Οκτωβρίου 2006*, vol. III/3, Chania 2011, pp. 111–134; Eadem, “Darstellungen des Franziskus von Assisi in den Kirchen Kretas”, *Iconographica* 13 (2014), pp. 78–95, with previous bibliography. On Astrakoi see Giuseppe Gerola, “I Francescani in Creta al tempo del dominio Veneziano”, *Collectanea Franciscana*, 2 (1932), pp. 301–325 and 445–461, esp. p. 302. On the image at Sklaverochori see Manolis Borboudakis, “Παρατηρήσεις στη ζωγραφική του Σκλαβεροχωρίου”, in *Ευφρόσυνον. Αφιέρωμα στον Μανώλη Χατζηδάκη*, vol. I, Athens 1991, pp. 375–399, esp. p. 362 and fig. 134.

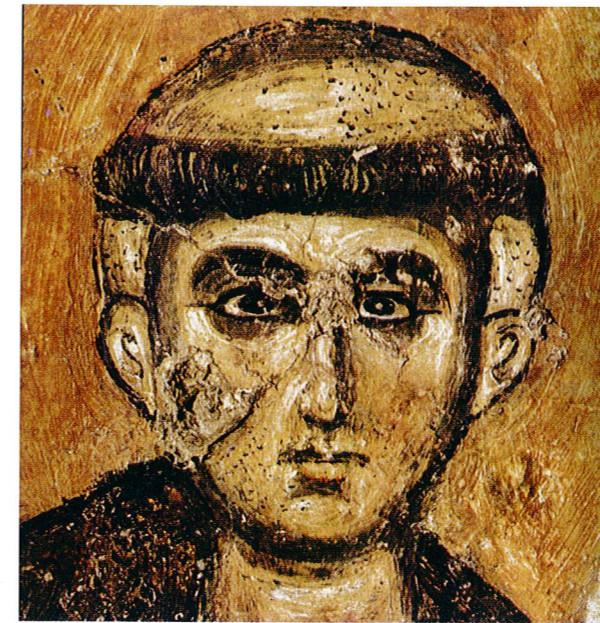
2 Maria Vassilaki, “Καθημερινή ζωή και πραγματικότητα στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κορήτη: Η μαρτυρία των τοιχογραφημένων εκκλησιών”, in *Ενθύμησις Νικολάου Μ. Παναγιωτάκη*, Herakleion 2000, pp. 57–80; Anne Derbes and Amy Neff, “Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere”, in *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, exhibition catalogue (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), Helen C. Evans ed., New Haven – London 2004, pp. 449–461, esp. p. 453.

This indicates that the indigenous people could easily acknowledge the Francis' sanctity and appropriate his image even if they did not sympathize with the Order bearing his name. The latter proved to be one of the most influential among the many religious institutions operating in the island, where it owned several convents. The most prominent Franciscan house, first mentioned in 1242, was situated in the south-east corner of the city of Candia, and included a big church which visitors celebrated as the more attractive in town. It was embellished by many altars, chapels, funerary monuments and furnishings, including elegantly carved choir stalls and paintings.<sup>3</sup> The convent possessed a rich library, endowed with manuscripts of the holy scriptures, theological treatises and biblical commentaries, liturgical books, juridical manuals, hagiographies, and collections of sermons, as well as texts on philosophy, medicine, grammar, geography, astrology and geometry. This collection of books enabled the Mendicant community to act as a pivotal centre of learning in the whole Aegean area and to play an important role in the dissemination of Latin theology and culture: friar Petrus Philargis, a Greek-speaking native of Nisyros who was elected to the pontificate as Alexander V during the council of Pisa in 1409, had his first training here, before continuing his education in Oxford and Paris<sup>4</sup>.

Local friars seem to have been also committed to the promotion of their church as an important cult-site, associated with the network of maritime holy places visited by Western pilgrims during their voyage from Venice to the Holy Land. During the

15<sup>th</sup> century they achieved to establish an important collection of relics, partly due to the munificence of Alexander V, that included, inter alia, a fragment of the Holy Cross, a piece of the Flagellation column and a stone of the Golden Gate associated with the commemoration of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. Such objects suited the pilgrims' wish to worship holy mementoes hinting at the holy places they expected to venerate in Palestine<sup>5</sup>. This Christological emphasis combined with a special effort to present the convent as an important cult-place for Saint Francis. Since no bodily relics of the latter were available to believers – the saint's corpse had namely been concealed in an underground space, within the brick pillar located under the Lower Church of Saint Francis at Assisi – the fragment of his habit preserved in the church was to be considered as a relic of utmost importance. Anyway, the most relevant goal for local and foreign visitors was a well located in the cloister, which was said to have appeared to Francis himself during his way to Egypt in 1219<sup>6</sup>.

By worshipping this well commemorating an event of the Poverello's commendable life, pilgrims were enabled to experience a holy object which, like those venerated in the Holy Land, was grafted on the soil itself. Since the death of their founder, the Minor friars had been committed to establish a peculiar network of holy places which were deemed to compose the specific sacred topography of the *alter Christus*. Unlike any other saint, whose material cult-objects consisted in bodily remains and miraculous images, Francis was mainly worshipped in the venerable sites associated with his most famous



deeds and actions, which partly echoed those associated with Christ: for example, Mount Verna could be easily paralleled with the Jerusalem Golgotha and the Lower Church with the Holy Sepulchre. The well in Candia was the only memorial site of Saint Francis located outside the Italian peninsula, along the sea route connecting Western Europe with the Holy Land and the *loca sancta*. Its presence in that very point, half-way from the starting point and the final goal of the pilgrims' path made it special and attractive, inasmuch it could be easily paralleled with a definitely Christological relic, the well of the Samaritan woman on the slopes of Mount Garizim<sup>7</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the friars made many efforts to promote worship for their founder and to stress his parallelism with Christ. Already in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the site had already functioned as a shared shrine visited not only by indigenous Latins and Western pilgrims, but also by the local Greek population, to such an extent that in 1414 Pope John XXIII, upon request of Friar Marco Schiavo, authorized the convent of Candia to solemnize the yearly feast of Saint Francis with both a Latin and a Byzantine-rite mass, apparently performed by Greek priests.<sup>8</sup> The worship for the saint was probably enhanced by the replacement of the Conventuals with Observant friars, which took place around the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. Already in 1424, the reformed branch of the Franciscan order had been authorized by Pope Martin V to open its own houses on Crete; by the 1450s Observant friars managed to take possession of the major convents of the island, including Saint Francis of Candia and Saint Francis of Canea (pres-

ent-day Chania), whereas by 1506 almost all of the local friaries had joined the Observance<sup>9</sup>.

3 Gerola, "I Francescani in Creta" (n. 1), pp. 311–318; Maria Georgopoulou, *Venice's Mediterranean Colonies: Architecture and Urbanism*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2001, pp. 133–135; Nickiphoros I. Tsougarakis, *The Latin Religious Orders in Medieval Greece, 1204–1500*, Turnhout 2012, pp. 111–120.

4 Giorgio Hofmann, "La biblioteca scientifica del monastero di San Francesco a Candia nel Medioevo", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 8 (1942), pp. 317–360.

5 Such relics are mentioned in a number of late Medieval travelogues, including that of duke Alexander of Palatinate and John-Ludovic of Nassau-Saarbrücken (1495–1496), Jürgen Karbach ed., "Die Reise Herzog Alexanders von Pfalz-Zweibrücken und Graf Johann Ludwigs von Nassau-Saarbrücken ins Heilige Land, 1495–1496, nach dem Bericht des Johann Meisenheimer", *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Saargegend*, 45 (1997), pp. 11–118, esp. p. 59; Frederick II of Liegnitz and Brieg (1507), Reinhold Röhrich, Heinrich Meisner eds., "Die Pilgerfahrt des Herzogs Friedrich II. von Liegnitz und Brieg nach dem Heiligen Lande", *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 1 (1878), pp. 101–209, esp. p. 120; Spanish Anonymous, *Viaje de Terra Santa* (ca. 1520), Joseph Ramon Jones ed., *Viajeros españoles a Tierra Santa (siglos XVI y XVII)*, Madrid 1998, pp. 109–243, esp. 130. The same relics are also mentioned in the 17th century inventory of Friar Michelangelo da Candia: see Gerola, "I Francescani in Creta" (n. 1), pp. 314–315, footnote 5. Cf. also Georgopoulou, *Venice's Mediterranean Colonies* (n. 3), pp. 134–135.

6 See the testimony of Jacques Le Saige (1518), *Voyage de Jacques Le Saige de Douai à Rome, Notre Dame de Lorette, Venise, Jérusalem et autres saints lieux*, Romain-Hippolyte Duthillculeu ed., Douai 1852, p. 81.

7 On Franciscan sacred geography see Michele Bacci, "Immagini sacre e 'pietà topografica' presso i Minoriti", in *Le immagini del Francescanesimo. Atti del XXXVI Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 9–11 ottobre 2008)*, Spoleto 2009, pp. 31–57; on holy sites along the Venetian sea route to the Holy Land in the Late Middle Ages see idem, "La moltiplicazione dei luoghi sacri lungo le vie d'acqua per Gerusalemme nel tardo Medioevo", in *Peregrino, ruta y meta en las peregrinaciones maiores, VIII Congreso internacional de estudios jacobeos (Santiago de Compostela, 13–15 Octubre 2010)*, Paolo Caucci von Saucken ed., Santiago de Compostela 2012, pp. 179–194.

8 Freddy Thiriet, "Le zèle unioniste d'un Franciscain crétois et la riposte de Venise", in *Festschrift zu Franz Dölger*, Munich 1967, pp. 496–504 (republished in idem, *Études sur la Romanie greco-venitienne (X<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Essay n. XII, London 1977); Tsougarakis, *The Latin Religious Orders* (n. 3), p. 117.

9 Tsougarakis, *The Latin Religious Orders* (n. 3), pp. 119–121 and 123–125.

The new friars, who perceived themselves as strict followers of the Poverello's lifestyle, had chosen to settle on Crete, as they explained to Martin V, in order to preach amongst the schismatic Greeks. It is very probable that, in this context, they fostered worship not only for Saint Francis, but also for the most eminent representative of their movement, Saint Bernardine of Siena, dead in 1444 and canonized six years later, in 1450. Already by 1457, a church had been dedicated to him in the island of Rhodes<sup>10</sup>. Analogous dedications are not documented on Crete, but we know from later sources that at some point the convent of Saint Francis in Candia came into possession of a relic of Bernardine's habit and that its main altarpiece, attributed to Giovanni Bellini, included the image of the Sieneze friar<sup>11</sup>.

The distinctive mark of Saint Bernardine in contemporary imagery was the so-called monogram, i.e. the Gothic abbreviation of the name of Jesus (YHS) included within a twelve-rayed sun<sup>12</sup>. The devotion for the holy name of Jesus had been developed in Western Europe since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and had been frequently mentioned by Franciscan authors, such as Bonaventure, Gilbert de Tournai, and Ubertino of Casale: it originally consisted in the practice of bowing when the name was pronounced during the holy mass<sup>13</sup>. Starting from the 1410s, Saint Bernardine of Siena had been especially committed to promoting this cult phenomenon: during his preaching activity, he was accustomed to show a wooden panel of rectangular form displaying the three letters within a golden sun. He considered that worship could be better enhanced by appealing to the organs of sight: therefore he invented a cult-object, whose material and visual appearance reminded viewers of contemporary devotional images, even if it was meant to foster veneration for a graphic, rather than an iconic element. A number of such early tablets have been preserved to us, the most famous being that preserved in the Osservanza church in Siena and dating from ca. 1425 /Fig. 7/. This work, which was frequently replicated, displays the golden monogram in the lowercase Gothic form *yhs* with a cross-stroke on the straight line of the *h* (standing for a Greek eta): it is set against a black background, within a twelve-rayed sun located in the middle of a quadrilobe. The whole composition is included within a red frame bearing an inscription which reads: "*in nomine Iesu omne(s) genuflectantur, celestium terrestrium et infernorum*", "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on

earth and under the earth": this was the passage of Saint Paul's *Letter to Philippians* (2:10), which was constantly evoked to assert the legitimacy of this new devotion<sup>14</sup>.

It is highly probable that the Observant friars introduced the cult of the holy name of Jesus into Crete. This is indirectly witnessed by the capstone bearing a Gothic monogram which decorates one of the vaults in the cloister of the Franciscan convent in Chania<sup>15</sup>. The success of the new devotion in the island is furthermore witnessed by a small devotional triptych preserved in the National Gallery of Prague, whose stylistic characters, blending Venetian and Byzantine elements, point to the authorship of a Cretan master working in the third quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century /Fig. 5/. The work displays the Madonna enthroned and bearing a Gothic crown, flanked by four saints – Anthony the Great and John the Baptist to the left and Jerome and Bernardine of Siena to the right. The latter is represented according to his standard iconography as a thin, almost emaciated old man wearing the light brown habit of Observant Friars and holding an accurately rendered YHS-monogram, included in the twelve-rayed sun and supported by a staff<sup>16</sup>. The diminutive dimensions of this work (17,6 x 13,1 cm) point to its original use as a domestic image intended to suit the devotional needs of an individual or a family group.

A much more compelling and controversial clue is provided by an icon signed by the famous Cretan painter Andreas Ritzos, presently preserved in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, and probably dating from about 1460 /Fig. 4/. It is an unusual horizontal panel, measuring 63,5 x 44,5 cm. and displaying the monogram in capital Gothic, preceded by two rhomboidal periods. Both letters and punctuation marks are enriched with images: the first two letters are used to display the Crucifixion, whereas the S shows the Byzantine theme of Christ's Descent into Hell, or Anastasis, and the Western rendering of the Resurrected Christ, holding a standard decorated with a cross, in the very moment as he comes out of the Sepulchre. The sun and the moon, a typical element of the Crucifixion scene, are included in

10 Tsougarakis, *The Latin Religious Orders* (n. 3), p. 127.

11 See the 17th-century inventory of Michelangelo of Candia, quoted by Gerola, "I Francescani in Creta" (n. 1), p. 315, footnote 5: "*De habitu S. Bernardini Senensis Ordinis Minorum... Pictura altaris maioris S. Francisci Candie, in qua sunt B. Virgo Maria cum puero Jesu, S. Joannes Baptista, S. Petrus, S. Paulus, S. Bernardinus Senensis, S. Bonaventura cardinalis, S. Ludovicus episcopus, S. pater Franciscus, et S. Joannes Evangelista: Joannis Bellini*".



- 12 For the history of the monogram see especially Ephrem Longpré, "S. Bernardin de Sienne et le nom de Jésus", *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 28 (1935), pp. 443–476; 29 (1936), pp. 142–168 and 443–447, and A. Montanari, *La devozione del santissimo nome di Gesù approvata dalla Chiesa*, Napoli 1957. On the iconography of Saint Bernardine, see especially *Enciclopedia bernardiniana. Iconografia*, Mario Alberto Pavone and Vincenzo Pacelli eds., Salerno 1981. On the use of the monogram as the saint's attribute in later paintings cf. Daniel Arasse, "Iconographie et evolution spirituelle: la tablette de Saint Bernardin de Sienne", *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité*, 50 (1974), pp. 433–456.
- 13 Longpré, "S. Bernardin de Sienne", 1936 (n. 12), p. 153.
- 14 Vincenzo Pacelli, "Il monogramma bernardiniano tra segno e immagine", in *La croce. Iconografia e interpretazione (secoli I–inizio XVI)*, Boris Ulianich ed., Napoli 2007, pp. 407–435, esp. pp. 407–409.
- 15 Gerola, "I Francescani in Creta" (n. 1), p. 447; Cf. also Olga Gratziou, *Η Κρήτη στην ύστερη μεσαιωνική εποχή. Η μαρτυρία της εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής*, Iraklion 2010, p. 111 and fig. 128; this author misunderstands the monogram YHS as an abbreviation for veritas.
- 16 The work (inv. no. O5258-O5260) is discussed in Hana Hlaváčková, "An Unknown Italo-Cretan Triptych from the Former Figdor Collection, now Held in the National Gallery in Prague", *Byzantinoslavica*, 56 (1993), pp. 713–719, who interprets it as the work of a Greek painter in Italy and associates it hypothetically with Bessarion. Anyway, the stylistic features of the work, blending Venetian and Palaiologan elements, are in keeping with works made in Crete in the 1450s: the image of St Jerome is almost identical to that displayed in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century icon of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and the Virgin's throne can be strictly compared to the analogous rendering in a slightly later icon by Angelos now in the Museum of Zakynthos: see *Χειρ Αγγέλου. Ένας ζωγράφος εικόνων στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κρήτη*, exhibition catalogue (Athens, Benaki Museum, 2010), Maria Vassilaki ed., Athens 2010, entries nos. 16 (pp. 100–101, Dimitra Koutoula), and 47 (pp. 196–197, Myrtili Acheimastou-Potamianou). See also Petr Přebyl, "Ikony", in *Evropské umění od antiky do závěru baroka. Přívodce stálou expozici Sbirky starého umění, Národní galerie v Praze ve Šternberském paláci*, Praha 2004, pp. 26–30, esp. p. 27.

3/ Three Franciscans in front of the Leviathan, mural painting, Deliana (Crete), Church of Saint John the Baptist, ca. 1340



4/ Andreas Ritzos, Holy Name of Jesus with Representation of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, panel painting, Athens, Byzantine Museum, ca. 1450-1460



the two rhomboidal periods on both sides of the inscription. Elegantly foliate branches spring out of each mark<sup>17</sup>.

This work is all the more compelling as it seems to clash with the very meaning attributed by Bernardine to his monogram tablets. If compared to the latter, Ritzos' icon looks very distinctive. First, the panel is not vertically oriented and seems to contradict Bernardine's wish to provide believers with an aniconic cult object which typologically looked like a horizontal cult-image. Second, the letters abbreviate the name in the unusual *IHS*-form, i.e. with *i* instead of *y*. Third, gold is used for the background and no visual hint is made at the twelve-rayed sun, which was described by Bernardine himself as an essential element of his panels<sup>18</sup>. Finally, the very fact that the letters are combined with narrative scenes seems to be completely at odds with Bernardine's aim to use the name of Jesus as an alternative to the more and more frequent misuses of contemporary image-worship.

This latter point was namely a leitmotif in the polemical writings against the new practice which

were produced and used by a number of Dominican and Augustinian authors as theological supports to denounce Bernardine as heretic before the papal court. The friar's critics insisted that worship for his aniconic panel contradicted the iconodulic doctrine established by the seventh ecumenical council of Nicea, seemed to reintroduce a Judaizing cult for the name of God, and was even at odds with Latin Christology, given that its emphasis on the name of Jesus, rather than on that of Christ, risked separating humanity from divinity in the Son of God's person. Moreover, it was considered to engender dangerous misunderstandings. The Dominican Bartholomew Lapacci of Florence lamented that some Sicilians had started scraping out the Child from Marian images and substituting it with the monogram of Jesus, whereas his brother Andrea of Cascia reported that Observants were convinced that the new devotion would have cast into oblivion all previous types of cult-objects, including relics and cult-images<sup>19</sup>.

Many authors stressed that the monogram was deemed to be in competition with the most popular of Christ's images, the Crucifix. An anonymous

writer, probably from Perugia, observed that the name of Jesus could hardly be more efficacious than the image of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, given that it lacked the latter's dramatic power and pathos<sup>20</sup>. The comparison became dramatic in 1431, when the inquisitor of Bologna, the Dominican Ludovico Tosi of Pisa, gave orders to remove the panel with the monogram posited on the main altar of the cathedral of Saint Petronius and to substitute it with an image of Christ on the cross. Pope Eugenius IV was obliged to intervene and Bernardine's panel was reinstated on the altar table<sup>21</sup>. The alternative image exhibited by Tosi has probably to be identified with the small panel by Orazio di Giacomo still preserved in San Petronio /Fig. 1/: it shows the twelve-rayed sun housing a Crucifix accompanied by the name of Jesus abbreviated in a completely different way, as *JS*, and followed by *Christus*<sup>22</sup>.

As a matter of fact, a number of extant works indicate that, notwithstanding Bernardine's and his followers' concerns for the spreading of a thoroughly aniconic form of devotion and probably as a result of polemics about its legitimacy, the panel of

17 The basic study is that by Myrtili Acheimastou-Potamianou, "Δύο εικόνες του Αγγέλου και του Ανδρέα Ριτζου στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο", *Δελτίον της χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής εταιρείας*, ser. IV, 15 (1989–1990), pp. 105–118, esp. pp. 110–117. Cf. also eadem, Entry no. 206, in *Εικόνες της κρητικής τέχνης*, exhibition catalogue (Iraklion, 1993), Manolis Borboudakis ed., Iraklion 1993, pp. 556–557; Eadem, *Εικόνες του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών*, Athens 1998, p. 132; Eadem, entry no. 295, in *Byzantium. Faith and Power* (n. 2), p. 485. See also Robin Cormack, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks, and Shrouds*, London 1997, pp. 206–209; Angeliki Lymberopoulou, "Audiences and Markets for Cretan Icons", in *Renaissance Art Reconsidered*, Volume 3, *Viewing Renaissance Art*, Kim W. Woods – Carol M. Richardson – Angeliki Lymberopoulou eds, New Haven – London 2007, pp. 171–206, esp. pp. 171–173; Diana Newall, "Candia and Post-Byzantine Icons in Late Fifteenth-Century Europe", in *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, Angeliki Lymberopoulou – Rembrandt Duits eds., Farnham 2013, pp. 101–134, esp. p. 126.

18 This was the topic developed in some sermons pronounced in Padua in 1423, especially the sermon XL *De nomine Iesu*, published in *Opera omnia*, vol. III, Jean de la Haye ed., Venice 1745, pp. 277–283.

19 Longpré, "Saint Bernardin", 1936 (n. 12), pp. 158 and 465–466. Longpré's negative view of these Dominican and Augustinian authors has been nuanced by Isabella Gagliardi, "*Figura Nominis Iesu*: in margine alla controversia *De Jesuitate* (1427–1431)", *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo*, 113 (2011), pp. 209–249, who points out that Bernardine and his followers, by the promotion of the aniconic tablet, revealed anxiety for the possible idolatric misuses of image-worship.

20 See the text in Longpré, "Saint Bernardin", 1936 (n. 12), p. 146.

21 Celestino Piana, "San Bernardino da Siena a Bologna", *Studi francescani*, 42 (1945), pp. 213–261.

22 Pacelli, "Il monogramma bernardiniano" (n. 14), pp. 430–431; cf. also ibidem, pp. 432–433.



the holy name of Jesus underwent, from the 1430s onward, a process of iconization. The Crucifix was sometimes introduced into the composition as a crowning element of the twelve-rayed sun, but more often it was displayed within the straight stroke of the central h. Viewers were easily led to recognize the sign of Christ's sacrifice in the form of this letter, marked by a cross-stroke through the upper part of its vertical line. A number of versions made visible this allusion to the cross by representing nails on its surface. Other versions were more explicit and did not refrain from displaying the crucified Christ within it<sup>23</sup>. It is not clear if such alterations of the monogram's original form were introduced, after Bernardine's trial before Martin V, as a visual compromise enabling the promoters of the new devotion to come to an arrangement with their critics or if, on the contrary, they were due to the secular clergy's wish to regulate the unexpected success of Bernardine's monogram: Andrea of Cascia witnesses that Saint John of Capestrano was much disappointed to see that the bishop of L'Aquila and his clerics had

decorated the façade of the town cathedral with a modified version of the holy name of Jesus, including an image of the Crucifix in the central *h*<sup>24</sup>.

In the light of these developments in Italy, one wonders what was the original function and meaning attributed to Andreas Ritzos' painting. Indeed, it can hardly be considered to directly mirror the Observant Friars' commitment to foster worship for the holy name of Jesus, since the inclusion of images within the monogram was inconsistent with Saint Bernardine's emphasis on aniconicity, even if his rigorism may not have been shared by all members of his Order. Shall one imagine that this odd solution was meant to establish a dialogue with the Greek Orthodox, who regarded religious images as a constitutive element of their religious identity, and to assert a sort of semantic equivalence of graphic and iconic signs? Did this composition imply that viewing the abbreviated letters of the name of Jesus was not unlike venerating icons?

23 Pacelli, "Il monogramma bernardiniano" (n. 14), pp. 426–435.  
24 Text in Longpré, "Saint Bernardin", 1936 (n. 12), p. 449.

6/ Retable of Vallbona de les Monges, Barcelona, National Museum of Catalonia, ca. 1350

7/ Monogram panel of Saint Bernardine, Siena, Osservanza, ca. 1425



8/ Venetian master,  
Allegorical Crucifixion,  
Kimolos, Hodegetria  
Church, late 14<sup>th</sup> century

Indeed, the use of Gothic minuscule and Latin letters (even if the *h* corresponded to a Greek *eta*) was problematic: critics of Bernardine's monogram had pointed out that the name of Jesus could not act as a universal cult-object, given that its being written in the Latin alphabet prevented non-Westerners, and in first instance Greek-rite Christians, from understanding it<sup>25</sup>.

It is possible that the arguments formulated by critics of the new devotion circulated in the Latin East, given that the Dominican Bartholomew Lapacci of Florence, one of Bernardine's harsher opponents and a strong supporter of the union of the Greek and the Latin church, was twice a legate in Greece and was appointed bishop of the Venetian colony of Korone, in the Southern Peloponnesus, in 1455<sup>26</sup>. Should we infer from this that the iconized monogram invented by Ritzos has to be intended as a visual compromise between the positions of Observant friars and their detractors? In order to answer this question, we need to have a closer look at its iconography and other compositional features.

As mentioned above, the use of a horizontal panel, the lack of the twelve-rayed sun and the spelling *IHS* with *i* instead of *y* is all the more striking and can hardly be deemed to have been introduced by chance, given that, as witnessed by the Prague triptych, the standard type of Bernardine's monogram was well known on Crete. To the best of my knowledge, the isolated monogram, separated from the sun, was used in the Late Medieval and Renaissance West in two special contexts: first, as a decoration for pendants used as devotional amulets (as witnessed, for instance, by Holbein's portrait of Jane Seymour in Vienna, Cranach's *Young man* in Cologne, and Tizian's portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga in Florence), where it usually displays the spelling with *Y*, unless its letters are transcribed into Humanist capitals (where *Y* is substituted with *I*)<sup>27</sup>. Second, it is known that the abbreviation of Jesus' name could be strictly associated with the Eucharist, to such an extent that it could be even imprinted onto the holy host. A most compelling witness to this is provided by a Catalan work dating from ca. 1350, i.e. well before Bernardine's preaching. The retable of the Corpus Domini originally in the Cistercian monastery of Vallbona de les Monges displays a unique selection of miracle scenes where the holy host, rendered in relief pastiglia, is the only and absolute protagonist. In all of them the *IHS* is written with *i* in capital letters, with a macron above the *h*, whereas the central image of

the *Corpus Christi* in its Eucharistic tabernacle displays the Gothic form *ihus* with double macron: the inscription is combined with an image of Christ on the cross, embellished by foliate motifs /Fig. 6/<sup>28</sup>. Such graphic and figurative elements must have strongly contributed to enhance the visual experience of the host during the Elevation rite in Latin churches of both Western countries and Venetian-ruled Crete.

The sacramental associations of the name of Jesus, which preexisted the success of Bernardine's monogram, are manifestly visualized in Ritsos' panel by the coupling of Crucifixion and Resurrection. The redemptive power of the Son of God's sacrifice is evoked by the special emphasis laid on Adam, the progenitor of humanity and first sinner: he appears in the cave of Golgotha, where his skull is usually represented, alive and bowing in a gesture of self-dedication, while a great many trickles of Christ's blood ooze down his head; and he is shown again in the Anastasis, in the very moment as the resurrected Saviour draws him and Eve from Hell. The representation of the first man as a supplicant can be paralleled with analogous solutions encountered in late 14<sup>th</sup> century Venetian paintings that display an allegorical reading of the Crucifixion: a case in point is a panel preserved in the Aegean island of Kimolos, where not only Adam, but also David and Solomon, as representatives of the Old Testament righteous, are shown kneeling in the cave /Fig. 8/<sup>29</sup>.

The Greek inscription reinforces and explicates the meaning of this image as an allegory of Redemption. It reads Ἐσταυρώθης ἀναμάρτητε καὶ ἐν μνημείῳ κατετέθης ἐκὼν, ἀλλ' ἐξανέστης ὡς Θεός/ συνέγειρας τὸν προπάτορα. Μνήσθητί μου κρᾶζοντα, ὅταν ἔλθῃς ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, i.e.

25 See the anonymous treatise in Longpré, "Saint Bernardin" (n. 12), p. 475.

26 On Lapacci and his thought see Thomas Kaeppli, "Bartolomeo Lapacci de' Rimbentini (1402-1466), vescovo, legato pontificio, scrittore", *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 9 (1939), pp. 86-127; Luciano Cinelli, *Il trattato "De sanguinis pretiosissimi crucifixi divinitate" di Bartolomeo Lapacci de' Rimbentini OP per la disputa del "Triduum mortis" (1463)*, Fribourg 2005.

27 Pacelli, "Il monogramma bernardiniano" (n. 14), pp. 420-421.

28 On this retable see the accurate iconographic analysis by Marisa Melero Moneo, "Eucaristía y polémica antisemita en el retablo y frontal de Vallbona de les Monges", *Locus Amoenus*, 6 (2002-2003), pp. 22-40.

29 Myrtili Acheimastou-Potamianou, entry no. 97, in *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, Athens 1985, pp. 96-98. Another variant of this theme occurs in a painting by Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Allegna now in Prague, cf. Petr Přebyl, entry no. 135, in *Italian Painting c. 1330-1550. I. National Gallery in Prague. II. Collections in the Czech Republic. Illustrated Summary Catalogue*, Olga Pujmanová and Petr Přebyl eds., Prague 2008, pp. 202-203 (with previous bibliography). On the early motif of the resurrected Adam at the foot of the cross cf. Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst. 2. Die Passion Jesu Christi*, Gütersloh 1968, pp. 142-143, where he is normally represented within a sarcophagus.



"You were crucified without sin and were willingly buried in the tomb, yet you resurrected as God and released the progenitor. Remember me, as I invoke you, when you will arrive in your kingdom". Such verses are formulas of the Byzantine rite: they belong to the Great Oktoechos (or Parakletike) and are sung at Sunday Matins, alternating with the Beatitudes of Christ's Sermon on the Mount<sup>30</sup>. Their presence in the image make clear that the work was intended for a viewer being familiar with the Greek liturgy, given that they have no parallel in Western usage. Nonetheless, such formulas were not used to hint at a specific rite, yet rather to mirror and orientate the beholder's devotional experience: at a glance, he or she was led to understand that Christ's death and resurrection, reenacted in the Eucharist, enabled sinners to attain salvation, as symbolized by Adam's liberation from Hell.

Undoubtedly, this odd work seems to defy any straightforward or univocal interpretation: it displays a much widespread Latin motif invested with Eucharistic symbolism, the holy name of Jesus, while distorting its meaning and its function in such a way to turn it into a visual allegory of Christ's sacrifice and redemptive action. Its iconographic, compositional and typological peculiarity makes improbable that it was originally meant to be exhibited in a church. Much more likely, it must have suited the religious needs of either a Greek who was fascinated by the cultic efficacy of the holy name of Jesus or of a Venetian who felt that an iconized monogram could be more profitably used as visual support for his or her meditative practice. As observed by Myrtale Acheimastou-Potamianou, a similar image "delle lettere IHS con pitture dentro esse lettere" was owned in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by the literate Andrea Cornaro, who kept it in his private room<sup>31</sup>. Most plausibly, the panel signed by Ritzos and now in Athens, which is likely to be the same work owned by Cornaro, was destined since its very beginnings for an analogous domestic setting: unlike any other image and regardless of theological distinctions, it appropriated a successful devotional pattern of contemporary Latin piety and made it suitable to the Byzantine-inspired visual conventions of Cretan believers.

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<sup>30</sup> See Παρακλητική, ἤτοι Ὀκτώηχος ἡ μεγάλη, Rome 1885, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Acheimastou-Potamianou, "Δύο εικόνες" (n. 17), pp. 110–111. The text is edited in Stergios G. Spanakis, "Ἡ διαθήκη τοῦ Ἀνδρέα Κορνάρου (1611)", *Κρητικά χρονικά*, 9 (1955), pp. 379–478.

## SUMMARY

### Kréta pod benátskou nadvládou a Nejsvětější jméno Ježíš

Byzantské muzeum v Athénách uchovává velmi neobvyklý obraz Andrease Ritzose, pocházející ze 3. čtvrtiny 15. století. Vyniká neobvyklou kombinací italských a byzantských vizuálních prvků. Ukazuje neobratnou "ikonizovanou" verzi standardní gotické zkratky pro Nejsvětější jméno Ježíš, tzv. monogram nebo trigram IHS, jehož písmena jsou dekorována scénami z Kristova ukřížování a zmrtvýchvstání, a který je doprovázen řeckým nápisem spojeným s rituálními formulami používanými při ortodoxních nedělních ranních chválách.

Bylo navrženo, že toto řešení se může vázat ke zvláštním formám úcty k Nejsvětějšímu jménu Ježíš podporované v Itálii sv. Bernardinem ze Sieny a observantskou odnoží františkánského řádu. Observanté pěstovali úctu k deskovým obrazům ikonického typu zobrazujícím Nejsvětější jméno Ježíš uprostřed slunce se dvanácti paprsky a podnítili jeho používání, jak jejich kritici často podotýkali, jako alternativu ke kultu obrazů.

Ve skutečnosti observantství začalo na Krétě převládat od poloviny 15. století a místní mniši neupustili od prosazování úcty jak k Bernardinovi, tak k monogramu IHS. Malý triptych z 50. nebo 60. let 15. století z Národní galerie v Praze, kde je Bernardin zobrazen s monogramem, nese zvláštní svědectví tohoto vývoje. Řešení Ritzosovo je velmi kontroverzní, neboť zahrnutí narativních figurálních scén do monogramu IHS se zdá být v přímém rozporu s Bernardinovým učením o Nejsvětějším jménu Ježíš jako o skutečném objek-

tu individuálního i kolektivního uctívání. Kromě toho kompozice postrádá slunce se dvanácti paprsky, které bylo popsáno Bernardinem samotným jako základní prvek monogramu IHS a bylo proto napodobováno i na Krétě. Také typologicky ikona vodorovně orientovaná neodpovídá standardní formě bernardinských desek, které byly všechny orientované vertikálně.

Scény zastoupené v písmenech odkazují na jistou eschatologickou dimenzi. Zejména postava Adama klanícího se ve své pohřební jeskyni u paty Kristova kříže se zdá být inspirována obdobnými řešeními v současných benátských alegoriích Ukřížování, jejichž přítomnost ve východním Středomoří svědčí o obrazu dochovaném na egejském ostrově Kimolos. Perspektiva individuální spásy je také zdůrazněna řeckým nápisem na spodním okraji ikony, obsahujícím verše pocházející z ortodoxních nedělních laud.

Zdá se nepochybné, že toto zvláštní dílo se vzpírá jakémoliv jednoduché a jednoznačné interpretaci. Zobrazuje rozšířený latinský motiv, jenž je zahalen eucharistickou symbolikou a zároveň narušuje význam a funkci Nejsvětějšího jména Ježíš takovým způsobem, že jej proměňuje ve vizuální alegorii Kristovy oběti a spásného působení. Na rozdíl od jakéhokoliv jiného obrazu a bez ohledu na teologické rozdíly, přivlastnil si tento obraz úspěšný devoční vzor současné latinské zbožnosti a přizpůsobil je byzantsky inspirovaným vizuálním zvyklostem krétských věřících.