

Icons as Maps: Cartographic icons in Orthodox art

Iconos como mapas: Iconos cartográficos en el arte cristiano ortodoxo

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Abstract: Although a comparison between Orthodox icons and geographic maps sounds like an extravagant idea, if we set them in a broader context, we will see that they are actually akin. Both, the Orthodox *εικόν* and the medieval *mappamundi* are symbolic images that represent cosmological concepts, showing the essence and character of the Universe in images. They enable people to overcome their natural limitations and see what is invisible to their eyes.

Keywords: Byzantine Art, Post-Byzantine Art, Iconography, Topography, Cartography

Resumen: Aunque una comparación entre los iconos ortodoxos y los mapas geográficos parece una idea extravagante, si los situamos en un contexto más amplio, veremos que son realmente semejantes. Ambos, el *εικόν* ortodoxo y el *mappamundi* medieval son imágenes simbólicas que representan conceptos cosmológicos, mostrando la esencia y el carácter del Universo en imágenes. Ellos permiten a las personas superar sus limitaciones naturales y ver lo que es invisible a sus ojos

Palabras clave: Arte bizantino, arte post-bizantino, iconografía, topografía, cartografía.

Contents: 1. Iconography and Cartography. 2. Cartographic icons of biblical places. 3. Cartographic icons of Pan-Orthodox monastic centers. 4. Cartographic icons of miraculous icons. 5. Cartographic icons of local Orthodox shrines. 6. *Eikón* and *Mappamundi*. 6. Conclusions. Sources and Bibliography.

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1. Iconography and Cartography

Comparison of Orthodox icons with geographic maps sounds odd, to say the least. Scarcely any images seem diametrically so opposite at first glance, when we speak in terms of their functionality, and their origins and semantics.

One of the most popular definitions of Orthodox icons describes them as “theology in images”¹, equal in rank with theology in words.² It is difficult to define icons simply as religious paintings or liturgical images, because they are not only artistic products or devotional objects of prayer. Orthodox iconography serves as an elaborated expression of the Orthodox religious doctrine, as a symbolic manifestation of the truths of faith.³

On the other hand, geographic maps are products of human rational knowledge, but they are also visual representations of the Earth’s surface, subservient to the rules of different sciences. The art of cartography incorporates science, aesthetics, and techniques, creates symbolic depictions of the surrounding reality, emphasizing the relationships between its elements – spatial, objective or thematic.⁴

However, in a broader context both types of images have similar function, motives and meaning. According to St. John Damascene, people create images of various events and persons, driven by their own limitation in time and place in the nature, which forces them to communicate through images. The image is contrived, he says, to lead man to knowledge, and to reveal in front of him different phenomena that otherwise remain hidden.⁵ A bit later St. Theodore the Studite compares icons with “windows to heaven” and defines them as means of ascension to the transcendent.⁶ In a similar way Renaissance geographers describe their maps as “windows on the theater of the world”, helping people to see what remains invisible to the eyes. Maps have been compared with telescopes allowing the observer to visualize the world from above, in its entirety, which was unachievable for humans.⁷

In fact, topographic elements appear in the iconographic scenes from the very beginning of their formation. Many patterns show that sacred events represented on the icons have often been complemented with recognizable images of the surrounding sites or buildings. For example, Crucifixion iconography includes symbolic references to the place of Golgotha, as well as direct depictions of the nearby mountains Gareb and Agra.⁸ Scenes from the life of the Holy Virgin are

¹ Leonid OUSPENSKY, *Theology of the Icon*, Vol. 1, New York: SVS Press, 1992, 6.

² ST. BASIL THE GREAT, *A Homily on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*, PG 31, 509A.

³ Rostislava TODOROVA, *Ikonnata perspektiva*, V. Turnovo: Faber, 2009, 9-10.

⁴ Marcus FOTH, *Handbook of Research on Human Informatics: the Practice and Promise of the Real-Time City*, Hershey, London: IGI Global, 2009, 211.

⁵ Ioannou DAMASKINOY, *Pros tous diabolontas tas agias logoi treis*, Keimeno-Metafrasi-Eisagogi-Sholia Nikou Matsouka, Thessaloniki, 1988, 3, 17, 332.

⁶ Stanley Samuel HARAKAS, “Faith Formation in Byzantium”, In: *Educating People on Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004, 122.

⁷ Veronica DELLA DORA, “Windows on Heaven (and Earth): The Poetics and Politics of Post-Byzantine “Cartographic Icons”, *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 2012, 38 (1), 84.

⁸ Kurt WEITZMANN, “Loca Sancta” and the Representational Arts of Palestine”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 1974, 28, 40-41.

also often portrayed with recognizable architectural and topographic elements that enhance the theological significance of the sacred event, which is represented.⁹

2. Cartographic icons of biblical places

Loca sancta have become a natural center for the creation of sacred images with many specific topographic details.¹⁰ The reason for producing such type of images is rooted in the Christian pilgrimage tradition based on the biblical appeal of Ps. 131:7 “*We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool*” and evidenced in the Old Testament (Jud. 20:18; and I King. 1:3, 9, 21, 24), as well as in the New Testament (Luke. 2:41-44).¹¹

Due to its biblical character and its religious importance to the believers, this type of icons stands at the highest level of classification of cartographic icons in Orthodox art. The most important among them are the iconic depictions of Jerusalem (the *ομφαλός*) the spiritual and geographic center of Christianity. The earliest extant cartographic image of the Holy City is the map from Madaba, Jordan from the middle of the 6th century. Depicted on the mosaic floor of the Church of St. George it represents the biblical lands from Egypt to Lebanon, including Sinai, Israel, Palestine and Jordan. The largest and central image located in that mosaic is that of Jerusalem, including several important depictions of places in the Old city that truly represented the urban topography of Byzantine Jerusalem.¹²

We can find similar topographical information in a number of icon images of the Holy city from its Byzantine period, such as the ones in St. Maria Maggiore, St. Prudenciana and St. Giovanni at Rome, as well as in Umm ar-Rasas in Northern Jordan. However, the iconographic tradition for detailed topographical description of *loca sancta* had developed gradually, up to the moment when it became fashionable in the 16th century and reached its peak in the 17th-18th centuries.¹³ The most popular icons of the Holy city, usually called “*ierusalimii*” (*ierosolimitika*, *panagiotafitika*, *proskynetaria*) date from that period. These icons normally accompanied and even certified the pilgrimage of their owners. Large scaled (usually about 1, 5 m x 2 m), *ierosolimitika* are rectangular oil paintings on canvas. The canvas base allowed icons to be rolled and transported easily, and after returning home to be put in frames.

These topographical icons were massively produced in the local Jerusalem ateliers. Painted with bright, bold colours, they have the typical composition and

⁹ Helen C. EVANS, and William WIXOM (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Arts and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, AD 843-1261*, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, 2000, 374-375.

¹⁰ WEITZMANN, *Op. cit.*, 35.

¹¹ Ivan DIMITROV, “Poklonenie i poklonnichestvo. Istoriko-ekzegeticheski pogled”, *Duhovna kultura*, 1998, 5, 19-20.

¹² Caspar Rene GREGORY, “The Madaba Map”, *The Biblical World*, 1898, 12 (4), 244-250.

¹³ WEITZMANN, *Op. cit.*, 54.

dedication at the bottom stating the year of pilgrimage and the name of the pilgrim.¹⁴



Fig. 1. *Ierosolimitiko*, unknown artist, 1797,
Oil on canvas, 114x94 cm.

The representation of Jerusalem is located in the center, usually crowned with a scene of the Second Coming and flanked with images of the Holy Virgin and Our Lord, Jesus Christ (Fig. 1). The central images are framed with numerous biblical scenes and portraits of saints. It has to be emphasized that although schematically depicted, the sights are realistic and geographically properly disposed, following the east-west vertical orientation of the icon. Also schematic, but correctly localized are the depictions of sights lying outside the walls of Jerusalem, marking the *loca sancta* visited by the pilgrim – Bethlehem, Gethsemane garden, among others. The hierarchical, artistic and geographic center of the whole structure of *ierosolimitika* is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, although there are patterns with the Crucifixion scene in the center.¹⁵ Such type of composition functions as a cartographical scheme and is directly related to Christian cosmology that presents Jesus Christ and His Resurrection as the *axis mundi*.

The second important *locus sanctus* frequently represented in cartographic icons is Mount Sinai. The topographical icons of Sinai are very intriguing

¹⁴ Vasileios ARGIRATOS, and Foteini FRAGKAKI, “IEROSOLYMITIKA: Ena diaforetiko eidos foritis eikonas apo tous Agious Topous. Istorika stoiheia, Ylika kataskeuis, Katastasi diatirisis kai Syntirisi”, Paper given at the International Meeting *Icons: Approaches to Research, Conservation and Ethical Issues*, Athens, Benaki Museum, 2006, In: http://www.icon-network.org/Approaches-to-Conservation.html?var_recherche=fragkaki

¹⁵ Rehav RUBIN, “Iconography as Cartography: Two Cartographic Icons of the holy City and its Environments”, In: *Eastern Mediterranean Cartography*, Athens, 2004, 347-378.

because of the combination of images associated with various biblical events and with the history of the monastery complex there.



Fig. 2. *Sinai*, 13th century, tempera on wood, St. Catherine's Monastery, Egypt, (photo by Iakovos Moskos)

The first topographical icons of Sinai relate to the iconographic tradition of depicting the Virgin the Unburnt Bush and Moses before the Burning Bush (Ex. 3:2) – typical themes for Sinai school of iconography, especially after the 12th century.¹⁶ After the 10th-11th centuries, when the monastery, which was established by emperor Justinian in the middle of the 6th century and dedicated to the Holy Virgin, received the relics of St. Catherine and was rededicated to her, the iconographic images of Sinai became more complicated, involving different scenes with the patron saint. However, around the 16th century a new type of *locus sanctus* icons, which included detailed topographic representation of the area, became popular (Fig. 2).

The accent in the image was put on the realistic depiction of the monastery, with focus on the Chapel of the Burning Bush. What is more, it depicts in details all other events related to the *locus sanctus* of Sinai: Moses and the Burning Bush, the Ladder of Divine Ascent and St. John Climacus, the cave and the profit Elijah. Two mountain peaks – Djebel Musa, where Moses received the Ten Commandments, and Djebel Katrin, where the angels put the relics of St. Catherine in the chapel are presented in the background.¹⁷ The topographical icons of Sinai are very precise – in addition to the realistic depiction of the mountain, the monastery complex, and all surrounding chapels, all pilgrimage sites are represented very accurately as well. The topographical icons of Sinai

¹⁶ Kurt WEITZMANN, *A Treasury of Icons – Sixth to Seventeenth Century*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966, xv, pl. on 32.

¹⁷ WEITZMANN, “Loca Sancta”, 54.

also present some of the plant species and contain the image of the Sun placed in the right hand side, which geographically correctly marks East.

After the 17th and the 18th centuries, when the number of pilgrims increased significantly, the painting of topographical icons was replaced by the production of xylographs and lithographs on the same topic.¹⁸ The topographic elements in them were even more accurate and included a realistic representation of the Red Sea, using the image of the Sun to signify East again (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. *Sinai*, Lithographic icon, 18th century

One of the earliest copper engravings of the sacred topography of Sinai is an icon from 1710, preserved in the collection of Rovinsky (№ 62898/52), with bilingual inscription in Greek and Latin. The imprint was made probably in Italy and in addition to the images of all monasteries, sketes and monk cells, it includes many interesting topographical elements as the river Nile with its crocodiles as well as the Pyramids of Giza, combined with a number of biblical scenes. It is very important to note that this icon represents one of the major artistic trends of the time – the modern European secularization of the theme of Heaven, shown as an idealized landscape painting.¹⁹

¹⁸ Robert S. NELSON, and Kristen M. COLLINS (eds.), *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, Oxford University Press, 2007, 235.

¹⁹ Plamena DIMITROVA, “Izobrajeniyata na manastira Zograf v Balkanskata I Swetogorska shtampa”, In: *Svetogorska obitel Zograf*, vol. I, Sofia, 1995, 159.

Imprinted xylographs, lithographs and copper engravings of topographical icons of the *loca sancta* were usually produced in the European centers such as Venice and Lvov, and were distributed in order to promote monasteries, to attract new pilgrims and more donations.²⁰

3. Cartographic icons of Pan-Orthodox monastic centers

Second in popularity after the cartographic icons of biblical sites come the topographical icons of Mount Athos. The rapid development of Western cartographic tradition and pilgrimage xylographs of *loca sancta* influenced the iconographic representation of *Agion Oros*.

The topographical icons of Mount Athos represent in general the Holy Tradition story about the sea travel of the Holy Virgin and St. John the Theologian to Cyprus. A sudden sea storm forced their ship to wharf miraculously to the port of Klement (now the Holy Monastery of Iveron) on the Athos peninsula. The Holy Virgin loved the beauty of that place and begged the Lord this peninsula to be her land. The legend of this miracle was recorded in codices *A' 66* and *I' 31* from the library of the Great Lavra. Based on it, the most popular iconographic type of cartographic representation of *Agion Oros* is “The Holy Virgin Mistress of Mount Athos” (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. *The Holy Virgin Mistress of Mount Athos*, 19th century

²⁰ DELLA DORA, *Op. cit.*, 91.

The Theotokos is portrayed in full height and surrounded by saints. She has an archbishop cross-stuff and her hands are raised in prayer. Her feet stand on the accurate depiction of the whole peninsula with the Mount Athos and all twenty monasteries and numerous sketes among them. This iconographic type is not the only topographic representation of Mount Athos, but the other types will be reviewed a bit later.

The first imprinted icons of Mount Athos appeared in the 17th century. Probably the main reason for their production was the economic difficulties experienced by all Orthodox monastery centers at that time. The higher taxes imposed by the Sublime Porte resulted in the idea of serial manufacture of cheap paper icons that could increase the monastic revenues. Some of the monasteries imprinted icons by themselves, but the common practice was imprinting to be carried out in the major European centers in Italy, Austria and Poland. These icons were sold to pilgrims in the monasteries or were distributed by the taxidiotes all over the Balkan Peninsula. Two engravings from the 17th century, published in „Abagar” book, are considered the earliest patterns of xylographic topographical icons of Mount Athos.²¹

The serial manufacture of imprinted paper icons of *loca sancta* during the 18th and the 19th centuries affected the monastic complex of Meteora as well. Many icons of Meteora contain topographic data such as the shape and the number of mountain peaks, the actual number of the monasteries there, as well as depictions of the means for reaching them – steps, stairs and baskets. As in the Athonite prints, these icons also combine topographic elements and architectural images of the buildings with religious and everyday scenes from monastic life.

4. Cartographic icons of miraculous icons

There is another type of cartographic icons in whose artistic and spiritual center stands not the *locus sanctus* itself, but the portrayal of the miraculous icons kept in it.

One of the most emblematic examples in this regard is a topographical icon of Mount Athos from the middle of the 18th century that portrays the miraculous appearance of the icon of the Holy Virgin Portaitissa (Keeper of the Gate) in the Holy Monastery of Iveron (Fig. 5).

It represents the miraculous escape of the icon of the Holy Virgin from the persecutions of the iconoclastic emperor Theophilus (829-842). The Iveron icon of the Holy Virgin is considered the earliest miraculous icon on Mount Athos, dated from the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century. According to the Holy Tradition recorded in several Athonite codices the icon was laid floating in the sea near Nicaea in order to be saved from the iconoclastic persecutions. Touching the water the icon stood up and started moving towards West on its own. In 999 the icon appeared in the sea in a pillar of fire high to the sky near Mount Athos and by God’s benevolence was placed in the Iveron monastery,

²¹ DIMITROVA, *Op. cit.*, 157.

where the icon itself chose not to remain in the temple, but to guard the gates of the monastery, hence its name.²²



Fig. 5. *The Miraculous appearance of the icon of the Holy Virgin Portaitissa on Mount Athos, 18th century*

The cartographic icon of this miracle represents the Aegean Sea and its coast from north to south in such a way that the Anatolian shore from Pamphylia to the Bosphorus is depicted on the left, while the Greek coast from Mount Athos to the Peloponnesus is pictured on the right side of the icon. Istanbul, Gallipoli, Trace and Macedonia are presented at the bottom, while Crete is placed on the top. Relatively correct from cartographic point of view are presented all coastal areas, with a lot of details as well as with all larger and some of the smaller cities. The image of the sea is realistic, with white foamy waves and different kinds of ships and boats. In accordance with the Holy Tradition, most attention is paid on Constantinople, Nicaea and the Athonite coast, and the central position is assigned to the image of the miraculous icon, which is floating upright in the sea.

²² Kriton CHRISOCHOIDIS, "The Portaitissa icon at Iveron monastery and the cult of the Virgin on Mount Athos", In: Maria VASILAKE (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, Ashgate Publishing, 2005, 133-141.

It is very interesting that at first sight, the geographic position of Nicaea looks incorrect – it is situated on the lake, not on the sea. The place that is depicted on the icon belongs to the neighboring city of Nicomedia. Actually, there is no mistake, because the painter did not represent Nicaea (the place where the icon was kept), but the place where it was laid floating in the sea. In general, the outlines of the coast, reversed orientation and some cartographic mistakes clearly associate the iconic image with the widespread Ptolemaic maps of Greece.²³ Therefore, what makes this icon very interesting is that it demonstrates clearly the influence of secular art on Orthodox iconography in the time of the Ottoman Empire.

There are many similar iconic images of miraculous Athonite icons combined with topographic depiction of the monasteries where they were kept. A good example in this regard is an icon from the 16th and 17th centuries portraying the miraculous icon of St. Nikolas “Stridas” in the background of the Holy Monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos. In this icon the topographic depiction of Mount Athos with several sketes is combined with a realistic architectural representation of the monastery, and above it is placed a half-figure image of St. Nikolas. The coast in front of the monastery is presented cartographically correctly. There are also two simultaneous episodes of the story of the miraculous finding of the icon in the sea (Fig. 6).

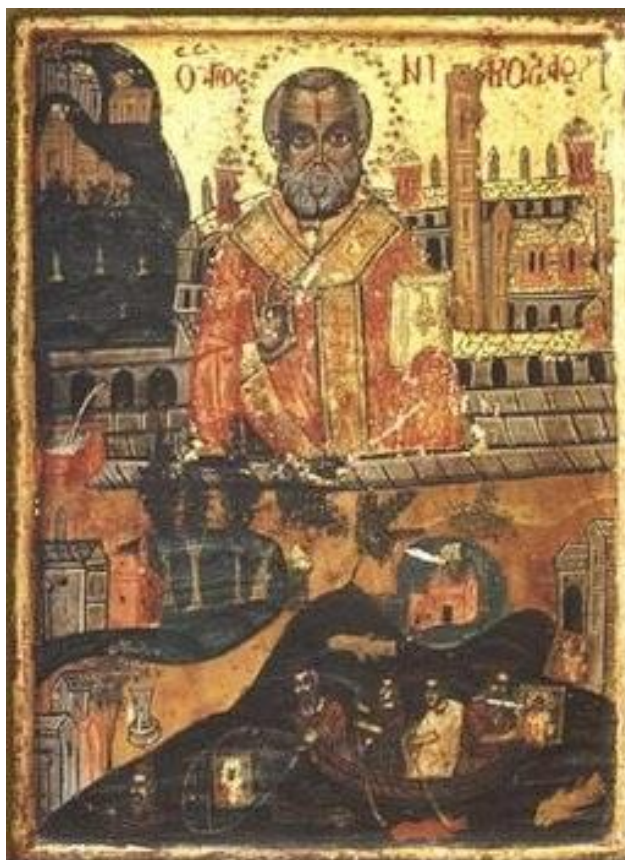


Fig. 6. *Agios Nikolaos tou Streida*, Monastery of Stavronikita, 16th-17th century

²³ Theoharis PAZARAS, “Istorisi tis Thaumaturgikis Eleusis tis eikonas tis Panagias Portaitissas sti moni Iwiron”, *Deltion XAE*, 1998, 20, 385-398.

A great number of imprinted cartographic icons of Athonite monasteries with depictions of their miraculous patron icons, including the Holy Zograf Monastery and its icon of St. George, have been preserved from the period of the 17th and 19th centuries. This type of iconic images has common features. The architecture of the main temple and the entire monastery complex are precisely depicted. A part of the Athonite coast is presented on the foreground. The main plane is enriched with scenes from monastic everyday life and with representations of plants and monastery gardens. The upper register is taken by the image of the miraculous icon, which is frequently surrounded with scenes from the life of the saint.²⁴



Fig. 7. The fresco from the Bachkovo monastery, 1846 (photo by Ivo Sotirov)

The iconographic tradition of representing miraculous icons together with the monasteries where they were placed had rapidly spread beyond Mount Athos. The largest image of this type in Bulgaria is the fresco on the outside wall of the Magernitsa of the Bachkovo monastery, painted by Alexi Atanasov in 1846 (Fig. 7). It presents extended panoramic view of the monastery complex and the annual procession with the miraculous icon of the Holy Virgin to the local site called Kluvya, which includes the images of all donors of the monastery.²⁵ This scene was reproduced on imprinted paper icons as evidenced by the copper plate preserved in the monastery collection.

5. Cartographic icons of local Orthodox shrines

Cartographic icons are not limited only to the biblical *loca sancta* and the biggest Orthodox religious shrines. Under the strong influence of the European

²⁴ DIMITROVA, *Op. cit.*, 162.

²⁵ Ekaterina MANOVA, *Bulgarska stenopis XVI-XVII v.*, Sofia: Bulgarska akademiya na naukite, 1985, 36.

vedutes, post-Byzantine Orthodox iconographic tradition created number of images of local religious shrines or individual monasteries. However, unlike the European genre pictures, Orthodox iconic variations preserved their religious character and always included the portrayal of saints.

One of the most interesting examples in this regard is the cartographic icons of Cyprus with the depiction of St. Barnabas – the founder and patron of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The saint is depicted on a throne similar to the iconographical plot of Christ Great Archiereus and the island of Cyprus is presented in his feet. Such icons were very popular during the 17th century,²⁶ but one of them contains a unique image of a map of the island. The icon was painted by the most famous Cypriot iconographer of that time – hieromonk Leontios. Unfortunately, a large part of the cartographic depiction of Cyprus is damaged, especially in the areas of Karpasia, Famagusta – Larnaka and Limassol – Akrotiri. However, it is clear enough that this image is a copy of the famous map of Cyprus made by Paolo Forlani and published in Venice in 1570, and widely used until the 1720s in the popular *itineraries (viaggia)*.²⁷

Similar cartographic images are found in some Russian icons as well. Good examples in this respect are two Pskov icons that assisted the restoration of the historical topography of the region, because there were no other sources of information. Both icons represent the scene with the miraculous appearance of the Holy Virgin in front of blacksmith Dorofey during the siege of Pskov by the army of Stefan Batory in 1581. Obviously, that was the reason for the iconographer to present the miracle including not only the images of the surrounding monasteries, but also a detailed topographic scheme of Pskov, its fortifications and its adjacent areas.²⁸

Topographical icon images of local religious shrines also occur in the Bulgarian iconographic tradition. Strongly influenced by the pilgrim images of the biblical *loca sancta* and Mount Athos, as well as by the European *vedutes*, the modern topographical depictions of local monasteries became very popular in Bulgaria during the 18th century. There is evidence that most of the biggest Bulgarian monasteries had their own printing offices. Following the lead of the Athonite monasteries they produced and distributed paper icons *in situ* or by taxidiotes.²⁹ The most widespread were the imprint icons of the Holy Monastery of Rila and the Holy Zograf Monastery on Mount Athos. Their composition usually contains a panoramic view of the monastery and its adjacent areas,

²⁶ DIMITROVA, *Op. cit.*, 88-91.

²⁷ Christodoulos HADJICHRISTODOULOU, “A Map of Cyprus in a Post-Byzantine Cypriot Icon”, In: Dimitris LOUPIS, and George TOLIAS (eds.), *Eastern Mediterranean Cartographies. Tetrada Efgasias*, Institute for Neohellenic Research 25/26, Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2004, 337–346.

²⁸ Elena SALMINA, “Otkrytie moshtenoy ulitshy XII-XIII vv. Na zavelichye Srednevekovogo Pskova (Olyginskie raskopy 2006 g.)”, In: *Novgorod and Novgorod Region History and Archeology*, Materials of the Scientific Conference, Veliki Novgorod, 2007, 21, <http://bibliotekar.ru/rusNovgorod/162.htm>

²⁹ Ani GERGOVA, *Bulgarska kniga: Enciklopedia*, Sofia: Pensoft, 2004, 486.

complemented by scenes of monastic everyday life in the lower register of the image; the patron saint flanked by scenes of his/her life is depicted in the upper register. The topographical representation of the objects is of two types – detailed and cartographically correct or summarized and schematic.³⁰



Fig. 8. *Saints Cyril and Methodius*, Nikola Vassilev, 1896, (Unpublished icon from Shumen)

An interesting example can be seen in an unpublished till this moment topographical icon of Saints Cyril and Methodius – the inventors of the Cyrillic alphabet and the most venerated saints for the Slavs³¹ (Fig. 8). Here they are represented in front of a topographical depiction of the town Veliki Preslav – the successor of the second Bulgarian capital Preslav, where during the reign of St. Tzar Boris Mikhail I in the 9th century, their pupils developed in the Preslav

³⁰ DIMITROVA, *Op. cit.*, 167-172.

³¹“Cyril and Methodius, Saints”, In: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica Incorporated, Warren E. Preece, 1972, 846; Leonid Ivan STRAKHOVSKY, *A Handbook of Slavic Studies*, Harvard University Press, 2013, 98.

Literary School the early Cyrillic alphabets.³² Certainly, this unique iconographic scheme was made by the painter for emphasizing the significance of Preslav and the importance of its connection with the great deed of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Equal-to-the-Apostles. Therefore, the representation shows a contemporary for the painter view of the town mixed with the depictions of its surrounding area and the old castle walls, which had been destroyed by the Turks several centuries earlier.

Icons with topographical images of monasteries remained popular during the 19th century as well. A good example in this regard is an icon of the Holy Monastery of Valaam, depicted with its surroundings and flanked by the images of two Valaam miracle-workers – St. Sergius and St. Herman. The icon gives truthful view of the old cathedral in the Valaam monastery (Fig. 9).

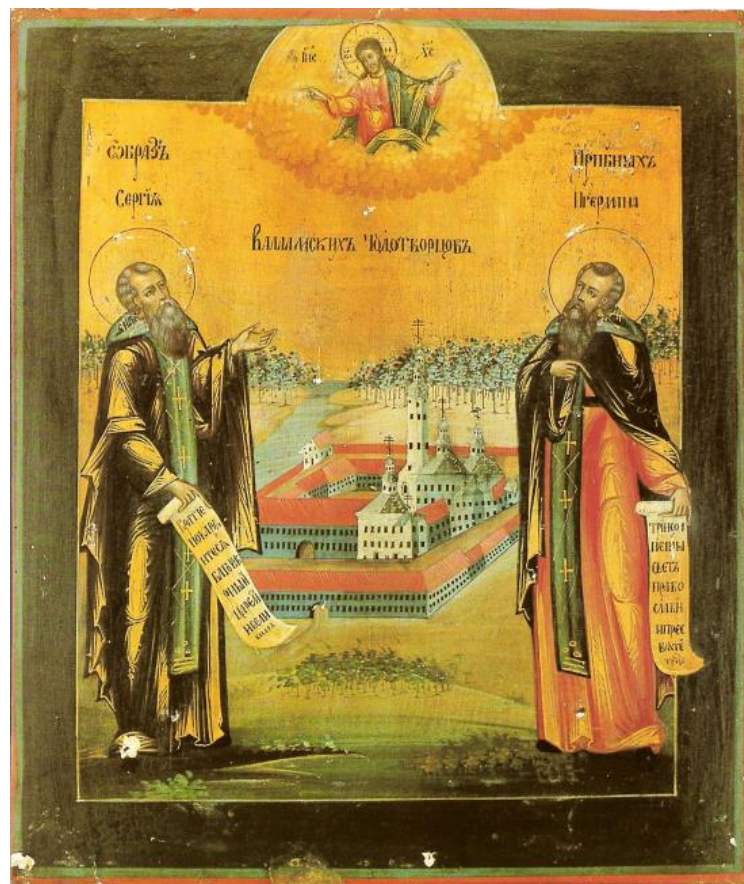


Fig. 9. *St. Sergius and St. Herman*, 19th century, Orthodox Church Museum, Kuopio, Finland

A similar icon depicts St. Constantine, the New Martyr of Hydra, who suffered a martyr's death in 1800. According to the extant evidences, his icons were widely spread even during the first decades of the 19th century and their iconographical type consists of a detailed topographical depiction of the island of Hydra. In this icon, we see a precise representation of the city with its walls and towers and even of the minarets of the mosques there. The surroundings of the

³² Paul CUBBERLEY, "The Slavic Alphabets", In: Peter T. DANIELS and William BRIGHT (eds.), *The World's Writing Systems*, Oxford University Press, 1996, 346-355.

city including some plants, villages, fortifications, a detailed view of the harbor and the sea with ships and boats are also presented (Fig. 10).

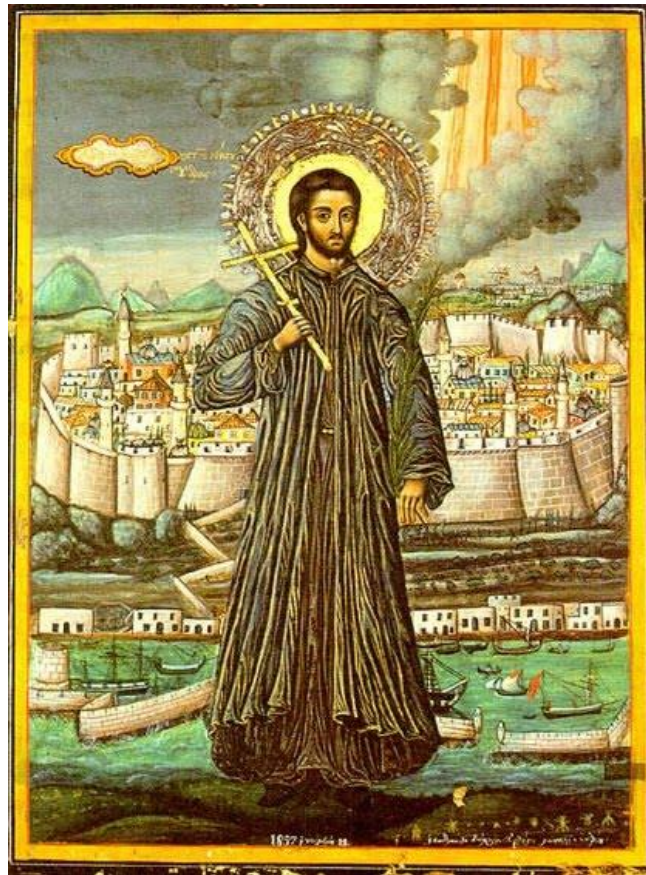


Fig. 10. *St. Constantine the New Martyr of Hydra*, 19th century, paper icon

The Athonite images of this type are numerous. Practically each of the monasteries on Mount Athos had created icons of the saints shone forth in its brotherhood, and their iconographic canon included a topographical depiction of the monastery, Mount Athos, part of the coast and the sea. The tradition of producing common icons with all saints who had shone forth on Mount Athos also remained untouched, and it has to be emphasized that all of these images contain topographical representation of the Athonite peninsula.

Here is the place to point out that even being under the influence of European secular art Orthodox iconography tradition had never deviated from the symbolic type of representation of *loca sancta*. Examples of the latter are a few images of Mount Athos, which used topographic elements arranged according to the spiritual hierarchy and sacred symbolism. Mount Athos is presented as a high peak topped with the image of the Holy Virgin and a stream of water springs from it and meanders among the monasteries that are placed vertically in rows. The iconographic image combines a view from above with a view from the sea that also makes scholars associate this iconographic model with Renaissance cartography.³³

³³ DELLA DORA, *Op. cit.*, 95-98.

6. *Εικόν* and *Mappamundi*

There are some differences as well as similarities between Orthodox *εικόν* and medieval *mappamundi*. Due to the dominant liturgical function of the Orthodox icon, it is difficult to view the holy images from a different perspective. However, despite its dogmatic meaning, the icon is not devoid of specific features that demonstrate its ontological similarities with other at first glance non-comparable images. The sacred character of the icon has not affected its relationship with reality and the world in its dichotomous material-spiritual essence. Therefore, we should not forget that apart from being a visual representation of the events described in the Holy Bible, the icon serves as a vehicle for expression of Orthodox ideology, including biblical cosmology. From this standpoint, Orthodox iconography could be seen as cosmography based on the Christian view of the world, its history and the role of humans in it.

The cosmological and cosmographical character of the icon is not limited only to the symbolic representation of the material and the spiritual space emphasizing the sanctity of the sacred portraits and events. Sometimes it is exhibited in a very literal way, turning the Orthodox icon into a topographical map that represents all details of a sacred story together with the geographic area where it has happened. Although rare, such type of icons has its ground in the sacred geography and religious tradition of pilgrimage to the *loca sancta*, playing the role of a map of the theocentric world.

7. Conclusions

We should note that mapping of *loca sancta* has always been connected one way or another with the symbolic representation typical for religious art. Most of the ancient maps of the Holy Land had not been created with the modern utilitarian purpose of maps in mind, i.e., they had not been drawn to help travelers to find the way to *loca sancta*. Many of these maps put the center of the world in the Holy City of Jerusalem in the same way that it was done in *ierosolimitika* icons, for example. Some of them did not even try to represent in full the real layout of the *locus sanctus*. In fact, these maps served as a mediator in the expression of certain information (selected from a hierarchical and spiritual point of view), a perspective or a concept. It is precisely this functional characteristic of the *loca sancta* maps, which made their incorporation in the sacred images of the icons so easy and so natural, converting the Orthodox *εικόν* into an original *mappamundi* of the theocentric Universe.

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