The iconographic theme of the Deesis in the 14th century monumental painting on Naxos[1]

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Abstract

Η Δέηση είναι ένα εικονογραφικό θέμα, το οποίο αποτελεί εικαστική έκφραση πολλών και σύνθετων δογματικών εννοιών. Το συγκεκριμένο άρθρο επικεντρώνεται κυρίως σε παραδείγματα από ναούς της Νάξου, χρονολογημένα βάσει επιγραφών. Πρόκειται για τους ναούς Άγιο Ιωάννη Θεολόγο Απειράνθου 1309, Άγιο Κωνσταντίνο Βουρβουριάς 1310, Άγιο Σώζοντα Γιαλλούς 1313/14, Άγιο Ιωάννη Θεολόγο Φιλωτίου 1314.

Στα μνημεία της συγκεκριμένης περιόδου, εντοπίζονται περιπτώσεις απλών συνθέσεων καθώς και ορισμένα ιδιότυπα παραδείγματα. Οι συγκρίσεις με παραδείγματα από ναξιακά μνημεία του δεύτερου μισού του 13ου αιώνα οδηγούν σε ορισμένα ενδεικτικά, αλλά πολύτιμα συμπεράσματα. Από την εξέταση του θέματος αυτού στο πλαίσιο των εικονογραφικών προγραμμάτων των ναών του 14ου αιώνα στη Νάξο, αντλούνται σημαντικά στοιχεία. Πρωιμότερα παραδείγματα της Δέησης, όπως η απεικόνισή της σε επάλληλα ζωγραφικά στρώματα στο ναό της Παναγίας της Δροσιανής, πιστοποιούν τη διαχρονικότητα της παρουσίας του θέματος στο εικονογραφικό πρόγραμμα των ναών του νησιού.

Επίσης, από τη μελέτη του θέματος στα μνημεία της Νάξου, προκύπτει ότι αυτό σπάνια απαντά σε άλλα σημεία του ναού εκτός της αψίδας του Ιερού και ποτέ στη διακόσμηση των κτιστών τέμπλων.

Οι λόγοι της τόσο συχνής παρουσίας του θέματος στο ζωγραφικό διάκοσμο των ναών του 13ου και του 14ου αιώνα στη Νάξο, μπορούν να συνοψιστούν στο συντηρητισμό, που διαπνέει τη μνημειακή ζωγραφική στο νησί, στον πιθανό ταφικό χαρακτήρα ορισμένων μνημείων, στη δραστηριότητα τοπικών καλλιτεχνικών εργαστηρίων και στις προσωπικές επιθυμίες των χορηγών των τοιχογραφιών.

Introduction

This paper considers the iconography of the Deesis, mainly a three-figure composition with Christ in the centre surrounded by the Virgin and the Baptist in supplication, a theme which constitutes the pictorial expression of many complex doctrinal concepts, in the 14th-century frescoes of Naxos. Special focus is directed at monuments dated by inscriptions: Agios Ioannis Theologos st' Afikli at Apeiranthos (1309), Agios Konstantinos at Vourvouria, Damarionas (1310), Agios Sozon Giallous at Agiassos (1313/14), and Agios Ioannis Theologos at Kaminos, Philoti (1314) (**fig. 1**).

The date at which the iconographic theme of the Deesis[2] was created cannot be determined accurately.[3] However, it is sure that it was included in the sanctuary decoration from the Early Christian era.[4] Certainly from the early 11th century the Deesis is found in the apse decoration of Cappadocian churches and from the middle of the same century it is found in the Balkans, in southern Italy and in Russia.[5] The form was established in monumental painting from the 12th to the 13th century.[6] During the Late Byzantine period, apart from Naxos,[7] it is particularly common in churches of Mani,[8] Crete,[9] Cyprus,[10] and Rhodes.[11] That it is so often represented in monumental painting can be justified by the existence of a common "iconographic language" around the eastern Mediterranean during this period.[12]

The theme mainly occupies the eastern part of the church, with particular preference for the sanctuary apse. Especially in single-aisle churches, due to the absence of a dome, or in domed churches with undecorated domes, the Deesis is more often chosen for the decoration of the semi-dome probably because it includes the Pantokrator (typically represented in the dome). Nevertheless, this is not always the case.[13]

Many examples of the Deesis are preserved on Naxos, reflecting the diachronic eschatological concerns of the local faithful. The evolution of the theme's presence on the island can be clearly seen in the frescoes of Panagia Drosiani, near the village of Moni, where it is depicted from the 7th to the 13th century.[14] In decorations of the sanctuary apse, the number of representations of the Deesis seems to outnumber singular representations of the Virgin Mary, and the choice of Christ Pantokrator is rare.[15]

The majority of Naxian examples can be dated to the second half of the 13th century, principally: Agios Georgios at Apeiranthos (1253/4),[16] Agios Georgios at Distomo, Philoti (1286/87) (**fig. 2**),[17] the chapel of Agia Kyriaki at Kalloni in Apeiranthos (end of the 13th century) (**fig. 3**),[18] Agios Panteleimon at Pera Chalki or Santani, in Tragaia (1291-92),[19] and Agios Georgios (south church)

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2. Indicative bibliography for Deesis: Von Bogyay (1966), pp. 1178-86 with bibliography; Mouriki (1968), pp. 13-28; Walter (1968), pp. 311-36; Idem (1970), pp. 161-87; Thierry (1974), pp. 13-28; Kaster (1974), p. 38; Papadaki-Oekland (1973-74), pp. 31-54 pl. 7-10; Walter (1980), pp. 261-69; Velmans (1980-81), pp. 47-102; Skawran (1982); pp. 18-19; Velmans (1983), pp. 129-74; Cutler (1987), pp. 145-56; Weyl Carr (1991), pp. 599-600; Emmanouel (1991), pp. 87-89; Altripp (1998), pp. 97-98; Maderakis (2003), p.18, note 7 with bibliography; Mantas (2000), pp. 165-82; Idem (2001), pp. 96-112; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 25-30; Kalopissi-Verti (2006), pp. 120, 122; Kountoura-Galaki (2015), pp. 151-59.

3. Mantas (2001), pp. 96.

4. Weitzmann (1990), pp. 65; Mantas (2001), pp. 97-98; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 19-22.

5. Mantas (2001) pp. 101-104 with bibliography.

6. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 23.

7. Strati (1982), p. 57; Mastoropoulos (1983), p. 125 note 15, 16; Zias (1989), p. 37; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 80-86.

8. Drandakis, Kalopissi and Panayotidi (1979), p. 182.

9. Maderakis (2003), p. 9 and passim; Spatharakis (1999), especially p. 268; Spatharakis (2001), with examples of the period under discussion, pp. 22, 23, 40, 44, 48-49, 60, 62 etc; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 59-72; Spatharakis (2010), especially p. 268; Spatharakis and Van Essenberg (2012), especially p. 70; Spatharakis (2015), sporadically.

10. Stylianou (1997), p. 507 and passim. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 72.

11. The theme is widespread, mainly on Rhodes. Strati (1982), p. 55; Zias (1989), p. 37; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 73-77. Generally it is common in the Dodecanese (Idem pp. 77-79).

12. Drandakis (1986) p. 704; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 247.

13. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 58-59, 256-58.

14. Panagia Drosiani: For the second half of the 7th century Deesis: Drandakis (1988), p. 76; Idem (1989a), pp. 21, 26, 24 pl. 8; Pallas (1989-90), pp. 129-131; Gioles (1998), pp. 70, 67 pl. 1; Mantas (2001), p. 97; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 164-166. For the 10th-11th century Deesis: Chatzidakis (1976), p. 38 no. 54, pl. 23. For the 11th-13th century representations of the theme: Chatzidakis (1989a), p. 27, where there has been a confusion in the series of the mural layers, but in Achimastou-Potamianou (2007), p. 16 note 17, the successive frescoes layers are placed in the correct chronological order.

15. Kostarelli (2013a), pp. 107-108. Personal archive.

16. Drandakis, (1965), pp. 545-546, pl. 688a; Skawran, (1982), p. 183, no. 71, pl. 416-17; Mitsani (2000), p. 103 pl. 7; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 83 note 126; Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 216, no. 130, 131; Gioles and Pallis (eds.) (2014), p. 370, pl. 589.

17. Mastoropoulos (1983), pp. 123-24; Idem (1986a), pp. 4-5.

18. Vassilaki (1962-63), p. 60; Mastoropoulos (1983), p. 122 note 11; Vassilaki-Karakatsani (1989), p. 59; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 83.

19. Mitsani (2000), pl. 15; Mastoropoulos (2006), no. 86, pp. 174, 192 pl. 147; Gioles and Pallis (eds.) (2014), p. 372, pl. 589.

(about 1290-1300)[20] and Agios Nikolaos (north church) (1290-1300), at Lathrino in Sangri.[21]

In the 14th century, the Deesis continued to be frequently chosen for the sanctuary apse decoration on Naxos. There are many examples of simple compositions where the theme has the typical iconographical scheme constituted by the three basic figures (Trimorphon), namely the frontal Christ Pantokrator in the middle flanked by the intercessory figures of His mother the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. Additionally, special compositions are occasionally selected.

As far as the simple compositions are concerned, we can mention the cases of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Apeiranthos (1309) (**fig. 4**) and also at Philoti (1314) (**fig. 5**), and Agios Sozon Giallous (1313/14), precisely dated by inscriptions. In addition to these, a large number of relevant examples from the same period are found on Naxos, dated on stylistic grounds as no inscriptions are preserved, for example: the anonymous chapel at Agios Georgios in Melanes (**fig. 6**),[22] Agios Nikolaos at Komiaki,[23] Agios Georgios at Pera Chalki,[24] and Agios Georgios at Sifones,[25] all dating to the end of the 13th century or around 1300. The representations of the Deesis in the monuments from Apeiranthos and Philoti show iconographic similarities, such as the same physiognomic types and the same motives decorating the halos of the figures. Therefore, both can be attributed to the same artist.[26] The theme in Agios Sozon Giallous, although poorly preserved, does not seem to deviate in its iconography from the previous two.

In three of the examples from 14th-century monuments, the Deesis is composed of bust figures, as is generally the case in 13th-14th century Naxian churches.[27] Only rarely are the figures of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist full-length, turned three-quarters towards the enthroned Christ. Examples are seen in the semi-dome of Panagia Protothronos in Chalki (13th century)[28] and Prophitis Ilias at Vlachaki in Apeiranthos (end of 13th–beginning of 14th century), where the figures of the Deesis are depicted full-length (**fig. 7**).[29] A unique example is the decoration in the apse of Agios Georgios in Apeiranthos, where the Pantokrator is full length while the Virgin and the Baptist are half (1253/54).[30] These depictions seem to follow old patterns, as established in earlier representations on Naxos.[31]

The central figure of Christ, as in the Deesis of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Philoti, holds an open gospel with the inscription: "I am the light" (Ἐγώ εἰμί τό φῶς) (John: 8:12),[32] common on the island[33] and elsewhere.[34] In the Deesis of Agios Sozon Giallous, Christ holds a closed codex, representing a rare variation on Naxos[35] whereas numerous relevant examples are found elsewhere.[36]

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20. Panayotidi (1991-92), pp. 140-41 pl. 2,4; Mitsani (2000), p. 108 pl. 14; Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 153 pl.109.

21. Strati (1982), p. 68 pl. 1; Achimastou-Potamianou (1995), p. 189 pl. 111-12; Mitsani (2000), p. 107, pl.13; Boubouli (ed) (2004), pp. 114-15 pl. 91; Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 75 pl. 35.

22. Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 120 no. 37 (dating), p. 79 pl. 39.

23. Kostarelli (2013a), p. 251 note 1509 where the earlier bibliography on the dating of the murals.

24. Achimastou-Potamianou (1980), pp. 489-90.

25. Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 236, no. 144 (dating). Personal archive.

26. Kostarelli (2013a), pp. 229, 249.

27. The choice of the iconographic type of figures in Middle Byzantine Deesis scenes has been argued to be related to the available surface for painted decoration. Mantas (2001), pp. 111.

28. Zias (1989), pp. 34, 35, pl. 6; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 84.

29. Dimitrokallis (1983), p. 12.

30. See note 16.

31. Indicatively: Panagia Drosiani, Deesis (detached), 10th-11th century. See note 13.

32. This is the evangelical reading for Sunday of Pentecost. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 185 note 78. For Pantokrator holding an open inscribed codex: Kontogiannis and Germanidou (2008), pp. 65-66.

33. This text appears fragmentarily, as in the church of Agios Ioannis Baptistis at Damarionas (Mastoropoulos, (1991), pp. 388-89) or complete, as in Agios Nikolaos at Lathrino (Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 75 pl. 35). But in Agios Georgios at Lathrino, another text appears in Christ's open gospel (Mt. 11. 28). An open inscribed gospel is also held by the Pantokrator in Agios Stefanos at Marathos (Theochari (1983), pl. Θ) and Panagia Damiotissa (Skawran (1982), pp. 54, 180; Personal archive).

34. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 184-90 with examples from various regions.

35. The same element is seen in Agia Kyriaki at Kalloni in Apeiranthos, Deesis of the chapel (late 13th century).

36. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 190-93 with many examples.

The Virgin Mary, rendered on a smaller scale than Christ, is depicted wrapped in her maphorion, turning her hands towards Him in supplication.

The third figure in the scene, John the Baptist, is also represented supplicating, on a smaller scale in relation to Christ. In the three examined Naxian monuments, the third figure in the Deesis is preserved in poor condition or is damaged. Generally, the Baptist is represented wearing a chiton and a himation in the monumental painting of Naxos. Only in the apse of the north church of Agios Panteleimon at Lakkomersina in Apeiranthos is he rendered wearing a bristle garment, called a miloti.[37] In the Deesis of Agios Ioannis in Philoti, the figure placed on Christ's south side may be identified, with some caution due to poor preservation, as Saint John the Theologian. The replacement of the Baptist in Deesis scenes decorating the semi-dome of the sanctuary conch is not common. Concerning Naxian monuments, we can also mention Agios Ioannis Theologos "Sta Pelai" (13th century) where the Baptist's position is occupied by the eponymous saint.[38]

Another issue concerns the position of the simple form of the Deesis in the iconographic programmes within 14th-century Naxian monuments. In the three-aisle church of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Apeiranthos, the tripartite Deesis adorns the semi-dome of the central sanctuary apse and is combined with the subject of Melismos and co-officiating hierarchs in the semi-cylinder, as in the homonymous church at Philoti (**fig. 8**) and elsewhere on Naxos.[39] This is also a fairly common element in Cretan frescoes,[40] and has been associated with an eastern origin.[41] The combination of the Deesis with Melismos in the central apse is more frequently noted in Naxian churches than the association of the Virgin Mary and Melismos[42] and other less common combinations.[43]

The Deesis is depicted in the central apse of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Apeiranthos while the Virgin with Child adorns the apse of the diakonikon. The displacement of the depiction of the Virgin to the apse of the south aisle (diakonikon), as in the church at Apeiranthos, is a practice also adopted in both Maniot[44] and Cappadocian monuments.[45] It is considered that the choice of placing the Deesis in the semi-dome of the sanctuary apse helps emphasize the doctrine of the divine Incarnation, just as with the iconographic theme of the Virgin, which is usually depicted in the semi-dome of the central apse.[46]

In the sanctuary of Agios Sozon Giallous, the Deesis is combined with the Annunciation, the figures of which are placed on either side of the apse conch; purely soteriological content is found in the

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37. Mitsani (2000), pp. 96-97; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 85; Personal archive.

38. Mastoropoulos (1986b), p. 100, pl. 16.

39. Indicatively: Panagia Damiotisa (12th-13th century) (Skawran (1982) pp. 54, 180; Kazamia-Chernou, (2005), p. 82; Konstantinidi (2008), p. 180 no. 33), Agios Ioannis Theologos of Kerami (second half of the 13th century) (Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 82; Konstantinidi (2008), p. 178 no. 25), both conches of the church at Lathrino (1290-1300) (Kazamia-Chernou, (2005), pp. 82-83; Konstantinidi (2008), p. 164 no. 13, pp. 181-182 no. 40), Agios Georgios of Apeiranthos (1253-54) (Kazamia-Chernou, (2005), p. 83; Konstantinidi (2008), p. 175 no. 12), Agios Georgios of Distomo, (1286-87) (Kazamia-Chernou, (2005), p. 84; Konstantinidi (2008), p. 181 no. 38), Agios Georgios and Agios Panteleimon of Pera Chalki (1291-92) (Kazamia-Chernou, (2005), pp. 84-85).

40. Indicatively: Agios Georgios in Agia Triada / Pyrgiotissa (1302) (Bissinger (1995), p. 115, pl. 6), Agios Georgios at Anydrous of Selino (1323) (Spatharakis (2001), p. 63), Agios Photios in Agia (1329/30) (Spatharakis (2010), pp. 15-16), Agios Ioannis Baptistis in Kritsa (1370) (Gallas, Wessel and Borboudakis, (1983), pl. 408).

41. A. Xyngopoulos collates apse decoration of Trebizond churches of the first half of the 15th century, in which the same combination is found. Xyngopoulos (1999), pp. 46-47.

42. Indicatively: Agios Nikolaos of Sangri, Panagia at Marathos (Personal archive).

43. Indicatively: Prophitis Ilias at Vlachaki of Apeiranthos (end of 13th–beginning of 14th century), where the Deesis is seen in the semi-dome and the Sacred Mandylion in the semi-cylinder. Strati (1982), p. 57; Dimitrokallis (1983), p. 12; Kazamia-Chernou, (2005) p. 83.

44. The three-aisle church of Agios Nikolaos at Platsa in Mani (second half of the 14th century). Mouriki (1975), pp. 33, 53.

45. The same element is seen in: Yusuf Koc Kilisesi (Virgin in the northern apse, Deesis in the southern apse), Direkli Kilise at Belisirma (the enthroned Virgin in the northern apse and the Deesis in the central apse) and Carikli Kilise (Deesis in the central apse and Virgin with Christ in the northern). Lafontaine-Dosogne (1972), pp. 173-74.

46. Mantas (2001), p. 101.

apse itself. The correlation of the Deesis with the Annunciation is quite frequently seen in churches in Georgia, Cappadocia and Syria.[47]

Figures of the Annunciation also adorn both sides of the sanctuary conch of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Philoti and other churches on Naxos.[48] They are painted lower down, following two half-length saints identified as the apostles Peter and Paul. These apostles, placed at this location of the church, can be interpreted as supplementary figures of the Deesis in the semi-dome, although it is not certain that they were supplicating.[49] In the barrel-vaulted church of Agios Georgios at Oskelos (1286-1287), the presence of the same figures in the apse combined with the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist in opposition to the Pantokrator, above the altar, can also be interpreted as a special composition of the Deesis.[50] The inclusion of these particular apostles in the Deesis is connected with their appearance in the sequence of Proskomedia.[51] Their correlation with the Deesis is already seen in early Cappadocian monuments,[52] in several early post-Byzantine churches,[53] and in icons.[54]

The halo of the Pantokrator sometimes bears painted[55] or stamped decoration.[56] Stamped motives are made by a technique particularly popular in Late Byzantine monumental painting in either Latin-occupied regions or those neighbouring Latin states.[57] The frame of the halos can be simple or decorated with a variety of painted motives. Frequently a specific motif appears, composed of alternating single and double painted white pearls, which is widespread in monumental painting in Naxos in the 13th century, in South Italy and in Cappadocia.[58]

Western iconographic influence is noted in the representation of the Virgin in the Deesis of Agios Ioannis Theologos in Apeiranthos (**fig. 9**) in the Western-style white head-cap under her maphorion.[59] Although Naxos had already been under Latin occupation for a century, only a few individual elements of Western origin[60] appear in Naxian frescoes dated to the early 14th century. Western influences in the mural decorations of this century correspond qualitatively and

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47. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 270-71.

48. Indicatively: Agios Panteleimon of Pera Chalki or Santani, 1291-92. Achimastou-Potamianou (1978), b2, pp. 343-44; Mitsani (2000), p. 107, pl.15.

49. Kostarelli (2013a), p. 92.

50. Achimastou-Potamianou, (1982), b2, pl. 247a; Mastoropoulos (1983), p. 122; Idem (1986a), pp. 3-4; Achimastou-Potamianou, (1995), p. 149; Mitsani (2000), p. 96. Gioles and Pallis (eds.) (2014), p. 372, pl. 589.

51. However, the presence of additional figures of the Deesis at this point has been associated with images of the epistyle of the templon. Drandakis, Kalopissi and Panayotidi (1979), p. 165 note 1 with examples. Also see Mantas (2001), p. 192.

52. Indicatively: Direkli Kilise (976-1025), Yusuf Koç Kilisesi. Jolivet-Lévy (1991), p. 74 pl. 54, 323, 324. Also the representation of the two apostles is found in a burial arcosolium between Kokar and Purenli Seki Kilise [Idem note 166]. Additionally see: Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p.167 note 19.

53. Indicatively: Agia Varvara "stou Glezou" in Mani (around 1200) (Drandakis, Kalopissi and Panayotidi (1979), pp. 164-65; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 177-178), Holy Apostles in Perachorio (1286/87) (Stylianou (1997), p. 422) and the earlier, 1233-1234, of the two representations of Deesis in the sanctuary in the south chapel of the cave of Mount Penteli where the Deesis is flanked by busts of the apostles Peter and Paul (Mouriki (1973-74), pp. 95-96). Also see: Gioles (2009), pp. 132 note 761 with more examples.

54. Indicatively: Icon of Prophitis Ilias (13th century), Tretiakov collection (Alpatov (1960), p. 50) and icon from Veria with an iconographic theme reminiscent of the Deesis (second half of the 14th century) (Mavropoulou-Tsioumi (1998), pp. 141-47).

55. Such as in the Deesis of Agios Georgios at Melanes chapel, where Christ's halo is decorated with fleurs de lis, 14th century. Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 79 (dating) pl. 39.

56. Indicatively: Deesis of Agios Ioannis Theologos in Apeiranthos. Kostarelli (2013a), pp. 103, 110.

57. Kalopissi-Verti (1986), pp. 557-60. For examples from other regions, indicativelly: Spatharakis (2010), p. 128 pl. 150 (Agia Marina in Chalepa, 2nd layer, 1330-1350).

58. Kostarelli (2013a), pp. 99-100.

59. Drandakis (1965), p. 543, pl. 682a. A Western-style white headband under maphorion is worn by the Virgin in the represantation of the Deesis in Agios Georgios at Apeiranthos (1253/54), Mitsani (2000), p. 103 pl. 7; Kostarelli (2013a), p. 111.

60. For elements that are considered to be of Western influences in Byzantine art, see Mitsani (2000), p. 118 note 107 with bibliography. On the issue of Western influences in Byzantine monumental painting, see Pallas (1987), p. 30 and passim; Parani (2003), pp. 230-38; Foskolou (2009), pp. 145-55. However, we can not always be absolute in categorizations, Mouriki (1984), pp. 171-213; Katsioti (1996-1997), p. 260 note 114.

quantitatively to those of the previous century on the island.[61]

Concerning stylistic matters, the figures of the Deesis in both churches dedicated to Agios Ioannis Theologos are placed against a purple background in the semi-dome of the sanctuary apse, similar to several homonymous depictions on the island. These date to the second half of the 13th century, espe-cially to the last decades, and can be attributed to a local artistic workshop.[62] This is in contrast to the majority of examples on Naxos and elsewhere, which are depicted against a blue background, such as the case of Agios Sozon Giallous.[63]

A particularly significant 14th-century composition of the Deesis is seen in Agios Konstantinos at Vourvouria, dated to 1310 (**fig. 10**). The figures of the Virgin and the bust of Christ adorn the semi-dome of the sanctuary apse.[64] A thick red band divides the semi-cylinder into three sections: the cen-tral, largest section is occupied by Saints Basil and Nicholas, the southern by the figure of John the Bap-tist, while the frontal, full-size figures of saints Constantine and Helena are placed on the northern side.

The doctrine of Divine Incarnation is represented through the figure of the Virgin in the apse. Nevertheless, additional symbolic axes are revealed through the Virgin's various iconographic forms,[65] as well as the placement of the figures that surround her. In particular, John the Baptist is iconograph-ically related to the Virgin Mary since the 6th century.[66] As second in the hierarchy of saints after the Virgin, he is considered to be the only man to dwell among the celestial forces. Besides that, the Baptist is represented next to the Lord as having been his friend, having joined the Old with the New Testament, and as the last of the prophets.[67]

In the church at Vourvouria and in some other representations of the Deesis, however, Saint Nicholas replaces John the Baptist. This substitution can be explained by the former's key position in the hierarchy of saints.[68] On the other hand, there are examples of the Trimorphon where Saint Nicholas just stands by.[69] Similarly, Saint Basil may have been chosen to participate in this iconographic scheme because he also occupies a significant position in the hierarchy of saints.

Saint Constantine is shown supplicating in a single composition with Saint Helena. The depiction of the eponymous saint in the sanctuary apse is an Early Christian practice, but a number of examples are found in 13th-century Naxian monuments, where, however, the eponymous saint is mainly depict-ed in the semi-dome. Female figures rarely appear in monumental painting in the apse; in the case of Agios Konstantinos at Vourvouria, Saint Helena is there to accompany Saint Constantine.[70]

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61. Kostarelli (2013a), p. 112.

62. Indicatively: Agios Georgios at Marathos (Personal archive), Agios Georgios at Lathrino (Achimastou-Potamianou (2007), pl. 1), the single-vaulted chapel attached to the south of the church of Agia Kyriaki at Kalloni of Apeiranthos (second half of the 13th century) (Personal archive). For the purple background in Naxian monumental painting: Kostarelli (2006), pp. 69-79; Idem (2013a), pp. 217-21.

63. Indicatively: Agios Nikolaos at Lathrino, northern church (Boubouli (ed.) (2004), pl. 91; Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 75, pl. 35), Agios Ioannis at Sifones, northern church (Personal archive).

64. Due to the special veneration of the Virgin Mary on Naxos, there are many names attributed to Her. Korres (1967), pp. 559-78; Katsouros (1989) pp. 23-26; Paschalis (1985-90), pp. 151-94; Kampanellis (2000), pp. 24-25; Kefalliniadis (1996); Baltogianni (2000), p. 139; Bacci (2000), p. 88.

65. Mantas (2001), pp. 57-61, 101.

66. Ampulla of Bobbio (no. 20) (Der Nersessian (1960), pp. 71-86). During the 7th-8th century, a corresponding representation is preserved in Agios Stefanos in Cemil, Cappadocia (Restle (1967), pl. 409).

67. Gioles (2009), p. 31; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 33-37.

68. Drosogianni (1966), p. 394, note 8, with examples. Also see Maderakis (2003), pp. 78-79. Saint Nicholas is the second saint of Orthodoxy after the Baptist, receiving so many appeals for intercession with Christ for the salvation of the people. Mouriki (1973-74), pp. 98-99, note 56-58.

69. Indicatively: painted decoration of a carved tomb in Veria (13th century), Drosogianni (1966), pp. 394-96, note 9 with examples. Also see Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 168 with more examples.

70. For the eponymous saint in Naxian monumental painting see Kostarelli (2013b).

Typically, supplicating saints are not depicted holding a book or scroll or in a gesture of blessing, although saints often stand by the Trimorphon holding a book, sharing in the desire of the supplicating figures.[71] These figures in the apse of Agios Konstantinos, therefore, in combination with the Virgin Mary, constitute a Deesis. This view is supported by the fact that the Virgin of the semi-dome bears the special name "ΕΠΙΣΚΕΨΙΣ". A rare name is also attributed to the Virgin in the apse of Panagia "stis Giallous", dated to 1288/89, where a special representation of the Deesis is also preserved,[72] as well as in some other examples.[73] Additionally, the division of the sanctuary apse of the church at Vourvouria into sections refers to the similar practice adopted in the apse of Panagia "stis Giallous".[74]

Regarding particular variations of the theme, some early examples from Naxos should be mentioned, namely the Deesis of Panagia Drosiani, from the second half of the 7th century,[75] and the unique composition in the semi-dome of the apse in the cavernous church of Kaloritissa, dated to the second quarter of the 10th century.[76]

Many of the unique iconographic elements in the apse decoration of Naxian churches are associated with the concept of the Deesis. These special features are also apparent in the figures participating in the iconographic scheme as well as their position in the given space on the church walls. Such examples are characterized by a remarkable variety during the second half of the 13th century, as seen in the church of Panagia "stis Giallous". In this church, besides the Deesis of the sanctuary conch, the figures of the northern drum of the blind arch in the nave (Virgin and Child, Saint Demetrios and supplicating saints Kyriaki and Paraskevi) are juxtaposed with those of the corresponding position on the south wall (Christ, Saint John the Theologian) to constitute another special representation of the Deesis.[77] In Agios Eleftherios at Apeiranthos (13th-14th century), Christ is portrayed alone in the semi-dome with an open gospel, while the supplicating Virgin Mary, two co-officiating hierarchs, and the Baptist are depicted half-length in the short semi-cylinder.[78] In the double-apse barrel-vaulted church of Agios Georgios at Skeponi, the Deesis is depicted on the eastern flat wall, over two conches. Between them, the eponymous saint is painted frontally, almost full length, dating from the late 13th to early 14th century.[79] Additional relevant and interesting compositions are seen in: Agia Irini of Galanado (13th century),[80] Agios Georgios at Paratrechos (13th century),[81] Agios Georgios at Sifones (southern

71. Drosogianni (1982), p.18 note 4.

72. The composition in the semi-dome of the sanctuary conch at Panagia "stis Giallous", namely the Virgin Nikopios flanked by the archangel Michael and the Baptist, has been interpreted as a combination of two iconographic themes: the Virgin between angels and the Deesis (Kalopissi-Verti (1984), p. 201). The same figures are also repsesented in the sanctuary conch of Panagia at Archatos, (1285) (Mastoropoulos (1986b), p. 111), whereas in Agios Panteleimon of Lakkomersina at Apeiranthos (second half of the 13th century), in the conch of the northern church, the Baptist and a saint or an angel are supplicating to the central figure of the Virgin Nikopios (Drandakis, (1985-90), pp. 35-36; Mitsani (2000), pp. 96-67; Gioles and Pallis (eds.) (2014), p. 373, pl. 589). In Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 202, the composition from Panagia "stis Giallous" as well as the corresponding one of Panagia at Archatos and the north aisle of Agios Panteleimon at Lakkomersina of Apeiranthos are included in the category of special compositions of the Deesis, where Christ from the Trimorphon is replaced by the Virgin Nikopios and the place of Virgin Mary is occupied by the archangel Michael. In the later monument, the archangel is replaced by a saint or an angel (Idem, pp. 214, 218-19).

73. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 37-39, 231-38 with examples.

74. Drandakis (1989b), p. 100.

75. See note14.

76. In Kaloritissa, the enthroned Virgin with Christ is represented flanked by two angels, and also surrounded by Prodromos and prophet Isaiah, combined with twelve frontal apostles in the semi-cylinder. Panayotidi (1994), p. 541, pl. 1; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 80-81, 172.

77. Drandakis (1989b), pp. 100, 102, pl. 5, 6; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 132, 235, 262.

78. Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 224 no. 136 (dating); Personal archive.

79. Mastoropoulos (2007), pp. 264, 294 note 70, 265 pl. 7.

80. Mastoropoulos (2006), p. 106, no. 18 (dating); Personal archive.

81. Mastoropoulos (2006), pp. 102, 104, 106, no. 17 (dating); Personal archive.

church) (second half of the 13th century),[82] Agios Georgios at Oskelos, (1285-86),[83] Agios Georgios at Apeiranthos (1253-1254),[84] Agios Stefanos at Kato Marathos (second half of the 13th century),[85] and Agios Ioannis Theologos "sta Pelai" (13th century).[86]

Along with the pictorial expression of many complex doctrinal concepts, the choice of the Deesis for the decoration of the sanctuary apse is due to other factors, which vary for each monument.[87] Apart from funerary churches,[88] its frequent presence in small provincial monuments, as on Naxos, is likely due to the conservative character of painting.[89]

It can also be considered to reflect the personal wishes of the donors of the painted decoration.[90] Frequently, the donors' votive inscriptions start with the word: "Δέησις". Despite this, the only pre-served example of the Deesis accompanied by the figure of a donor dates to the 11th century and comes from the eastern sanctuary conch (today removed) of Panagia Drosiani.[91] Although many examples of donor portraits are included in the decorative programmes of the 13th century on Naxos, none of them accompanies the iconographic theme we have discussed. The same observation applies to 14th-century monumental painting on the island, as no donor portrait is seen among the known murals.[92] General-ly, the choice of the Deesis theme seems to be associated with the so-called "private liturgy", which is considered to have affected the evolution of Byzantine church architecture,[93] and therefore the pictorial choices concerning church decoration.[94]

As a result of the frequent selection of the Deesis to decorate the sanctuary apse, this theme is one of the basics in church iconographic programmes during this period on the island.[95] The use of re-peated physiognomic types and specific stylistic traits led researchers to suppose the existence of local ateliers of painters on Naxos.[96]

Moreover, the success of the Byzantine fleet in the Aegean, under the command of Alexios Philan-thropenos, has been associated with a religious and cultural reaction by the local islanders and conse-quently with the frequent representation of certain iconographic themes in the monumental painting on Naxos, such as the Deesis.[97]

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82. Mitsani (2000), p. 96.

83. See note 50.

84. See note16.

85. Chatzidakis (1967), b2, pp. 30-31, pl. 56b; Achimastou-Potamianou (1979), b2, p. 374; Mastoropoulos (1986b), pp. 107-108; Mitsani (2000), p. 96, note 31, p. 97 pl. 1; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 263.

86. Mastoropoulos (1986b), p. 100.

87. Mantas (2001), pp. 98-112; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 55-59.

88. Emmanuel (1991), pp. 176-77 with examples of cemeterial churches, note 759 with bibliography; Lafontaine-Dosogne (1979), p. 319 with examples. Also see Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 264 and passim, for more examples of the Deesis in churches with funerary character.

89. For the conservative character of Naxian monumental painting in this period see Chatzidakis (1989b), pp. 14-16; Kostarelli (2013a), pp. 242-72, mainly pp. 253-54, 259-60. There are several examples of the Deesis with special elements, preserved in various regions. Maderakis (2003), pp. 28-31 (examples from Crete); Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 202-205, 217-19, 225-30, 230-31 (examples from various regions).

90. Mantas (2001), pp. 104-105.

91. Achimastou-Potamianou (1995), pp. 151, 188 pl. 110; Idem (2007), p. 16 note 17; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 175; Kostarelli (2013a), p. 107 note 518.

92. Kostarelli (2014).

93. The so-called "private liturgy" appears in the 7th century. Matthews (1982), p. 136.

94. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 269.

95. By contrast, the Deesis is sporadically found among the known contemporary murals on other Cycladic islands. Indicatively: Mitsani (1995), pp. 721-22 (Agia Anna, Sikinos, after the mid-14th century); Idem (1998), pp. 840 (Agios Stefanos at Chorio, Sikinos, first half of the 14th century); Dellaporta (ed.) (2008), without pagination (Agioi Anargyroi at Katapola, Amorgos, 14th century).

96. Mitsani (2000), pp. 102-112; Achimastou-Potamianou (2007), pp. 15-20; Kostarelli (2013a), mainly pp. 249-54; Kountoura-Galaki (2015), p. 157.

97. Kountoura-Galaki (2015), pp. 151-59.

It is worth mentioning that the Deesis covered earlier layers with aniconic decoration,[98] such as in the sanctuary apse of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Adissarou,[99] as well as the central apse of Agia Kyriaki of Apeiranthos, where another representation of the same theme decorates the semi-dome of the attached chapel.[100] Notably, scenes of the Deesis do not appear in the painted decoration of masonry screens[101] in Naxian churches, as frequently occurs in the Peloponnese and Kythera,[102] although it is also rare on Crete.[103] Additionally, it is rarely depicted elsewhere in the church apart from the sanctuary apse, with the only known exception being the special composition in the nave of Panagia "stis Giallous", where the name "Παυσωλίπει" is used for Virgin, while Christ is called "Σωτήρας".[104]

In conclusion, we can say that the Deesis is a common iconographic theme in the painted repertoire decorating the sanctuary apse of Naxian churches from the Early Byzantine period. It becomes widespread after the mid-13th up to the early 14th century, but it is rarely found in the nave and it never occupies the front side of the masonry templon. After the mid-14th century, it apparently ceases to be included in church iconographic programmes. The wide use of this theme can be identified as an archaic element in the monumental painting of Naxos, but can also be interpreted as an example of the vigorous religiosity of the local people.

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98. Achimastou-Potamianou (1995), p. 149; Kountoura-Galaki (2015), pp. 155-56.

99. Achimastou-Potamianou (1989), pp. 50, 55 pl. 4. Idem (1995), p. 149.

100. Vassilaki (1962-63), p. 60, pl. 18a (detail of the central apse Deesis). Also see note 18.

101. For the Deesis depicted on the masonry screen: Mantas (2001), p. 103 note 41.

102. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 108-109.

103. Found in only five 14th-century cretan monuments. Kazamia-Chernou (2005), pp. 113-14.

104. Drandakis (1989b), p. 103 pl. 6. The name "Φιλάνθρωπος" accompanies Christ in the Deesis of Agios Georgios at Lathrino. Panayotidi (1991-92), p. 139; Kazamia-Chernou (2005), p. 234.

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Abbreviations

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AAA:	Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εξ Αθηνών
ΑΔ:	Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον
BZ:	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CorsiRav:	Corsi di Cultura sull΄ Arte Ravennante e Bizantina
CahArch:	Cahiers archéologiques
ΔΧΑΕ:	Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας
DOP:	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
EEKM:	Επιστημονική Επετηρίς Κυκλαδικών Μελετών
LCI:	Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie
ODB:	Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium
ΠΑΑ:	Πρακτικά της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών
ΠΑΕ:	Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας
Rbk:	Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst
REB:	Revue des etudes byzantines
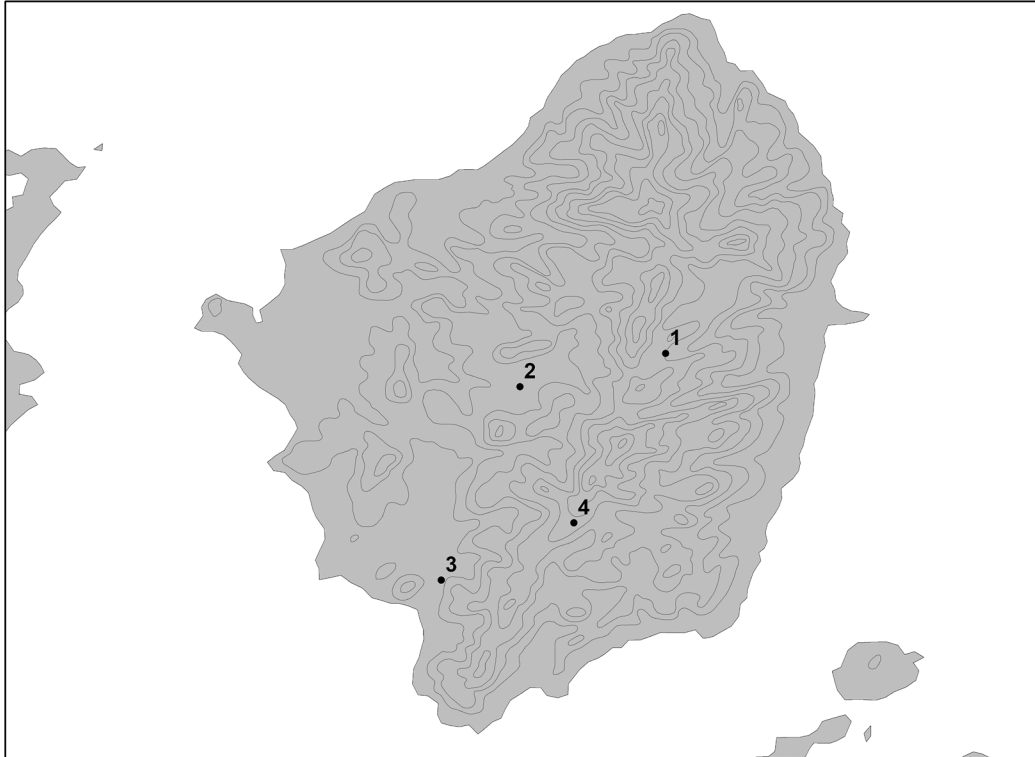
Figure 1. Naxos map. (1) Agios Ioannis Theologos, Apeiranthos (1309). (2) Agios Konstantinos, Vourvouria (1310). (3) Agios Sozon Giallous (1313/14). (4) Agios Ioannis Theologos, Philoti (1314).

Figure 2. Philoti, Distomo. Agios Georgios, sanctuary, semi-dome, Deesis, 1286/87. (Photo: A. Kostarelli).
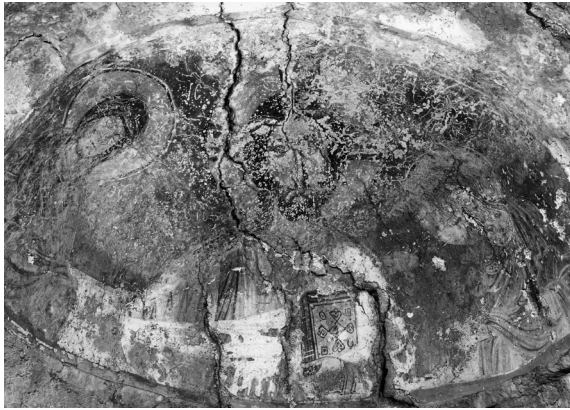
Figure 3. Apeiranthos, Kalloni. Agia Kyriaki, sanctuary conch of the chapel, semi-dome, Deesis, end of the 13th century. (Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum, no.41557, Ioannidou-Bartzioti).

Figure 4. Apeiranthos, st'Afikli. Agios Ioannis Theologos, sanctuary, semi-dome, Deesis, 1309. (Photo: A. Kostarelli).

Figure 5.
Philoti, Kaminos. Agios Ioannis Theologos, sanctuary, semi-dome, Deesis, 1314. (Photo: A. Kostarelli).

Figure 6. Melanes. Agios Georgios, chapel apse, Christ of the Deesis, beginning of the 14th century. (Mastoropoulos, (2007a), p. 79 fig. 39).

Figure 7. Apeiranthos, Vlachaki. Prophitis Ilias, sanctuary conch, Deesis, end of the 13th–beginning of the 14th century. (Historical and Photographic Archives of the Byzantine and Christian Museum BIE46-2).

Figure 8. Philoti, Kaminos. Agios Ioannis Theologos, sanctuary conch, Deesis and Melismos, 1314. (Photo: A. Kostarelli).

Figure 9. Apeiranthos, st'Afikli. Agios Ioannis Theologos, central sanctuary conch, Deesis, Virgin (detail), 1309. (Photo: A. Kostarelli).

Figure 10. Vourvouria. Agios Konstantinos, sanctuary conch, 1310. (Photo: A. Mitsani).