

ACADÉMIE ROUMAINE
INSTITUT D'ÉTUDES SUD-EST EUROPÉENNES
SOCIÉTÉ ROUMAINE D'ÉTUDES BYZANTINES

ÉTUDES BYZANTINES ET POST-BYZANTINES

Nouvelle série
Tome IV (XI)

Byzantine Heritages in South-Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

Editors

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2022

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Saint Eustratios – *Skriniarios* and Soldier. A Contribution to the Study of the Iconography of Warrior Saints in Eastern Christian Art¹

Miloš Živković

Abstract: Several representations of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia in the guise of a soldier, previously unpublished or insufficiently examined, are presented in the paper. Although they are quite rare, the examples in question are very important for understanding the fact that the figure of the leader of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia is included in the group of warrior saints on some very significant Middle and Late Byzantine works of art. Images of St. Eustratios with weapons and in military equipment were probably based on hagiographic, hymnographic and encomiastic data about his service in the army.

Keywords: St. Eustratios, Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, warrior saints, iconography, Byzantine art, ivory triptychs, wall paintings

¹ In the writing of this paper, I have benefited from the generous help of many of my colleagues. Professor Miodrag Marković read the first draft and kindly offered many invaluable comments and remarks. I am particularly grateful to him for calling my attention to the representation of St. Eustratios at the Great Lavra Monastery (cf. Fig. 17). I am indebted to my dear friend and colleague at the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA, Marka Tomić, who also had insight into my work on this paper, for her numerous useful suggestions, especially concerning the stylistic analysis of the icon of St. Eustratios from the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai (cf. fig. 12-15); and to Maja Nikolić, research associate at the Institute for Byzantine Studies, for her generous help with reading Greek sources. Tatjana Starodubcev (Academy of Arts in Novi Sad), Julia Gearhart (Director of the Visual Resources and Curator of the Image and Historic Collections of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University), Sally Bjork (Visual Resources Collections, The Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan), Alice Isabella Sullivan (The Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan), Simona Moretti (IULM University, Milan) and Irina Shalina (The State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg) were all kind enough to make the necessary photographs available to me during my research.

Among the groups of Early Christian martyrs whose cult left a deep mark in Byzantine art, a special place belongs to the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia (feastday 13 December): Eustratios (Armenian name: Kyrisikes), a *skrinarios*; Auxentios, a priest; Eugenios, an official; Mardarios, a commoner; and Orestes, a soldier, who were tortured and executed in Satala, Arauraka and Sebasteia during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian (286-310).² Until the Seljuk conquests in the second half of the eleventh century, the cult of these martyrs radiated from the martyrdom in Arauraka, Eustratios' and Eugenios' birth town, where the relics of all five martyrs had been translated and kept.³ Starting from the Middle Byzantine period, numerous representations of the "Five Martyrs of Sebasteia" or the "Holy Five," as they came to be known, emerged in different corners of the Byzantine cultural space and in various art mediums – monumental painting, illustrated manuscripts, the minor arts and icon-painting (Fig. 1). In the formative phase of their representations in Eastern Christian art, the portraits of these martyrs acquired very distinctive iconographic characteristics, which survived throughout the Late and Post-Byzantine period, albeit with some variations. Therefore, when consistent with their standard iconographic types, images of the Holy Five are fairly easy to identify even when not accompanied by the appropriate inscriptions. St. Eustratios, the leader of the group, was usually shown as middle-aged, with longish hair and a pointed beard, dressed in an ornate cloak decorated with two or three horizontal clasps in the front and a white scarf around his neck, and holding a scroll. These three "attributes," although not all three necessarily appear in every representation of St. Eustratios, are the hallmarks of his occupation as a public official. Special iconographic features were also given to St. Mardarios, who is routinely shown wearing a hat, usually a dome-shaped one; and to the young, beardless Orestes, most often pictured armed and in military attire. St. Auxentios was generally depicted as an older man with white hair and beard, and Eugenios as relatively young, with a more or less sparse mustache and beard.⁴

² F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca*. I, Bruxelles, 1957, 202-203; idem, *Auctarium Bibliothecae hagiographicae Graecae*, Bruxelles, 1969, p. 71; idem, *Novum auctarium Bibliothecae hagiographicae Graecae*, Bruxelles, 1984, p. 75; Arhimandrit Sergii, *Polnyi miasiaceslov Vostoka. II. Sviatoï Vostok*, Moscow, 1876, *Chast' I, Miasiaceslov*, p. 327; *Chast' II, Zametki*, p. 386-387; *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*. V, Rome, 1964, col. 313-315; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (= ODB). II, ed. by A. Kazhdan, Oxford, 1991, p. 789; *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia* (= PE) XVII, Moscow, 2008, p. 333-336.

³ F. Halkin, "L'épilogue d'Eusèbe de Sébastée à la Passion de S. Eustrate et de ses compagnons", *Analecta Bollandiana* 88, 1970, p. 279-283; P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient. Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe*, Paris, 1985, p. 375; A. Bryer, D. Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos*, Washington, D.C., 1985, p. 165-168; J. O. Rosenqvist, "Local Worshippers, Imperial Patrons: Pilgrimage to St. Eugenios of Trebizond", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56, 2002, p. 193-194.

⁴ On the representations of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia in Eastern Christian art, cf. *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (= LCI). VI, ed. by W. Braunfels, Rome – Freiburg – Basel – Vienna, 1974 (reprint 2004), col. 200-201; K. Weitzmann, "Illustrations to the Lives of the Five Martyrs of Sebaste", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33, 1979, p. 95-112; T. Chatzidakis-Bacharas, *Les peintures murales de*



Fig. 1. Sinai, St. Catherine's Monastery, Icon of Five Martyrs of Sebasteia (by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai).

The leader of the group could sometimes be shown individually.⁵ The earliest known example of a stand-alone figure of St. Eustratios has survived on a small ivory icon, probably made in the tenth century, now part of the London collection of Julius Wernher (Lady Ludlow Collection).⁶ It is followed by two examples found

Hosios Loukas. Les chapelles occidentales, Athens, 1982, p. 74-81; D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios*, I, Athens, 1985, p. 143-147; S. Gabelić, "Predstave Petozarnih mučenika u crkvi Svetog Stefana u Konči", *Zograf* 29, 2002-2003, p. 191-198; M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images. Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, Leiden – Boston, 2003, p. 97-98 and *passim*; P. Kostovska, "Mačeničkite dopojasja vo Sveti Nikola, vo Manastir, Mariovo", *Zbornik. Srednovekovna umetnost* 6, 2007, p. 29-37; PE XVII, p. 335-336; D. Gorgievski, "Prilog kon proučavanjata na koltot na svetite Petozarnici i idejnata programa vo severnata kupola na manastirov Treskavec", *Patrimonium.MK* 7, 2014, p. 121-132.

⁵ It is interesting to note that some synaxaria also mention St. Eustratios without the other four martyrs of Sebasteia, for example, the *Taktikon* by Nikon of the Black Mountain (c. 1050-1060), cf. *Taktikon Nikona Chernogorca*, ed. by V. N. Beneshevich, Saint Petersburg, 1917, p. 63; *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents. A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments* (=BMFD). I, ed. by J. Thomas, A. Constantinides Hero, Washington, D.C., 2000, p. 413. Individual representations of the leader of a martyr group, both in commemorative liturgical texts and art, is hardly unusual. For some characteristic examples cf. M. Marković, "Notes on a Byzantine Processional Cross from the George Ortiz Collection", *Zograf* 30, 2004-2005, p. 38, n. 22.

⁶ A. Goldschmidt, K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts*, II, Berlin, 1934, p. 29 (no. 19) Taf. V/19. An even earlier depiction of St. Eustratios seems to have survived on the so-called Fieschi Morgan staurotheke, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, cf. H. C. Evans, W. D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle*

in illustrated manuscripts from the libraries of Athonite monasteries. Shown without his companions and instead grouped with St. Stephen the Protomartyr and Stephen the Younger, Eustratios of Sebasteia appears on a miniature in a psalter from the Monastery of Dionysiou (cod. 762), illuminated in the twelfth century;⁷ the Gospel Lectionary no. 2 from St. Panteleimon's Monastery, from the first half of the same century, contains an individual figure of Eustratios.⁸ Furthermore, another testimony to the singling out of the Holy Five's leader within the collective cult is the templon beam with scenes of his miracles from St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (twelfth century).⁹ Sphragistic evidence also shows that St. Eustratios could be depicted without his companions,¹⁰ and his individual images appear on some Late Byzantine icons, as well.¹¹

Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261, New York, 1997, p. 74 (no. 35); R. Cormack, M. Vassilaki (eds.), *Byzantium 330-1453*, London, 2008, p. 390-391 (no. 52). In this case, however, the depicted saint cannot be conclusively identified as the leader of the Holy Five because he is shown beardless.

⁷ *Οι θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους: Εικονογραφημένα χειρόγραφα*. IV, ed. by P. K. Chrēstou et al., Athens, 1991, p. 298, εἰκ. 224.

⁸ D. Mouriki, *Nea Moni...*, p. 147; S. Kadas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφημένο χειρόγραφο ἀρ. 2 τῆς Μονῆς Αγίου Παντελεήμονος (Αγίου Όρους). Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τῶν βυζαντινῶν εὐαγγελίων*, Thessaloniki, 2001, p. 150-151, πίν. 29α.

⁹ S. A. Ivanov, "Chudo sv. Evstratiia s sinaiskoi ikony i ego literaturnyi prototip", in A. V. Zakharaova (ed.), *Obraz Vizantii. Sbornik statei v chest' O. S. Popovoï*, Moscow, 2008, p. 211-214; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Posthumous Miracles of Saint Eustratios on a Sinai Templon Beam", in D. Sullivan, E. A. Fischer, S. Papaioannou (eds.), *Byzantine Religious Culture. Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, Leiden – Boston, 2011, p. 267-287. Out of eleven miracle scenes, just one involves the remaining four martyrs.

¹⁰ V. Penna, "Two Rare Byzantine Lead Seals: A Contribution to Iconographic and Administrative Matters", *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 11, 2012, p. 143-152, especially p. 145 (with examples and references); M. Campagnolo-Poithou, J.-C. Cheynet, *Sceaux de la collection George Zacos au Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève*, Genève – Milan, 2016, 366 (no. 324); A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden*, Teil 2: *Einleitung, Siegellegenden von Ny bis inklusive Sphragis*, Vienna, 2016, p. 114 (no. 1643), p. 131 (no. 1689), p. 153 (no. 1711b), p. 399 (no. 2223), p. 406 (no. 2244), p. 431 (no. 2300), p. 468-470 (no. 2386); *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, Volume 7. *Anonymous, with Bilateral Religious Imagery*, ed. by J. A. Cotsonis, Washington, D.C., 2020, p. 243 (no. 15.23). Cf. also idem, "The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (Sixth-Twelfth century)", *Byzantion* 75, 2005, p. 394 (chart III). On some seals, St. Eustratios is shown as a full-length figure surrounded by the busts of the remaining four martyrs of Sebasteia, cf. V. S. Shchandrovskaja., "Pechati s izobrazheniem armianskikh muchenikov", *Παυσίνιου-φυλιούσηρηλιού ηουλήτη* 2, 2001, p. 44-49 (= *Vizantiiskaia sfragistika v trudakh V. S. Shchandrovskoi*, ed. by E. V. Stepanova, Saint Petersburg, 2019, p. 492-494); V. Bulgakova, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel in Osteuropa. Die Funde auf dem Territorium Altrusslands*, Wiesbaden, 2004, p. 59-61 (no. 1.2.7); A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus...*, II, p. 391 (no. 2203), p. 517-518 (no. 2491). For seals with representations of all five martyrs in medallions cf. eadem, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Teil 1. Einleitung, Siegellegenden von Alpha bis inklusive My*, Vienna, 2011, p. 373 (no. 828).

¹¹ Busts of St. Eustratios appear on the commissions of Maria Palaiologina and her husband, Toma



Fig. 2. Rome, Museo nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia, ivory triptych (after Deomene. *L'immagine dell'orante fra Oriente e Occidente*, ed. by A. Donati, G. Gentili, Electa, Milano 2001)

As noted in previous scholarship, representations of St. Eustratios on Constantinopolitan ivory triptychs from the tenth and eleventh centuries are of particular significance.¹²

The oldest example from the abovementioned group is held at the Museo nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia in Rome (Fig. 2). Judging by the verse inscription in the central segment of the triptych, it seems to have been commissioned by Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos during his sole rule (945-959).¹³ This outstanding

Preljubović (Thomas Komnenos Palaiologos), the ruler of the Despotate of Epirus in Ioannina: an icon of the Mother of God with saints from the Transfiguration Monastery at Meteora (1367-1384), next to the cavity that held the particles of their relics; and on a diptych from Cuenca (1382-1384), cf. A. M. Sáez, *El díptico bizantino de la Catedral de Cuenca*, Cuenca, 2004, p. 98-99; A. Babuin, “Il dittico di Cuenca e l’Epiro in epoca tardo-medievale”, in A. Rigo, M. Trizio, E. Despotakis (eds.), *Byzantine Hagiography. Texts, Themes & Projects*, Turnhout, 2018, p. 428, fig. 2.

¹² D. Mouriki, *Nea Moni...*, p. 147; D. Gorgievski, “Prilog...”, p. 123.

¹³ A. Goldschmidt, K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen...*, II, p. 33 (no. 31a-f), Taf. X, LXIII/31f; D. Talbot Rice (ed.), *Masterpieces of Byzantine Art*, Edinburgh, 1958, p. 34-35 (no. 68); A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master. Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium*, Princeton, 1994, p. 157, 208, 210 and *passim*; N. Oikonomides, “The Concept of ‘Holy War’ and the Two Tenth-century Byzantine Ivories”, in T. S. Miller, J. Nesbitt (eds.), *Peace and War in Byzantium, Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, SJ*, Washington, D.C., 1995, p. 69-77, ill. I-III; A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme auf Ikonen und Objekten der Kleinkunst*, Vienna, 2010, p. 337-342; R. S. Nelson, “‘And So, With the Help of God’. The Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 65-66, 2011, p. 186-187, fig. 15; S. Moretti, “Viaggio di un trittico eburneo da Costantinopoli a Roma. Note in margine al «Corpus degli oggetti bizantini in Italia»”, in A. Acconcia Longo et al. (eds.), *La Sapienza bizantina. Un secolo di ricerche sulla civiltà di Bisanzio all’Università di Roma*,



Fig. 3. Sts Demeterios and Eustratios, a detail of Fig. 2

example of Constantinopolitan art from the period of the Macedonian Renaissance shows Eustratios of Sebasteia together with warrior saints, whose images are on the wings of the (open) triptych, flanking the Deesis composition and the figures of five apostles (Peter, Paul, John, Andrew, James) below it.¹⁴ On the left wing, in the upper register, are the frontal representations of Theodore Tyron and presumably Eustathios Plakidas, with St. Prokopios and St. Arethas below them. The uppermost zone of the triptych wing facing this one features the standing figures of Theodore Stratelates and St. George, while the lower one depicts St. George, St. Demetrios and St. Eustratios of Sebasteia (Fig. 3). Every warrior saint is shown in a tunic and chlamys, and all hold martyr's crosses with their right hands; only Eustathios Plakidas and Theodore Stratelates have swords in their left hands. Like the seven military saints, St.

Eustratios wears a tunic and chlamys and holds a cross with his right hand. This representation, therefore, does not correspond to his usual iconographic type – the distinctive clasps on his cloak are absent, as is the scarf around his neck and the scroll in the other hand. However, Eustratios's physiognomy is consistent with his standard facial features. He is middle-aged, with longish, curly hair combed behind his ears and a relatively short, pointed beard.

The ivory triptych from the Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica in the Vatican (Fig. 4) seems to have been made under the direct influence of the example from Palazzo Venezia and is consequently dated to the mid- to late tenth or possibly early eleventh century.¹⁵ Indeed, the central panel of this triptych also features the

Rome, 2012, p. 225-244; eadem, *Roma bizantina. Opere d'arte dall'impero di Costantinopoli nelle collezioni romane*, Rome, 2014, 226-232 (no. 16); A. Eastmond, "The Heavenly Court, Courty Ceremony, and the Great Byzantine Ivory Triptychs of the Tenth Century", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 69, 2015, p. 71-72, 94-95 (no. 1); S. Moretti, "Deesis e santi di manifattura bizantina", in M. D'Onofrio (ed.), *Museo Nazionale. 150 opere d'arte della storia d'Italia*, Milano, 2019, p. 616-619.

¹⁴ The description of this one and other triptychs omits the representations of saints on the reverse except the figures of some martyrs who will be discussed further below, cf. *infra*.

¹⁵ A. Goldschmidt, K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen...*, II, p. 34 (no. 32a-b), Taf.



Fig. 4. Vatican, Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica, ivory triptych (after *Byzantium 330-1453*)



Fig. 5. Sts Demeterios and Eustratios, a detail of Fig. 3

Deesis, and the selection of the apostles in the lower registers corresponds to that of its possible predecessor and model. However, on the Vatican triptych, above the standing figures of the apostles, there are five medallions with apostle busts and two medallions each between the two zones of the inner sides of the lateral panels (including another holy soldier, St. Merkourios). The selection and arrangement of the seven holy warriors is almost identical to the example discussed above, the only difference being that Arethas and Prokopios have changed places. Eustratios of Sebasteia again occupies the same position, next to the figure of St. Demeterios (Fig. 5). On the other hand, on the Vatican triptych, the holy warriors in the uppermost zone of the lateral panels are depicted in armor and with weapons, while the three in the lower register retain the iconographic form given to them in

the Palazzo Venezia example, with the addition of *tablia* on their chlamydes. The

XI-XII; A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, p. 220-221; *The Glory of Byzantium...*, p. 131-134 (no. 79); *Byzantium 330-1453...*, p. 400 (no. 76); A. Eastmond, "The Heavenly Court...", p. 96-97 (no. 2) and *passim*.



Fig. 6. Paris, Louvre, Harbaville triptych (after *Byzantium 330-1453*)

iconography of the Holy Five's leader corresponds to the appearance of these three martyrs. Once again, he does not appear in his distinctive costume but his facial features are consistent with his usual iconographic type.

The same group of ivory artworks includes the famed Harbaville Triptych, now in the Louvre but made in Constantinople, probably in the mid-tenth century or slightly later (Fig. 6).¹⁶ The iconographic content of the central panel of this triptych largely overlaps with that of the examples discussed above (Deesis, standing figures of five apostles). Furthermore, like in the Vatican triptych, St. Merkourios is shown along with the other saints on the wings (Thomas the Apostle, Philip the Apostle, St. Panteleimon). However, the arrangement of the standing figures of the warrior saints on the lateral panels is somewhat different from the examples described above. In the upper zones of the wings with the representations of the four military saints with weapons, the sculptor of the Harbaville Triptych (or the person whose instructions he followed) decided to depict Theodore Stratelates and Theodore Tyron together (left) and across them St. George and St. Eustathios Plakidas (right). In the lower zone, he obviously grouped the saints according to their age. Hence, the beardless Demetrios and Prokopios are shown next to each other on the right side, while Arethas and

¹⁶ A. Goldschmidt, K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen...*, II, p. 34-35 (no. 33a-b), Taf. XIII; J. Durand (ed.), *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, Paris, 1992, p. 233-236 (no. 149); J. Durand, M. Durand, *À propos du triptyque Harbaville: Quelques remarques d'iconographie médo-byzantine*, in M. Durand (ed.), *Patrimoine des Balkans. Voskopojë sans frontières 2004*, Paris, 2005, p. 133-155; *Byzantium 330-1453...*, p. 401 (no. 77); A. Eastmond, "The Heavenly Court..." p. 98-99 (no. 3) and *passim*. Ioli Kalavrezou proposes the middle of the eleventh century as the triptych's time of creation, cf. *The Glory of Byzantium...*, p. 133-134 (no. 80).



Fig. 7. Harbaville triptych, Sts Eustratios and Arethas
(photo Wikimedia Commons)

Eustratios of Sebasteia appear as their counterparts (Fig. 7). Like in the previous two cases, all four wear patrician clothing and hold martyr's crosses with their hands. St. Eustratios' hair is slightly shorter than usual.

Of all Constantinopolitan ivory triptychs, Eustratios of Sebasteia holds the most prominent place on the example from the Hermitage made in the tenth or early eleventh century.¹⁷ Unlike all previously discussed works, the central iconographic theme of this triptych is the scene of the *Passion of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia* – another group of saints who had been Roman soldiers in their lifetime. The selection of the standing military saints is distinctive due to the absence of St. Arethas, who is here replaced by St. Merkourios. On the opposite wing are Theodore Stratelates and Prokopios (lower register) and, above them, St. Eustathios Plakidas and Eustratios of Sebasteia (Fig. 8). On the Hermitage triptych, all seven warrior saints are armed and armored. On the

¹⁷ A. Goldschmidt, K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen...*, II, 27 (no. 9); A. Bank, *L'art byzantin dans les musées de l'Union Soviétique*, Leningrad, 1977, p. 294, pl. 123-127; A. V. Bank, O. S. Popova (eds.), *Iskusstvo Vizantii v sobraniakh SSSR*, II, Moscow, 1977, p. 103 (no. 592); Y. Piatnitsky et al. (eds.), *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia. Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, Saint Petersburg, 2000, p. 74-76 (no. B44); A. Eastmond, "The Heavenly Court...", p. 105 (no. 8) and *passim*.



Fig. 8. Saint Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, ivory triptych, Sts Eustathios Plakidas and Eustratios of Sebasteia (after *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia*)

other hand, Eustratios of Sebasteia wears a tunic and a chlamys with three clasps on the chest. He holds a martyr's cross in his left hand, and his right rests on his abdomen.

The images of the holy warriors on the four ivory triptychs discussed above have been included in studies of the representations of this distinctive class of saints in Eastern Christian art. Scholars have noted that Eustratios of Sebasteia appears together with them.¹⁸ However, the presence of this saint in those works has yet to receive a more detailed explanation. I believe that it warrants a more in-depth consideration.

On one hand, the images of Eustratios of Sebasteia on the listed triptychs represent eloquent testimonies of the veneration of this martyr in the Byzantine

¹⁸ M. Marković, "O ikonografiji svetih ratnika i o predstavama ovih svetitelja u Dečanima", in V. J. Đurić (ed.), *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana. Građa i studije*, Belgrade, 1995, p. 592, 597; Ch. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, Aldershot, 2003, p. 98, 103, 167-168, 187, 197, 275-276; P. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, Leiden – Boston, 2010, p. 58, n. 4, 104, n. 158, 184, 187, 193, 280, 301-302, and *passim*; H. A. Badamo, *Image and Community: Representations of Military Saints in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean*, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011, p. 97, 98, 100, n. 21, 108-109; M. White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900-1200*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 78-81; F. A. Bauer, *Eine Stadt und ihr Patron. Thessaloniki und der Heilige Demetrios*, Regensburg, 2013, p. 260-264.

capital. According to the information provided in the Synaxarion of Constantinople and the Typikon of the Great Church, the commemoration of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia was held at the church of St. John the Evangelist near Hagia Sophia.¹⁹ By comparing data from other, rather numerous written sources and even a few valuable visual representations, this church can be fairly reliably identified as the monumental Early Byzantine domed edifice, probably octagonal, that once stood in the city quarter of *Diipion*, between the Hippodrome and the church of Holy Wisdom.²⁰ Other sources mention churches dedicated to the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia. The collection of the numerous miracles that occurred in the ancient Constantinopolitan monastery of the Virgin at the Life-Giving Spring (commonly known as Zoodochos Pege / Ζωοδόχος πηγή), composed in the mid-tenth century, contains two references to the *parekklesion* dedicated to the holy martyr Eustratios, which seems to have been located in the monastery's courtyard.²¹ There is no serious reason to doubt that the saint in question was the leader of the Holy Five.²² Finally, a fifteenth-century

¹⁹ *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi* (= Syn CP), ed. by H. Delehaye, Bruxelles, 1902, col. 305.28-29, 306.5-6; *Le Typicon de la Grande Église. Ms. Sainte-Croix no. 40, Xe siècle*. I, ed. by J. Mateos, Rome, 1962, p. 129.

²⁰ C. Mango, "Le Diipion, étude historique et topographique", *Revue des études byzantines* 8, 1950, p. 154-159; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin. Première partie, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique*. Tome III, *Les églises et les monastères*, Paris, 1969², p. 264-267; N. Asutay-Effenberger, A. Effenberger, "Zur Kirche auf einem Kupferstich von Ğugas Inciciyan und zum Standort der Chalke-Kirche", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 97/1, 2004, p. 69-74; J-P. Grélois, "Note sur la disparition de Saint-Jean au Dihippion", *Revue des études byzantines* 64-65, 2006-2007, p. 369-372; P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Antecedents of the Round Church at Preslav", *Problemi na izkustvoto* 2, 2012, p. 3-4.

²¹ *Miracle Tales from Byzantium*, ed. by A.-M. Talbot, S. F. Johnson, Cambridge, MA – London 2012, p. 230/231, 260/261, 431, n. 24. Cf. S. Efthymiadis, "Le monastère de la Source à Constantinople et ses deux recueils de miracles. Entre hagiographie et patriographie", *Revue des études byzantines* 64-65, 2006-2007, p. 292. In his version of the same collection of miracula written in the 1300s, Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos also mentions the chapel of St. Eustratios, cf. *Νικηφόρου Καλλίστου τοῦ Ξανθοπούλου Σύγγραμμα περὶ συστάσεως τοῦ σεβασμίου Οἴκου τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ζωοδόχου πηγῆς, καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ ὑπερφυῶς τελεσθέντων θαυμάτων*, ed. by A. Pamperis, Leipzig, 1812, p. 32. On the collection of miracles that occurred at the Monastery of Zoodochos Pege, cf. A.-M. Talbot, "Two Accounts of Miracles at the Pege Shrine in Constantinople", *Travaux et Mémoires* 14, 2002, p. 607-609; eadem, "The anonymous miracula of the Pege Shrine in Constantinople", *Palaeoslavica* 10/2, 2002, p. 223-228; I. Kimmelfield, "The Shrine of the Theotokos at the Pege", in P. Stephenson, B. Shilling (eds.), *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium*, Cambridge, 2016, p. 299-313; S. Constantinou, "A Rewriter at Work: Nikephoros Xanthopoulos and the Pege Miracles", in S. Constantinou, C. Högel (eds.), *Metaphrasis. A Byzantine Concept of Rewriting and Its Hagiographical Products*, Leiden – Boston, 2020, p. 324-342. Cf. T. Starodubcev, "Kult Bogorodice Ζωοδόχος πηγή i njegov odjek u slikarstvu u doba Paleologa", *Zograf* 33, 2009, p. 101-119.

²² Some scholars have expressed doubts about the identity of St. Eustratios: R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique...*, I, p. 119; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Posthoumos Miracles", p. 274, while others are convinced that this is indeed Eustratios of Sebasteia, cf. D. Mouriki, *Nea Moni...*, p. 147; S. Gabelić, "Predstave Petozarnih mučenika...", p. 192, 193, n. 9; P. Kostovska, "Mačeničkite dopojasja...", p.

prologue manuscript from Novgorod (Saint Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive, Sin. F 834, no. 3934) describes a miracle of St. Eustratios that took place in the church of the Holy Five located at the Constantinopolitan monastery of Olympiou, which lay beyond the city walls (Constantine's, clearly). This episode subsequently made its way into the printed edition of the Russian *menaion* reader (chet'yi-minei / четъи-миней).²³

Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine accurately when the cult of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia might have taken hold in Constantinople. There is no information as to when their *synaxis* in the abovementioned church of St. John began to be celebrated or about the construction date of the parekklesion of St. Eustratios at Zoodochos Pege or the church at Olympiou Monastery, which existed already in the sixth century. However, it seems safe to infer that the tenth century, the period that roughly corresponds to the time of creation of the four Constantinopolitan triptychs under consideration, saw a resurgence of interest for the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia. In the same century, Symeon Metaphrastes († late tenth century) included their *Passio* in his collection of hagiographies, drawing on an older, now lost version,²⁴ and a note on their martyrdom made its way into the Synaxarion of Constantinople.²⁵ Perhaps even more notably, the same period saw the writing of two encomia dedicated to the Holy Five. One of them (BHG 646b) was penned by Michael the Monk, possibly already in the late ninth century²⁶; the other (BHG 646c) was composed a few decades later

34; D. Gorgievski, "Prilog...", p. 122. Admittedly, the Synaxarion of Constantinople does mention another martyr called Eustratios, also from Sebasteia, who was martyred together with Agapius, Atticus, Carterius, Styriacus, Tobias, Eudoxius and others under Emperor Licinius, cf. Syn CP, col. 190. It is highly unlikely, however, that this martyr, mentioned as the sixth in this group of saints, had a separate parekklesion dedicated to him. For the rare representations of these martyrs cf. for example *El Menologio de Basilio II*, Madrid, 2005, p. 146; B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Belgrade, 1993, p. 81.

²³ S. A. Ivanov, "Chudo sv. Evstratiia...", p. 213-215. On Olympiou Monastery (Ὀλυμπίου), mentioned in two documents from the first half of the sixth century, probably located in the vicinity of Mokios' Cistern, cf. R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique...*, I, p. 382.

²⁴ For the text cf. PG 116, cols. 468-505. On the life and work of Symeon Metaphrastes, cf. C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization*, Copenhagen, 2002. The original Greek version of the *Passio* of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia is known to us only through its Latin translation (BHL 2778), done in Naples in the last quarter of the ninth century, cf. P. Devos, "L'œuvre de Guarimpotus, hagiographe napolitain", *Analecta Bollandiana* 76, 1958, p. 153-157; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Posthumous Miracles...", p. 273, n. 14.

²⁵ Syn CP, cols. 305-306. On the time of creation of Synaxarion of Constantinople cf. n. 37 *infra*.

²⁶ D. Krausmüller, "The Encomium of the Five Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugenius, Mardarius and Orestes (BHG 646b) by Michael the Monk: Edition and Translation", *Analecta Bollandiana* 138/2, 2020, p. 311-337. On the author of the encomium, who in the second half of the ninth and first half of the tenth century wrote several hagiographic works as a monk of Stoudios, archimandrite of Dalmatou and *synkellos* under Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (912-925) cf. idem, "Reconstructing the Hagiographical Oeuvre of Michael, Monk of Stoudios, Archimandrite of Dalmatou and Patriarchal Synkellos (9th/10th Centuries)", *Parekbolai* 10, 2020, p. 1-42; idem, "The Encomium of the Apostle Philip by Michael the Monk (BHG 1530a). Edition and English Translation", *Jahrbuch der*

by one of the most prolific Constantinopolitan hagiographers of his time, Niketas David Paphlagon.²⁷ Furthermore, another relevant piece of information is that the famed imperial poet John Geometres (c. 935-1000) dedicated three epigrams to this group of saints.²⁸

There are reliable testimonies about the veneration of St. Eustratios' relics in the tenth century, at the imperial court no less. Basil II (976-1025) is known to have given the saint's head to the Great Lavra Monastery, as noted in a chrysobull of 978.²⁹ This Athonite monastery had a chapel dedicated to the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, which probably owned the superb icon of the Holy Five now kept in the monastery treasury.³⁰ A monastery dedicated to St. Eustratios seems to have existed somewhere on Mount Athos as well.³¹

Some scholars have already used the information about the sending of St. Eustratios' relics to Mount Athos as grounds to assess the Constantinopolitan cult of the Holy Five from a very particular perspective. Vasiliki Penna assumed that

Österreichischen Byzantinistik 69, 2019, p. 233-256.

²⁷ F. Halkin, *Saints de Byzance et du Proche-Orient. Seize textes grecs inédits (dix Vies ou Passions sans nom d'auteur et six discours de Nicéas de Paphlagonie)*, Genève, 1986, p. 133-145. Cf. S. A. Paschalidēs, *Νικήτας Δαβίδ Παφλαγών. Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ τὸ ἔργο του. Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τῆς προσωπογραφίας καὶ τῆς ἀγιολογικῆς γραμματείας τῆς προμεταφραστικῆς περιόδου*, Thessaloniki, 1999, p. 161-162.

²⁸ J. Sajdak, "Spicilegium Geometreum", *Eos* 32, 1929, p. 191-193, 195-198; M. Tomadaki, *Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ιαμβικά Ποιήματα. Κριτική έκδοση, μετάφραση και σχόλια*, PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2014, p. 60-61 (no. 8-9), 270-271. On John Geometres, with a bibliography, cf. E. van Opstall, M. Tomadaki, "John Geometres: A Poet Around the Year 1000", in W. Hörandner, A. Rhoby, N. Zagklas (eds.), *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry*, Leiden – Boston 2019, p. 191-211. For the verses dedicated to the five Armenian martyrs in the metric synaxarion of Christopher of Mytilene from the following century, cf. E. Follieri, *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, Bruxelles, 1980, I, p. 366.14-15, 371.54-61; II, p. 107-108.

²⁹ *Actes de Lavra*, I, ed. by P. Lemerle et al., Paris, 1970, p. 46, 114. The original reliquary has not survived at the Great Lavra, but there is a silver staurotheke traditionally believed to be a gift of Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) which, besides the relics of the True Cross and some other saints, also holds particles of St. Eustratios' relics, cf. N. P. Kondakov, *Pamiatniki khristianskogo iskusstva na Afone*, Saint Petersburg, 1902, p. 204-208, таб. XXIV-XXV; A. Frolov, *La relique de la vraie Croix, recherches sur le développement d'un culte*, Paris, 1961, p. 278-279 (no. 233); A. Grabar, "La précieuse croix de la Lavra Saint-Athanase au Mont-Athos", *Cahiers archéologiques* 19, 1969, p. 105-110, fig. 15-17. The precious staurotheke was stolen from the Great Lavra in 1989. Fortunately, it was soon recovered, although in fragmentary form, cf. T. F. Mathews, E. Dandridge, "The Ruined Reliquary of the Holy Cross of the Great Lavra, Mt. Athos", in J. Durand, B. Flusin (eds.), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, Paris, 2004, p. 107-122.

³⁰ D. Mouriki, *Nea Moni...*, p. 147; M. Chatzidakēs, "Χρονολογημένη βυζαντινή εικόνα στή Μονή Μεγίστης Λαύρας", in N. A. Stratos (ed.), *Βυζάντιον. Αφιέρωμα στον Ανδρέα Ν. Στράτο* I, Athens, 1986, p. 225-240.

³¹ The signatories of the typikon of Constantine IX Monomachos (1045) include "Antonios, monk and abbot of the monastery of St. Eustratios", cf. *Actes du Prôtaton*, ed. by D. Papachryssanthou, Paris, 1975, p. 232.192; BMFD I, p. 291; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Posthumous Miracles...", p. 274, n. 18.

Basil II's devotion to Eustratios could have had something to do with the Armenian descent of the emperor's namesake and ancestor – Basil I (867-886), the founder of the Macedonian dynasty.³² This remarkably intriguing problem certainly warrants further investigation. In doing so, it should be borne in mind that the cults of some Armenian saints were indeed popularized in Constantinople during the reign of the Macedonians. Evidence of this is provided in a text about the miraculous discovery of the relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator and two Armenian martyresses from his time (Gaiana and Rhipseme), penned under Patriarch Photios (858–867; 877–886) and preserved only in the Armenian language.³³ There is another argument to support the plausibility of this interpretation: Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, another member of the Macedonian dynasty, in his work *De Thematribus*, describes Eustratios as a “glorious megalomartyr” when discussing his birth town of Arauraka in the chapter about the Theme of Koloneia.³⁴ The epithet “megalomartyr” (great martyr) does not appear either in the Metaphrastian *Passio* of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, the rubric of the Synaxarion of Constantinople³⁵ or the synaxarion notes in the Typikon of the Great Church³⁶ and other relevant liturgical texts from Constantinople.³⁷ Therefore, the appearance of this epithet in the emperor's work can

³² V. Penna, “Two Rare Byzantine Lead Seals...”, p. 147, where Basil II's gesture is seen in the context of the preparations for the war against Samuel of Bulgaria. For the impact of the cult of the Holy Five in Armenian art, cf. A. Bryer, D. Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos...*, p. 168. As for the reflections of his cult in the art of the Eastern areas of the Byzantine cultural space, there is a notable example from Georgia: a standing figure of Eustratios from Vardzia (1184-1186) painted at a very prominent spot – the north wall of the naos, in the immediate vicinity of the ktetorial composition, cf. N. Chikhladze, “Images of St Eugenios in Georgia and Cultural and Political Ties with the Empire of Trebizond”, *Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences* 2/1, 2009, p. 66-67. For reproductions, cf. G. Gaprindashvili, *Vardzia. History, Architecture, Wall Paintings, Applied Arts*, Leningrad, 1975, p. 20-21, fig. 73; A. Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1998, p. 101, 104, figs. 55, 57.

³³ T. Greenwood, “The Discovery of Relics of St Grigor and the Development of Armenian Tradition in Ninth-Century Byzantium”, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization. In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 177-191; B. Lourié, “The Feast of Pokrov, Its Byzantine Origin, and the Cult of Gregory the Illuminator and Isaac the Parthian (Sahak Partcev) in Byzantium”, *Scrinium* 7-8/1, 2011, p. 260-283, 303-304.

³⁴ *Constantino Porfirogenito. De Thematribus*, ed. by A. Pertusi, Città del Vaticano, 1952, p. 74.6-7: τὴν Ἀραβρακηνῶν πόλιν τὴν τοῦ περιφανεστάτου καὶ μεγαλομάρτυρος Εὐστρατίου πατρίδα. The significance of this was pointed out by N. Patterson Ševčenko, “The Posthoumos Miracles...”, p. 274.

³⁵ Cf. *supra*, n. 24.

³⁶ *Le Typikon de la Grande Église*. I, p. 129; A. A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei, khраниashikhsia v bibliotekakh Pravoslavnogo Vostoka*, I. Τυπικά, Kiev, 1895, p. 30.

³⁷ In the Evergetis Typikon (1054-1070) and the Typikon of Alexios the Stoudite (1025-1043), the latter of which survives only in its Slavonic version, the Holy Five are described simply as martyrs, cf. *The Synaxarion of the monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis. September-February*, ed. by R. H. Jordan, Belfast, 2000, p. 274/275; A. M. Pentkovskii, *Tipikon patriarkha Aleksīa Studita v Vizantii i na Rusi*, Moscow, 2001, p. 302-303.

be interpreted as a sign of his special veneration of St. Eustratios. Admittedly, some caution is advised due to the fact that the encomium of Niketas David Paphlagon also contains allusions to the status of Eustratios as a megalomartyr³⁸ and that some younger sources expressly refer to him as such.³⁹

Even if this explanation of the mentioned excerpt from *De Thematibus* happens to be unsound, let us recall that scholars rightly believe that it was precisely Constantine

³⁸ The title of the encomium refers to Eustratios as “the holy and all-blessed, victorious in Christ” (... ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν ἅγιον καὶ πανεύφημον τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀθλοφόρον Εὐστράτιον καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτῷ Αὐξέντιον, Εὐγένιον, Μαρδάριον, καὶ Ὁρέστην), cf. F. Halkin, *Saints de Byzance et du Proche-Orient*, p. 134; further below, the author calls him a megalomartyr: Δίῳ καὶ ἡμᾶς ἄξιον τῷ μνημοσύνῳ τῆς αὐτοῦ τελειώσεως, τὸν λόγον ἐπαφεμένους τῆς αἰνέσεως καὶ τῶν ἀγῶνων ἐπιμνησκομένους τῆς ἀθλήσεως σύμμετρα τῷ μεγαλομάρτυρι τῶν ἐπαίνων κοινωνῆσαι, ὡσάν καὶ τοῖς λόγοις δοξάζεται ὁ ἔργῳ τοὺς αὐτὸν ἀξίως δοξάζοντας δοξάζων θεός (cf. *ibid.*, p. 134-135). Unfortunately, there is no data about the date and circumstances that surrounded the writing of this encomium. However, in light of the fact that Constantine VII’s text and Niketas David Paphlagon’s panegyric both mention his status as a megalomartyr, it is worth noting that the emperor and the author are known to have worked together on the creation of some other hagiographic texts. For example, Constantine VII commissioned Niketas to write a vita of John Chrysostom (cf. Th. Antonopoulou, “The Unedited Life of St John Chrysostom by Nicetas David the Paphlagonian. An Introduction”, *Byzantion* 86, 2016, p. 1-51; eadem, “The Unedited Life of St John Chrysostom by Nicetas David the Paphlagonian. Editio Princeps, Part I”, *Byzantion* 87, 2017, p. 1-67), to whom he was very devoted and even personally composed two canons in his honor and a homily about the translation of his relics, cf. eadem, “Imperial Hymnography: The Canons Attributed to Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. With the Critical Edition of the First Canon on St John Chrysostom”, in A. Rhoby, N. Zagklas (eds.), *Middle and Late Byzantine Poetry: Texts and Contexts*, Turnhout, 2018, p. 211-244; eadem, “Imperial Hymnography: The Second Canon on St. John Chrysostom by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 23/1, 2019, p. 11-40. For the relationship between Niketas Paphlagon and Constantine VII, cf. S. Paschalidēs, *Νικήτας Δαβίδ Παφλαγών...*, p. 112-115. As is well-known, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos was very interested in the cults of saints. Besides the abovementioned works, he authored a few other celebratory texts (cf. Th. Antonopoulou, “A Survey of Tenth-Century Homiletic Literature”, *Parekbolai* 1, 2011, p. 18-21, with a bibliography), and the Synaxarion of Constantinople was compiled at his request, cf. A. Luzzi, “Note sulla recensione del Sinassario di Costantinopoli patrocinata da Costantino VII Porfirogenito”, *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 26, 1989, p. 139-186; B. Flusin, “L’empereur hagiographe. Remarques sur le rôle des premiers empereurs macédoniens dans le culte des saints”, in P. Guran (ed.) *L’empereur hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 41-51; P. Odorico, “Idéologie politique, production littéraire et patronage au Xe siècle: l’empereur Constantin VII et le synaxariste Évariste”, *Medioevo Greco* 1, 2001, p. 199-219; A. Luzzi, “Synaxaria and the Synaxarion of Constantinople”, in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. II. Genres and Contexts*, Farnham – Burlington, 2014, p. 201-202.

³⁹ St. Eustratios is also mentioned as a megalomartyr in the Typikon of the Holy Savior Monastery in Messina from 1131, cf. M. Arranz, *Le Typicon du monastère du Saint-Sauveur à Messine, codex Messanensis gr. 115, A.D. 1131*, Rome, 1969, p. 69-70, and in some other Italo-Greek calendars, cf. A. Luzzi, “Il calendario eortologico per il ciclo delle feste fisse del Tipico di S. Nicola di Casole”, *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 39, 2002, p. 247. Slavic manuscripts also refer to St. Eustratios as a megalomartyr fairly frequently. For the purposes of this paper, the list of calendar entries of the Holy Five in Slavic manuscripts provided on the website of the Encyclopedia Slavica Sanctorum project will suffice: http://www.eslavsanct.net/mod_viewdate.php?day=13&month=12

VII who commissioned the Palazzo Venezia triptych.⁴⁰ If their hypothesis is correct, we can cautiously assume that the emperor had some influence on the selection of the saints depicted in this work and on the inclusion of the figure of St. Eustratios. This view is even more tempting given that, as is well-known, Constantine VII left a striking testimony about Basil I's ethnicity, stating in his biography that he was born in Macedonia and of Armenian ancestry. Furthermore, like his father Leo VI (886-912) in the eulogy for his parents,⁴¹ in the process of heroizing his ancestor – a person of humble beginnings and a usurper, the author of *Vita Basilii* notes that he was a descendant of the Arsacid dynasty,⁴² drawing on the legendary genealogy that Patriarch Photios devised – no doubt without any historical grounds – already during Basil's lifetime.⁴³ Of course, the problem of the veracity of Constantine VII's claims lies beyond the scope of the topic at hand. They are relevant precisely as elements of the official version of history espoused by the ruling *genos*, more specifically as possible signposts for explaining the image of a famed Armenian martyr on the triptych from Palazzo Venezia, perhaps even on similar works of art, i.e., for accurately interpreting information about Basil II's attitude to the cult of St. Eustratios.

There is, however, an alternative explanation for the presence of the figure of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia on the Palazzo Venezia triptych. Even if not inspired by his Armenian ethnicity, the commissioner of the triptych, or the person responsible for designing its iconographic program, might have had a very different reason for including this saint. Nikolaos Oikonomides noticed that the reverse of the triptych features (among others) the figures of St. Agatonikos and St. Severianos, two of the six members of a group martyred under Maximian and commemorated on 22 August. This led him to suggest that the triptych had been a gift to one of the three Constantinopolitan

⁴⁰ Cf. *supra*, n. 12.

⁴¹ *Leonis VI Sapientis Imperatoris Byzantini homiliae*, ed. by T. Antonopoulou, Turnhout, 2008, p. 199-200.130-142.

⁴² *Chronographiae Quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Liber quo Vita Basilii imperatoris amplitur*, ed. by I. Ševčenko, Berlin, 2011, p. 10-19 (toward the end of the quoted section of the biography, the author even claims that Basil's mother was descended from Constantine the Great on one side of her family and from Alexander the Great on the other). For the most recent commentary on the quoted passage, with older literature, cf. T. Greenwood, "Basil I, Constantine VII and Armenian Literary Tradition in Byzantium", in T. Shawcross, I. Toth (eds.), *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, Cambridge, 2018, p. 447-466. For the legendary account of Basil I's lineage cf. also Gy. Moravcsik, "Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I.", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15, 1961, p. 59-126; A. Markopoulos, "Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches", in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot, 1994, p. 159-170; B. Krsmanović, N. Radošević, "Legendarne genealogije vizantijskih careva i njihovih porodica", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 41, 2004, p. 77-81.

⁴³ *Nicetas David. Life of Patriarch Ignatius*, ed. by A. Smithies, J. M. Duffy, Washington, D.C., 2013, p. 118-121. Cf. A. Schminck, "The beginnings and origins of the 'Macedonian' dynasty", in J. Burke, R. Scott (eds.), *Byzantine Macedonia. Identity, Image and History*, Melbourne, 2000, p. 65-67.

churches dedicated to St. Agatonikos. Believing that it was commissioned in the last years of Constantine VII's reign, when the emperor was experiencing serious health problems, Oikonomides thought that it had been intended for the church of St. Agatonikos at the Monastery of Zoodochos Pege.⁴⁴ If his hypothesis is correct, the presence of the figure of St. Eustratios could be explained by his veneration at this Marian sanctuary. It bears repeating that the same monastery had a parekklesion dedicated to St. Eustratios of Sebasteia.⁴⁵

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Leaving the quest for more conclusive answers to these tentatively raised questions to more competent researchers in this field, I will focus on another aspect of the study of the figures of St. Eustratios that appear on Constantinopolitan ivory artworks. That aspect has more to do with the saintly profile of this martyr and less with the external factors of the spread and power of his cult. To put it simply, why was St. Eustratios shown in a group of holy warriors on these works of art? The first assumption that naturally comes to mind is that the leader of the Holy Five was venerated as a military saint. Some scholars have already taken this possibility into account,⁴⁶ while others

⁴⁴ N. Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War'...", p. 71, 77, with references about the cult of St. Agatonikos and his churches in Constantinople. For the reference to the church of St. Agatonikos in the description of the miracles that took place at Zoodochos Pege cf. *Miracle Tales from Byzantium...*, p. 255. Eastmond disagrees with Oikonomides and notes that St. Agatonikos and St. Severianos also appear on the reverse of the triptych from the Museo Sacro, Eastmond, "The Heavenly Court", p. 83-84. Let me add that St. Severianos is also represented on the Harbaville Triptych, where James the Persian replaced the figure of St. Agatonikos. Cf. also S. Moretti, "Viaggio di un trittico", p. 226. For the rare later depictions of St. Agatonikos, cf. M. Marković, "Pojedinačne figure svetitelja u naosu i paraklisima", in *Zidno slikarstvo manastira Dečana...*, p. 258; P. Kostovska, "Mačeničkite dopojasja...", p. 12.

⁴⁵ Cf. *supra*, n. 20-21.

⁴⁶ In relation to hagiographic data about St. Eustratios' military service (cf. *infra*), his images on triptychs are discussed by D. Gorgievski, "Prilog...", p. 123, 124-125. More recently, it has been proposed that the entire group of these martyrs has "some military affiliations." The argument for this premise was found in the so-called "inverted heart motif" which decorates the clothing of Mardarios and Eugenios on their representations in the Venetian Pala d'Oro – a motif characteristic for the images of some holy warrior martyrs, cf. M. White, "Byzantine Visual Propaganda and the Inverted Heart Motif", *Byzantium* 76, 2006, p. 348-349. In my opinion, there are not enough grounds to associate this decorative motif with warrior iconography, but the spatial constraints of this paper preclude a more detailed refutation of this view. However, there is indeed an extant representation of St. Eugenios as a soldier: his bust on the reverse of the well-known Constantinopolitan icon of the archangel Michael from the treasury of St Mark's Basilica in Venice (eleventh century), between the representations of St. Orestes, also shown with military equipment, and St. Eustratios, depicted in his usual iconographic form, cf. *Il Tesoro di San Marco. Il Tesoro e il Museo*, ed. H. R. Hahnloser, Florence, 1971, p. 27 (no. 17), tav. XX. The same catalog states that an image of St. Eustratios also graces the obverse of the icon (cf. *ibid.*, p. 26, tav. XXI), but that is actually a bust of St. Eustathios Plakidas.

have rejected it (e.g., Christopher Walter).⁴⁷ It is additionally supported by the fact that the triptychs from Pallazo Venezia and Museo Sacro show St. Eustratios of Sebasteia in the same attire as warrior martyrs and not in his usual clothing. In my opinion, this change strongly suggests the tendency to iconographically integrate his figure into the group of saintly images into which it was physically placed. The tendency to achieve iconographic uniformity is, admittedly, discrepant with the fact that, in the Hermitage example, St. Eustratios is clearly distinguished from the figures of the armed military saints. Despite this inconsistency,⁴⁸ I believe that the representations of this martyr on Constantinopolitan ivory triptychs cannot be considered separately from the compact group of saints to which they belong. In other words, the rest of this paper will attempt to strengthen the view that those works of art show St. Eustratios of Sebasteia precisely as a warrior-martyr, i.e., that his cult contained a military component. This view can be explained by the relevant data from the main hagiographic text of the Holy Five and some other celebratory compositions. Even more convincing – unambiguous, in fact – arguments are provided by the visual representations of St. Eustratios as a warrior. Some have so far remained unknown, while others seem to have been slightly neglected in the research of the Holy Five’s iconography.

Let us continue from the last group of sources – visual representations. However, before we examine the representations of St. Eustratios as a warrior, we should take a brief look at some examples of his inclusion in the group of soldier saints not shown in military equipment or with weapons, which are very relevant for the problem at hand: the compositions where they are depicted as Byzantine court dignitaries. The earliest example of this solution is preserved in the corpus of Serbian medieval painting, in which images of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia began to appear at the beginning of the thirteenth century:⁴⁹ among the frescoes of the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin

⁴⁷ In response to the article A. Chatzinikolaou, “Heilige”, in K. Wessel (ed.), *Reallexikon zur byzantinische Kunst*, II, Stuttgart, 1971, col. 1050, which includes St. Eustratios in the group of warrior saints without offering any explanation for such a decision, Christopher Walter contests this interpretation, convinced that this saint was never represented as a soldier, cf. Ch. Walter, *The Warrior Saints...*, p. 219.

⁴⁸ It bears repeating that, besides the figures on the wings, the saints on the central panel of the triptych – the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia – also belong to the warrior saint category. That makes it even less likely that only the image of St. Eustratios does not belong to the same programmatic context, although he is not represented as a soldier. An additional reason for his inclusion might have been the fact that he was also a martyr from Sebasteia.

⁴⁹ The earliest Serbian representations of the Holy Five are preserved in the Studenica Monastery katholikon frescoed in 1208/1209, cf. M. Živković, *Najstarije zidno slikarstvo Bogorodičine crkve u Studenici i njegova obnova u XVI veku*, doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet u Beogradu, 2019, p. 165-166. They are followed by the images at Mileševa, Gradac, Arilje, and many fourteenth- and fifteenth-century representations, cf. D. Pavlović, “Zidno slikarstvo gradačkog katolikona. Popis fresaka i zapažanja o pojedinim ikonografskim osobenostima”, *Zograf* 36, 2012, p. 98, sh. 1 (6p. 67-68), sl. 12-13; D. Vojvodić, *Zidno slikarstvo crkve Svetog Ahilija u Arilju*, Belgrade, 2005, p. 90, n. 587, 212 (6p. 31-32), 205 (6p. 100-102); S. Gabelić, “Predstave Petozarnih mučenika...”, p. 194-195.

at the old Treskavac Monastery near Prilep, restored in the last decade of the thirteenth century or in the first years of the next century by the high Byzantine dignitary and general Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes.⁵⁰ After Prilep became a part of the Serbian state in 1334, the exonarthex of the monastery's katholikon was built and frescoed. A fragment of the portrait of King Stefan Dušan dated to the period before 1343 has survived on the east wall, south of the entrance.⁵¹ On the same occasion, in the calotte of the north dome of the exonarthex, Christ was painted as the King of Kings; in the lower zone, a representation of the Great Deesis; and on the surfaces between the windows on the dome drum, a procession of holy warriors in the costumes and insignia of Byzantine court officials (tunic, chlamys, tall hat, ceremonial staff).⁵² Besides Sts. George, Demetrios, Theodore Stratelates, Theodore Tyron, Prokopios, Merkourios and Artemios, the group includes St. Eustratios of Sebasteia. His identity is attested not only by his name and distinctive physiognomy but also by the white scarf around his neck (Fig. 9).⁵³



Fig. 9. Treskavac, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, St Eustratios (photo G. Phousteris; the perspective of the image is digitally corrected)

⁵⁰ M. Marković, “Mihailo Glavas Tarhaniot – ktitor manastira Treskavca”, *Zograf* 38, 2014, p. 77-98, with an exhaustive list of older literature on the history of the monastery.

⁵¹ S. Cvetkovski, “Portreti vizantijskih i srpskih vladara u manastiru Treskavcu”, *Zograf* 31, 2006–2007, p. 158-166.

⁵² The iconographic program of the north dome of the Treskavac Monastery katholikon has been discussed several times. The following are the more recent studies, but they exhaustively list earlier contributions: M. Gligorijević-Maksimović, “Slikarstvo XIV veka u manastiru Treskavcu”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 42, 2005, p. 109-113; S. Smolčić-Makuljević, “Carski deizis i nebeski dvor u slikarstvu XIV veka manastira Treskavac. Ikonografski program severne kupole priprate crkve Bogorodičinog Uspenja”, in Lj. Maksimović, N. Radošević, E. Radulović (eds.), *Treća jugoslovenska konferencija vizantologa*, Belgrade – Kruševac, 2002, p. 463-472; eadem, *Manastir Treskavac*, Belgrade, 2019, p. 162-163, 166.

⁵³ D. Gorgievski, “Prilog...”, p. 127, сл. 3. The author believes that the image of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia in Treskavac bears evidence to his special intercessor role, which he has discussed in another paper, cf. idem, “Sveti Evstratij od Sevastija kako posrednik”, *Monumenta* 2-3, 2017-2018, p. 161-172. As this matter has little relevance for the topic at hand, it will not be discussed here.



Fig. 10. Marko's monastery, Church of St Demetrios, Sts Eugenios, Eustratios and Auxentios
(photo T. Starodubcev)

In Serbian medieval painting, there is another example where St. Eustratios of Sebasteia appears in a group of holy soldier-courtiers. Based on his characteristic facial features, an image of him has been identified in the composition of the *Heavenly Court* covering the first zone of the naos and narthex of the Church of St. Demetrios at Markov Manastir, an endowment of King Vukašin (1365/1366-1371) frescoed in 1376/1377 during the reign of his heir Marko.⁵⁴ Unlike on the Treskavac image, in this church, St. Eustratios is shown together with his four companions, also in courtier attire (Fig. 10).⁵⁵ Given this circumstance, it is difficult to determine if and to what extent the understanding of St. Eustratios as a warrior could have led to his inclusion in the composition of the *Heavenly Court* at Markov Manastir. Caution is necessary in this case because it is hardly impossible that, in addition to the celebrated warrior saints [George, Demetrios, Theodore Tyron, Theodore Stratelates, Menas of Egypt, Artemios or Niketas, Prokopios, Merkourios (?), Loupos (?) and Nestor (?)],⁵⁶ the composition also included some saints that do not belong to this category. Namely, four saint-courtiers figures could not be conclusively identified.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ M. Tomić Đurić, *Freske Markovog manastira*, Belgrade, 2019, p. 417-418, 533 (no. 386) fig. 210.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 419-420, 533 (no. 383-385, 387), fig. 210-212.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 399-417, 533, (no. 363-367, 372, 374, 376-378), fig. 194-200, 205-207.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 417, 533 (no. 379-382), fig. 208-209.

Of course, there is no dilemma about the saintly profile of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia when it comes to his representations with weapons and military equipment. These examples are rare but, in conjunction with the images discussed above, they testify clearly enough to the military aspect of the cult of the Holy Five's leader.

The earliest known representation of this type⁵⁸ has survived in the Church of St. Nicholas “of the Roof” (τῆς Στέγης) near the village of Kakopetria in Cyprus.

⁵⁸ It bears noting that, according to some scholars, St. Eustratios appears among the warrior saints painted in the Sioni Church in Ateni (Georgia), frescoed in the second half of the eleventh century: Sh. ĪA. Amiranashvili, *Istoriā gruzinskoī monumental'noī zhivopisi*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1957, p. 95. For a dating of these paintings cf. A. Eastmond, *Royal Imagery...*, p. 45-49, 235-237. Unfortunately, a photo of this unpublished fresco was not available to me, and hence I was unable to verify that identification.

Several other representations of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia have so far been mentioned in scholarship. However, the identification of the saint is incorrect in all of these cases.

An unpublished seal of the Armenian-born *magistros* and *doux* Philaretos Brachamios (1068-1078) from the Dumbarton Oaks collection (BZS 1955.1.3396.), whose obverse shows two standing military saints, has been reprinted as an illustration in the most recent edition of *Skylitzes Continuatus*, with an English translation, cf. E. McGeer, J. W. Nesbitt (eds.), *Byzantium in the Time of Troubles. The Continuation of the Chronicle of John Skylitzes (1057–1079)*, Leiden – Boston, 2019, fig. 15 (p. 102). The caption of the reproduction states that the two saints are St. Demetrios and St. Eustratios. The same identification, admittedly with a question mark (?), can be found on the Dumbarton Oaks website: <https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1955.1.3396/view>. Leaving aside the matter of deciphering the initial next to the saint shown alongside Demetrios, I am more inclined to believe that this is Theodore Tyron, as suggested by J.-C. Cheynet, J.-F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques*, Paris, 1986, p. 67, n. 68. The latter identification is supported by the fact that St. Demetrios and St. Theodore Tyron appear on other seals issued by Philaretos Brachamios during his service as *magistros* and *doux*, cf. V. S. Shchandrovskaiia, “Ėrmitazhnye pechati Filareta Vrakhamiā (Varazhnuni)”, *Vestnik obshchestvennykh nauk AN Armiānskoī SSR* 3, 1975, p. 39-40 (= *Vizantiiskaia sfragistika v trudakh V. S. Shchandrovskoi...*, p. 358), ill. 1); W. Seibt, M. L. Zarnitz, *Das byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, Vienna, 1997, p. 97-98 (no. 2.3.7), with examples and literature; N. A. Alekseenko, “Molivdovuly armiānskogo aristokrata Filareta Vrakhamiā v kontekste istoricheskikh sobytiī XI v.”, *Bosporskie issledovaniā* 30, 2014, p. 317, 322.

In his list of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Sinaite icons, Georgi Parpulov includes an icon that supposedly shows St. Eustratios with Theodore Tyron, cf. G. R. Parpulov, “Mural and Icon Painting at Sinai in the Thirteenth Century”, in S. Gerstel, R. S. Nelson (eds.), *Approaching the Holy Mountain. Art and Liturgy at St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai*, Turnhout, 2010, p. 387 (no. XII.169). The saint in question is in fact St. Eustathios Plakidas, cf. Ė. S. Smirnova, *Ikony Severo Vostochnoī Rusi*, Moscow, 2004, p. 201, ill. on. p. 202.

Similarly, André Grabar identified one of the warrior saints in Bojana (1259) as St. Eustratios based on the two surviving first letters of his name, cf. A. Grabar, *Boiānskata cūrkvā*, Sofia, 1924, p. 61-62, tab. XXI/a, and the identification was accepted by N. Mavrodinov, *Boiānskata cūrkvā i neinite stenopisi*, Sofia, 1943, p. 37. However, as Biserka Penkova observed, this is more likely to be Eustathios Plakidas, cf. B. Penkova, “Obraz sviātosti. Izobrazheniā sviātykh v Boiānskoī cerkvi”, in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Ideā i obraz*, Moscow, 2009, p. 139, ill. 19. The latter identification proves unambiguous given the saint's physiognomy (short hair and a short, curly beard), which is not consistent with the “portrait characteristics” of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia. For the representations of St. Eustathios Plakidas, cf. Ch. Walter, *The Warrior Saints...*, p. 167-168.

Some studies claim that St. Eustratios was shown in the group of warrior saints on the mosaics of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople (1316-1321), cf. Ī. V. Brodovaia, “«Maly sut' moi strasti

It is located on the soffit of the supporting arch on the western wall of the narthex, painted in the late 13th or early 14th century. There, he is shown in a series of busts, along with three other martyrs of Sebasteia (Eustratios, Mardarios, Auxentios, and Orestes), but without Eugenios, the fifth member of the group. Further along the arch, more specifically, on its northern end, two more martyrs are depicted – St. Photios and St. Tryphon.⁵⁹ St. Eustratios (O | A|Γ|I|OC / EY|CTPA|TI|OC) is shown in the usual way, although his hair and beard are somewhat lighter than customary (Fig. 11). In all other aspects, however, this depiction departs from the iconographic tradition. In Kakopetria, it is the leader of the Holy Five who is shown as a warrior instead of St. Orestes, as would be expected. St. Eustratios has a pearl wreath on his head and wears armor and a cloak with pearl piping but without the standard feature – a triple clasp on the chest. The saint holds a martyr's cross in his right hand and a sheathed sword in his left.

protivu Bozhiiu vozdaianiū...»: Stradaniā i chudo sv. «piatochislennykh» muchenikov: Pamiātnik redkoī ikonografii iz sobr. GMZK”, *Iskusstvo khristianskogo mira* 6, 2002, p. 189, n. 22; PE XVII, 335 (eadem). In this church, however, St. Eustratios was represented in his usual iconographic form, together with his companions, cf. P. A. Underwood, *The Karye Djami*, I, New York, 1966, p. 152 (no. 142-146); II, pl. 282a, 284-288.

According to André Grabar, whose view was subsequently accepted by some other scholars, St. Eustratios was depicted in the procession of mounted warrior saints in the retinue of Emperor Constantine the Great in the narthex of the Church of the Holy Cross in the village of Pătrăuți (1487), the endowment of Prince Stephen the Great of Moldavia (1457-1504), cf. A. Grabar, “Les croisades de l’Europe orientale dans l’art”, in *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, II. *Art*, Paris, 1930, p. 19 (= idem, *L’art de la fin de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, I, Paris, 1968, p. 169); È. S. Smirnova, V. K. Laurina, E. A. Gordienko, *Zhivopis’ Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, Moscow, 1982, p. 318; IO. B. Бродовая, IŪ. V. Brodovaia, “«Maly sut’ moi strasti ...””, p. 189, n. 24; PE XVII, p. 335 (eadem). However, none of the warriors on the Petrauca fresco have the distinctive physiognomy of Eustratios of Sebasteia. For this composition cf. also I. D. Ștefănescu, *L’évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie depuis les origines jusqu’au XIX^{ème} siècle*, Paris, 1928, p. 143-144, pl. LXXIII/2; G. Subotić, *Sveti Konstantin i Jelena u Ohridu*, Belgrade, 1971, p. 86-87, crt. na str. 87; I. A. Kochetkov., “K istolkovaniū ikony «Cerkov’ voinstvuushchaia» («Blagoslovenno voinstvo nebesnogo caria»)”, *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoī literatury* 38, 1985, p. 205-206; E. Dragnev, “Cavalcada de la Pătrăuți. Noi contribuții”, in D. Dragnev, I. Chirtoagă (eds.), *Ștefan cel Mare – personalitate marcantă în istoria Europei (500 de ani de la trecerea în eternitate)*, Referate și comunicări, Chișinău, 2004, p. 56-69.

Finally, the entry on the iconography of the five Armenian martyrs in LCI VI, col. 200, states that St. Eustratios was depicted as a warrior at the Church of the Virgin Rassiotissa in Kastoria, based on the information provided by S. M. Pelekaniēs, *Καστόρια, I. Βυζαντιναί τοιχογραφίες. Πίνακες*, Thessaloniki, 1953, πίν. 223β. However, later studies have reliably identified this figure as St. Artemios. It is found in the procession of military saints on the north wall of the church, in the fresco layer painted in 1552/1553 by the renowned artist Frangos Katelanos and his associates, cf. G. Gounarēs, *Oi τοιχογραφίες των Αγίων Αποστόλων και της Παναγίας Ρασιώτισσας στην Καστοριά*, Thessaloniki, 1980, 148-149, πίν. 40β, σχ. 4 (no. 40); A. Stratē, *O Φράγγος Κατελάνος στην Καστοριά*, Thessaloniki, 2018, p. 26-27, σχ. 9 (no. 41), εικ. 14, 43, 55.

⁵⁹ A. and J. Stylianiou, “Ο ναός τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου τῆς Στέγης παρὰ τὴν Κακοπετριάν”, *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαί* 10, 1946, p. 142.



Fig. 11. Kakopetria. Church of St Nicholas “of the Roof”, St Eustratios (photo G. Phousteris)

The next image of St. Eustratios in military attire and with weapons has survived in an unpublished work of art: an icon from the treasury of St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai (Fig. 12-13).⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the icon was cut lengthwise on the right side, so approximately one quarter of it has been lost. The figure of the saint is, fortuitously, fully discernible. It is a frontal representation of a warrior saint clad in a gray tunic, golden armor and olive-green cloak. The upper edge of the armor, below the neck, and the cuff of his tunic above the right hand are gilded. The strict hieraticity of his figure is disturbed only by the position of the left leg, which

⁶⁰ A reproduction of the icon is available on the website of Princeton University dedicated to the Sinai icon collection: “Eustratios and Procopius,” The Sinai Icon Collection, accessed February 8, 2021, <http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/6969>.



Fig. 12. Sinai, St. Catherine's monastery, icons of Sts Eustratios and Prokopios (By permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai)



Fig. 13. St Eustratios, a detail of fig. 12.

takes a step to the left, and the position of the head, discretely turned to the opposite side. The bent, unnaturally elongated right arm touches the round red shield that the saint holds in his left arm, which lies alongside the body, covered by his cloak. He is shown with the “portrait characteristics” of a mature man, with his neat brown hair combed behind the ears and the relatively short beard tapering into two strands. Only a fragment of the caption with the saint's name on his right has survived because it had been written at the spot where the icon suffered damage. Nevertheless, enough letters have been preserved to allow us to reconstruct the whole signature: Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) / ΕΥ<CΤ>|ΡΑ<Τ>|ΗΟ<C>. This is, then, St. Eustratios. His physiognomy and especially the distinctive bifurcated beard unambiguously indicate that he is indeed the leader of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia and not another warrior saint of the same name.⁶¹ The possibility that it could be a misnamed representation of the famous warrior saint with a similar name, St. Eustathios Plakidas, is unacceptable for the same reason.

At the treasury of St. Catherine's Monastery, there is another relevant icon, seemingly by the same artist (Fig. 12) and of the same size as the one discussed above, with a representation of St. Prokopios – Ο ΑΓ(ΙΟC) / ΠΡΟ|ΚΟΠ|ΙΟC. The

⁶¹ The abovementioned Eustratios, commemorated on November 2 along with a few other martyrs, was a soldier, cf. *supra*, n. 21.



Fig. 14. a) Resava, Church of the Holy Trinity, prophet Habakkuk (photo Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia – Belgrade); b) Sinai, St. Catherine's monastery, St Prokopios, a detail of fig. 12

saint is shown frontally, but his legs and torso are slightly turned to the left. He wears golden armor over his blue tunic, with a red cloak on his shoulders. The palm of his raised right hand supports a long, slender spear, while the relaxed left arm holds a sword sheathed in a red scabbard. The beardless saint with curly hair parted in the middle and reaching below his ears faces right, in the opposite direction to the body.

A more detailed consideration of the very distinctive personal style of the artist who painted the two Sinai icons is best saved for another occasion. For now, let it suffice to note the stylistic characteristics of the icons that seem the most relevant for an attempt to determine their time of creation. The most conspicuous characteristic is the elongated proportion of the figures, which would suggest the last decades of the fourteenth century. The same dating seems likely based on a comparison of these icons with those painted by the Constantinopolitan artist Theophanes the Greek in the last quarter of the fourteenth century for the Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin, although those are much finer works of art.⁶² The slender bodies of Eustratios and Prokopios, with their elongated limbs, are no less comparable to some works from the first decades of the following century, such as the portrait of young Todor, son of the Serbian despot Đurađ Branković (1427-1456), painted in Gračanica, probably in the summer of 1429.⁶³ There is also a degree of facial

⁶² L. A. Shchennikova, *Ikony v Blagoveshchenskom sobore Moskovskogo Kremlia. Deisusnyĭ i prazdnichnyĭ riady ikonostasa*, Moscow, 2004, esp. p. 138-141 (no. 3).

⁶³ T. Starodubcev, "Todor Branković, son of George Branković and Irene Kantakouzene", in M. Marković, D. Vojvodić (eds.), *Serbian Artistic Heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. Identity, Significance,*



Fig. 15. a) Venice, Instituto Ellenico, icon of Christ with apostles, St Mathew (after Zarras, “Η παλαιολόγεια εικόνα του Χριστού...”); b) Sinai, St. Catherine’s monastery, St Eustratios, a detail of fig. 12

resemblance with some paintings from the same period. In this sense, it is worth comparing the image of St. Prokopios with some youthful saints from Resava (c. 1417) despite the undoubtedly superior execution of the former (Fig. 14)⁶⁴, and the image of St. Eustratios with the “portraits” of some apostles on the icon of Christ in Majesty from the museum collection of the Instituto Ellenico in Venice, which was probably painted in the early fifteenth century (Fig. 15).⁶⁵ Based on these analogies and awaiting a more detailed stylistic analysis of the two icons from St. Catherine’s Monastery, their dating to the late fourteenth or the first decades of the fifteenth century seems the most plausible. Although the suggested time frame is rather wide, a more specific dating of the Sinai icons of Eustratios and Prokopios cannot be proposed until the discovery of even more similar paintings.

Unfortunately, there is no information about the circumstances in which the icon of St. Eustratios came to be painted or its original location at St. Catherine’s Monastery. However, when considering the possible motives for its creation, some

Vulnerability, Belgrade, 2017, p. 228-229 (no. IVa.8), with a bibliography.

⁶⁴ T. Starodubcev, *Srpsko zidno slikarstvo u zemljama Lazarevića i Brankovića*, II, Belgrade, 2016, 145, сл. 135; J. Prolović, *Resava (Manasija). Geschichte, Architektur un Malerei einer Stiftung des serbischen Despoten Stefan Lazarević*, Vienna, 2017, 153-154, 432. Abb. 47.

⁶⁵ N. Zarras, “Η παλαιολόγεια εικόνα του Χριστού εν δόξη με τους αποστόλους στο Μουσείο του Ελληνικού Ινστιτούτου της Βενετίας”, *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρίας* 34, 2013, p. 239-252, esp. Ευκ. 3. Cf. also the personification of the Cosmos from the early fifteenth-century St. Theodores’ church at Žiža: D. Vojvodić, “Ostaci živopisa i istorija crkve Svetih Teodora (Svetih Petra i Pavla) u Žiži”, *Naša prošlost* 11, 2010, p. 52, 62-64, сл. 22; M. Čanak-Medić, D. Popović, D. Vojvodić, *Manastir Žiža*, Belgrade, 2014, p. 415, 419, sl. 291 (D. Vojvodić).

very eloquent testimonies about the veneration of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia on Mount Sinai must be taken into account. Their earliest Sinaite representations are preserved on an eleventh-century diptych featuring busts of apostles, warrior saints and holy physicians.⁶⁶ The treasury of St. Catherine's Monastery also includes a separate image of the Holy Five on a twelfth-century icon with the Deesis composition in the uppermost register (Fig. 1),⁶⁷ and they are also depicted on a thirteenth-century icon of the Great Deesis with saints⁶⁸ and in the lower zone of an unpublished icon of the Virgin Hodegetria which, judging by its stylistic characteristics, seems to have been painted in the Post-Byzantine period.⁶⁹ The most striking evidence of the veneration of these saints on Mount Sinai is the abovementioned templon beam with the posthumous miracles of St. Eustratios (twelfth century). Kurt Weitzmann believed that this work was specially made for the chapel of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia at St. Catherine's Monastery, which is still in existence.⁷⁰ Nancy Patterson Ševčenko has, however, questioned this view because none of the Western medieval pilgrims who have left written testimonies about their visits to Mount Sinai mention a parekklesion dedicated to these Armenian martyrs, and there is no information about the veneration of their relics at the monastery.⁷¹

⁶⁶ G. and M. Sōtēriou, *Εικόνες τής Μονής Σινά*, I, Athens, 1956, πίν. 51-52; II, Αθήνα 1958, p. 69; G. Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting at Sinai...", p. 378 (no. XI.50.1-XI.50.2).

⁶⁷ K. Weitzmann, who was the first to publish the icon, believed that it was painted in the early thirteenth century, cf. K. Weitzmann, "Illustrations...", p. 103, fig. 14; idem, *Ikonen aus dem Katharinenkloster auf dem Berge Sinai*, Berlin, 1980, pl. 12. Georgi Parpulov, however, dates the icon to the twelfth century, in my opinion rightfully, cf. G. Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting at Sinai...", p. 382, cf. (no. XII.25).

⁶⁸ G. and M. Sōtēriou, *Εικόνες τής Μονής Σινά*..., I, πίν. 221; II, p. 194-195; D. Mouriki, "Icons from the 12th to the 15th century", in K. A. Manafēs (ed.), *Sinai. Treasures of the monastery of Saint Catherine*, Athens, 1990, fig. 76; G. Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting at Sinai...", p. 389 (no. XIII.67). The selection of saints on this icon certainly deserves closer inspection. However, it seems that the position of the Holy Five could suggest that they were especially venerated at the Sinai monastery. Namely, their figures are on the right side of the icon, in the third zone from the top, directly above the representations of the local martyrs – the Forty Martyrs of Sinai and Raithou (on their cult and representation in art, cf. M. Živković, "On the Icons of Sinai and Raithou Martyrs in Saint Catherine's Monastery at Sinai, with an Overview of the Cult and Iconography of These Saints in East Christian Art", *Zograf* 44, 2020, p. 101-125). In addition, it should be noted that, above the Holy Five, is a group of five prophets led by Moses, whose cult was particularly strong at Sinai; in the bottommost register on the same, right side of the icon, the central place among the figures of three female saints belongs to St. Catherine.

⁶⁹ A photograph of the icon is available on the Princeton University webpage dedicated to the Sinai icons: "Virgin Hodegetria with Martyrs," The Sinai Icon Collection, accessed February 8, 2021, <http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/7435>. The captions with the saints' names are not discernible on the photo, but the identification is based on the physiognomies of the figures.

⁷⁰ K. Weitzmann, "Illustrations...", p. 108. D. Mouriki, *Icons from the 12th to the 15th century*..., p. 106, agrees with Weitzmann's hypothesis.

⁷¹ N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Posthumous Miracles...", 278-279, n. 34. Ševčenko draws on the

However, sources of different provenances mention both the relics and the chapel of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia. As for the relics, the only but fairly reliable testimony is an Arabian description of St. Catherine's from the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, whose author probably visited Sinai. This author, a hierarch of the Coptic church, Abū l-Makārim, claims that, besides the earthly remains of St. Catherine and many other unnamed saints, the main monastery church also had a thumb of St. Eustratios (Asatriyānūs).⁷² On the other hand, there is no doubt that the parekklesion of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia at St. Catherine's Monastery, located on the east side of the monastic complex, has existed for centuries. Marina Myriantheōs-Kouphopoulou has recently studied the architecture and history of this chapel, probably restored at some point before 1747, when a new iconostasis was installed.⁷³ Although cautious when it comes to the premise that the templon beam with the posthumous miracles of St. Eustratios was made especially for this chapel, she does identify it with the parekklesion of the "Great Martyrs" (Μάρτυρες οί μεγάλοι) mentioned by Paisios Hagiapostolites, the future metropolitan of Rhodes (1597–1603), in his versified description of St. Catherine's Monastery from 1577–1592.⁷⁴ She also notes that the chapel of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia appears on two plans of the monastery, from 1743 and 1813, and that it is mentioned in another description of the complex from 1817.⁷⁵ References to the Sinai chapel of the Holy Five are also found in some even older sources. It has hitherto gone unnoticed that, describing the churches in the monastic complex, the Kyiv hieromonk Barsanophios, who visited the monastery in January 1462, mentions the church of "the holy martyrs Eustratios, Auxentios, Mardarios and Orestes" as the ninth on his list, omitting, probably unintentionally, to include St. Eugenios.⁷⁶ An anonymous

material collected by J. M. Braun, *St. Catherine's monastery church, mount Sinai: literary sources from the fourth through the nineteenth centuries*, doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973.

⁷² J.-M. Mouton. A. Popescu-Belis, "Une description du monastère Sainte-Catherine du Sinai au XII^e siècle: le manuscrit d'Abū l-Makārim", *Arabica* 53/1, 2006, p. 39-41, 50.

⁷³ M. Myriantheōs-Kouphopoulou, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά παρεκκλήσια της Μονής Σινά. Ιστορία και αρχιτεκτονική*, doctoral dissertation, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2015, p. 140-143, Σχ. 100, 113, Εικ. 301-320.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143. Cf. Παϊσίου Ἀγιαποστολίτου Μητροπολίτου Ρόδου, Ἱστορία τοῦ ἁγίου ὄρους Σινά καί τῶν περιχώρων αὐτοῦ, ed. by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, G. S. Destounēs, *Pravoslavnyiĭ palestinskiĭ sbornik* 35, 1891, p. 40.1009-1111 (Greek original), 119.1009-1111 (Russian translation); A. Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam. Studien zu Pilgerführern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit*, Frankfurt am Mein, 1994, p. 31-33, 372; idem, *Die Sinaibeschreibung des Paisios Hagiapostolites, Metropolit von Rhodos (1577/92)*, in R. Schulz (ed.), *Beschreibung der Welt. Zur Poetik der Reise- und Länderberichte*, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 205-218.

⁷⁵ M. Myriantheōs-Kouphopoulou, *Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά παρεκκλήσια...*, p. 143.

⁷⁶ "Khozhenie sviāshchennoikona Varsanofiiā ko sviātomu gradu Ierusalimu v 1456 i 1461-1462 gg.", ed. by S. O. Dolgov, *Pravoslavnyiĭ palestinskiĭ sbornik* 45, 1896, p. 21; *Three East Slavic pilgrims at Sinai*, ed. by G. Parpulov, in *Approaching the Holy Mountain...*, p. 483.



Fig. 16. Patmos, Monastery of St John the Theologian, icon of Five Martyrs of Sebasteia [after A. Kominis (ed.), *Patmos*]

dated more reliably: an icon from the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian on Patmos created by Emmanuel Skordilis, a priest and prolific Cretan icon-painter, from 1650-1670 (Fig. 16).⁸⁰ On this icon, St. Eustratios is, expectedly, at the center of the group. Shown as frontal, full-length figures, all five saints hold gold martyr's crosses, and the center of the upper register features a bust of Christ, who blesses them. Instead of a scroll, his usual attribute, in his left hand St. Eustratios holds a long, slender sword with a gold hilt and red scabbard. He wears ornate armor over a short

Russian author, who composed a description of the Sinai monastery sometime in the sixteenth century, mentions the exact dedication of the chapel and includes the names of all five saints.⁷⁷ In his description of the Sinai monastery penned in 1576, Theodosios Zygomalas (1544–1607), *protonotarios* of Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople (1572–1595), also speaks about the parekklesion of the five Armenian martyrs, giving it the tenth place on his list of chapels within the monastery walls.⁷⁸ Finally, the chapel of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia appears in a *proskyneterion* composed by an anonymous Greek author in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.⁷⁹

The next example of the rare iconographic solution discussed here, preserved on a group representation of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, can be

⁷⁷ I. V. Fedorova, “Povest’ o sviatoï gore Sinaïskoï – maloizvestnyï pamiätnik vostochnoslavianskoï palomnicheskoi literatury”, *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoï literatury* 62, 2014, p. 475.

⁷⁸ “Vosem’ grecheskikh opisaniï Sviatykh mest XIV–XVI vv.”, ed. by A. I. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, P. V. Bezobrazov, *Pravoslavnyiï palestinskiï sbornik* 56, 1903, p. 52 (Greek text), 191 (Russian translation). Cf. A. Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca...*, p. 29-31, 353; A. Rhoby, “Theodosios Zygomalas and His Report on a Journey to the Aegean and the Coast of Asia Minor”, in A. Αργυρίου (ed.), *H Ελλάδα των νησιών από τη Φραγκοκρατία ως σήμερα* II, Athens, 2004, p. 103-113.

⁷⁹ “Vosem’ grecheskikh opisaniï...”, p. 130.19-21 (Greek original), 252 (Russian translation).

⁸⁰ M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos. Questions of Byzantine and Post-byzantine Painting*, Athens, 1985, p. 172 (no. 152), pl. 72, 189; idem, *Icons*, in A. D. Kominis (ed.), *Patmos. Treasures of the Monastery*, Athens, 1988, p. 124-125, fig. 45; M. Chatzidakēs, E. Drakopoulou, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1450-1830)*, II, Athens, 1997, p. 356, είκ. 251.



Fig. 17. Mount Athos, Great Lavra, Church of the Mother of God Koukouzelissa, St Orestes and Eustratios (photo G. Phousteris)

on Mount Athos. The sanctuary and naos of Lavra's "second katholikon," built in 1713, were frescoed six years later by hieromonk Damaskinos of Ioannina, on the commission of *prohegoumenos* Joseph Gordatos from the village of Patrika on Chios, in the time of *hegoumenos* Timotheos. The artist painted the leader of the Holy Five, together with St. Orestes, in the first fresco zone, in the group of warrior saints in the north choir. The other three martyrs of Sebasteia are shown outside of the procession of holy warriors, on the north of the space below the dome.⁸³ St. Eustratios is depicted with his usual "portrait characteristics" – as a mature man with longish hair and a

tunic, with a cloak draped over his shoulders. He is middle-aged, with short, neatly arranged hair and a short, curly beard rounded at the end. The described physiognomy deviates, to an extent, from the usual typological features of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia,⁸¹ just as his representation as a soldier deviates from the established custom. As noted in previous research, the artist seems to have also had some trouble when painting the faces of the other two martyrs: he confused the physiognomies of Auxentios and Mardarios and painted the former as young and the latter as old instead of vice versa. In addition, he depicted Mardarios with a scarf instead of a hat, which he placed on Auxentios' head.⁸²

A special place among the representations of St. Eustratios as a warrior saint belongs to an example from the Church of the Mother of God Koukouzelissa at the Great Lavra Monastery

⁸¹ It, in fact, to a large extent corresponds to the physiognomy of Eustathios Plakidas.

⁸² M. Chatzidakis, *Icons of Patmos...*, p. 172.

⁸³ I. Perrakēs, *Tò ἐνυπόγραφο ἔργο τοῦ ἱερομονάχου Δαμασκηνοῦ ἐξ Ἰωαννίνων (τέλη 17ου - ἀρχές 18ου αἰώνα)*, Athens, 2020, p. 158, 159, 172, 340, 428 (no. 248-249, 253-255), 455 (no. 340-341, 345-347), Eικ. 534, 559.

pointed, bifurcated beard. The only standard iconographic attribute here is the scarf around his neck, while in all else, his representation is very similar to the nearby figure of St. Orestes (Fig. 17). He wears armor with a cloak and holds a spear with his right hand; his left supports a shield, and there is a sheathed sword on his left hip. The prominence of the images of St. Eustratios and St. Orestes in the naos of the church is understandable in light of the above-presented information about the veneration of the Holy Five at the Great Lavra. Furthermore, the importance of their cult at this Athonite monastery should perhaps also be taken into account when considering the warrior iconography of St. Eustratios. Namely, it seems sensible to ask if his representation as a soldier at the Mother of God Koukouzelissa in 1719 might have been due to the existence of an older image of the same type at the Great Lavra.⁸⁴

The representations of St. Eustratios as a warrior on the Kakopetria and Great Lavra frescoes and the icons from Sinai and Patmos seem to be rare examples of this iconographic solution in Greek painting. On the other hand, this solution was more widely used in Russia, where St. Eustratios could be shown in the company of warrior saints – albeit not as a soldier himself – as early as the end of the fifteenth century.⁸⁵ Russian representations of St. Eustratios as a warrior appeared in the following century. On the menaion icon for December from the Moscow Theological Academy (late sixteenth – early seventeenth century), he is depicted in armor and with a sword (Fig. 18).⁸⁶ On another calendar icon, this one kept at the State Russian

⁸⁴ This question is even more pertinent given that, two years earlier (1717), the same artist frescoed the naos of the katholikon of the Karakallou Monastery and painted St. Eustratios and St. Orestes in martyr's clothing rather than with military equipment. Besides, the physiognomy of St. Eustratios is not the same at the two monasteries: his beard is not bifurcated at Karakallou, cf. *ibid.*, 448 (no. 205, 210), Eik. 533, 558.

⁸⁵ In this period, St. Eustratios was painted in martyr's clothing on an icon from the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod. Two warrior saints are shown with him: St. Artemios, also wearing a tunic and cloak, and St. Polyeuktos, in armor and with a sword, holding a cross in his right hand, cf. V. N. Lazarev, *Stranicy istorii novgorodskoï zhivopisi. Dvustoronnie tabletki iz sobora Sv. Sofii v Novgorode*, Moscow, 1983, tab. I; È. S. Smirnova, V. K. Laurina, È. A. Gordienko, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda...*, p. 302, 317-318. St. Eustratios is depicted in a group of warrior-martyrs in the Deesis on the iconostasis of the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at the Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery (c. 1497). His figure is on the left side of the procession, behind St. Demetrios. On the opposite side of the Deesis, St. George and St. Artemios are shown as the counterparts of these two saints, cf. O. V. Lelekova, *Russkii klassicheskii ikonostas. Ikonostas iz Uspenskogo sobora Kirillo-Belozerskogo monastyria 1497*, Moscow, 2011, p. 313-322 (no. 19-22). Both examples were pointed out in PE XVII, p. 336 (IU. V. Brodovaia).

⁸⁶ A reproduction of the icon is available on the website of the Moscow Theological Academy: <http://acmus.ru/collection/icons/index.php?page=5>; Cf. also PE XVII, fig. on p. 336. Cf. also the unpublished icon for December dated to c. 1660 from the Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, MA, where St. Eustratios is again shown as a warrior, but with a cross in his right and a sword in his left hand: https://gallery.collectorsystems.com/public/MoRI/3119/R2014.1.3?Title_search=Two%20Sided%20Mineia%20with%20December. On another icon from the same collection (c. 1680), St. St.



Fig. 18. Moscow, Theological Academy, menaion icon for December, a detail, Five Martyrs of Sebasteia (after PE XVII)



Fig. 19. Saint Petersburg, The State Russian Museum, menaion icon for December, a detail, Five Martyrs of Sebasteia (photo I. Shalina)

Museum in Saint Petersburg and painted in 1569 for the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Joseph Volokolamsk Monastery,⁸⁷ St. Eustratios holds a spear in his left hand and wears armor (Fig. 19). In all likelihood, this iconographic solution for images of St. Eustratios emerged in Russian art. Namely, the cross in the right and spear in the left hand are expressly mentioned as his attributes in a description of the representations of the “holy great martyrs Eustratios, Auxentios, Eugenios, Mardarios and Arestos (sic!)” in the sixteenth-century painter’s manual that once belonged to the library of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod and is now kept in the manuscript collection of the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy (no. 1523). The physiognomies of the five saints on the icon from the State Russian Museum are consistent with the guidelines in this *hermeneia* too. Namely, the painter’s manual explains that the facial features of St. Eustratios correspond to those of St. Floros

Eustratios, kneeling before Christ, again wears armor, holding a raised cross in his right hand, like the other four martyrs, whose figures also face Christ: https://gallery.collectorsystems.com/public/MoRI/3119/R2009.6?Title_search=Christ%20and%20the%20Five%20Martyrs%20of%20Sebasteia#.

⁸⁷ *Sofīa Premudrost’ Bozhīia. Vystavka ruskoī ikonopisi XIII-XIX vekov iz sobraniī muzeev Rosii*, ed. by O. A. Chernova, Moscow, 2000, p. 90-91, no. 18 (I. Shalina); eadem, “Mineinye ikony 1569 goda iz Iosifo-Volokolamskogo monastyriā”, in M. A. Orlova (ed.), «Ot Car’grada do Belogo moria...». *Sbornik stateī po srednevekovomu iskusstvu v chest’ Ė. S. Smirnovoi*, Moscow, 2007, p. 651-678, ill. 4.



Fig. 20. Moscow, Collection of Pavel Korin, icon of Five Martyrs of Sebasteia
(after <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/404831454003297879/>)

and associates the appearance of the remaining four martyrs with the “portrait characteristics” of other saints. Thus, instead of being described as an aging man, as he was shown in the Byzantine iconographic tradition, St. Auxentios is likened to the youthful St. Demetrios; Eugenios, the manual advises, should be depicted like Kosmas or Damian, Mardarios like St. Niketas, and Orestes as St. George.⁸⁸ The artist who, in the late seventeenth century, painted their *vita* cycle on an icon from Kolomenskoye Museum near Moscow, where St. Eustratios again appears as a soldier, seems to have followed the same instructions about the physiognomies of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia.⁸⁹ Finally, on an icon from the Moscow collection of Pavel Korin at the State Tretyakov Gallery (eighteenth century),⁹⁰ the “portraits” of the five saints are consistent with the descriptions in the abovementioned painter’s

⁸⁸ *Ikonopisnyĭ podlinnik novgorodskoĭ redakcii po sofiĭskomu spisku konca XVI veka*, ed. by G. D. Filimonov, Moscow, 1873, p. 51. Cf. Ī. V. Brodovaĭa, “«Maly sut’ moi strasti...”, p. 195, n. 20; PE XVII, 336 (eadem). On the iconography of Floros, Demetrios, Kosmas and Damian, Niketas and George in the Russian artistic tradition, including the relevant references, cf. Ė. S. Smirnova, V. K. Laurina, Ė. A. Gordienko, *Zhivopis’ Velikogo Novgoroda...*, p. 281, 313; PE X, 685-690; XV, 187-195; XXXVIII, 245-247.

⁸⁹ Ī. V. Brodovaĭa, “«Maly sut’ moi strasti...”, p. 190-191, ил. 1, 2.

⁹⁰ V. I. Antonova, *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo v sobranii Pavla Korina*, Moscow, 1966, p. 140 (no. 119), ill. 138.

manual (Fig. 20). Furthermore, here St. Eustratios has a cross in his right and a shield in his left hand.

The above-presented overview of the individual representations of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia in Eastern Christian art suggests that he could sometimes be shown as a warrior saint. His earliest depictions in military equipment have survived on the fresco from the Church of St Nicholas “of the Roof” on Cyprus, and on an icon from the treasury of St. Catherine’s Monastery on Sinai, where the Holy Five enjoyed particular veneration. Further, St. Eustratios could also appear as a soldier in Greek Post-Byzantine painting, as revealed by the icon from the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on the island of Patmos and the fresco at the Great Lavra on Mount Athos. The most numerous examples of this unusual iconographic solution have survived in Russian art, in which the faces of all five martyrs from Sebasteia received very distinctive “portrait characteristics” that set them apart from their earlier Eastern Christian representations. The knowledge that the cult of St. Eustratios had a military aspect – to which the listed examples, however rare, unambiguously testify – allows us to see some of his other depictions more clearly and explain them more reliably. In other words, the inclusion of St. Eustratios in a group of warrior saints in representative Middle-Byzantine works of art – Constantinopolitan ivory triptychs – is much easier to understand in light of the knowledge that he could be shown as a soldier in Late and Post-Byzantine painting. This comparative perspective also provides a firmer basis to explain the fact that St. Eustratios appears together with famed holy warriors dressed in the costumes of Byzantine court dignitaries in the *katholikon* of the Treskavac Monastery. Admittedly, it remains unclear if the inclusion of the Holy Five into the *Heavenly Court* scene at Markov Manastir should be interpreted in the same ideational and programmatic context.

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To conclude this overview of the representations of St. Eustratios of Sebasteia as a warrior, let us consider the narrative sources that could have led to their emergence.

Textual underpinnings for the representation of this martyr as a soldier can be found already in the central hagiographic text about the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia – the *Passio* preserved in the collection of Symeon Metaphrastes.⁹¹ At the very beginning of the story about St. Eustratios, the text reports that he was a “*skrinarios* in the service of a *doux*.”⁹² This formulation was almost verbatim transcribed in the

⁹¹ Cf. *supra*, n. 23. The historical layers of the Metaphrastian version of the *Passio* of the Holy Five have very recently been discussed in S. Mitchell, “Hagiography and the Great Persecution in Sebasteia and Armenia Minor”, in S. Mitchell, P. Pilhofer (eds.), *Early Christianity in Asia Minor and Cyprus. From the Margins to the Mainstream*, Leiden – Boston 2019, p. 69-73.

⁹² PG 116, col. 469 D.1-3: σκρινιάριος τῆς δουκιτικῆς ὑπάρχων τάξεως καὶ πρωτεύων ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ τότε

Slavic versions of the *Passio*.⁹³ On its own, the term *skrinarios*, which in the early Byzantine period denoted various types of public officials in imperial, provincial and military administration,⁹⁴ is insufficiently specific here to allow us to infer what duties it might have entailed,⁹⁵ but it can by no means be used as an argument that its bearer performed military service. Quite the contrary: as noted above, in Byzantine art, in representations that belong to the main iconographic redaction, St. Eustratios was depicted as a public official, in clothing that has parallels in some portraits of Byzantine court dignitaries.⁹⁶ On the other hand, some grounds for representing St. Eustratios as a soldier could have been found in the report that he was a *skrinarios* in the service of a *doux*. This additional piece of information removes any doubt that he

χρόνον.

⁹³ For example, the Serbian manuscript of the versified Prologue for December-February from the Dečani library (late fourteenth century, MS 54, fol. 36v), which is available in full on the monastery's website <https://www.decani.org>, states: скриннаріє си доукінскаго чина. For information on the manuscript cf. D. Bogdanović et al., *Opis ćirilskih rukopisnih knjiga manastira Visoki Dečani*, I, Belgrade, 2011, p. 183-189. Similarly, the *menaion* reader (*chet'yi-minei*) for December, printed as part of an edition for the full year and edited between 1530 and 1541 by Archbishop Makarios of Novgorod, later Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia (1542-1563), describes Eustratios as скриннар дѣковѣскаго сана, cf. *Velikie Minei Chety, sobranye Vserossiiskim mitropolitom Makariem, Dekabr', dni 6-17*, Moscow, 1904, col. цѣц. On the other hand, in the *Passio* of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia in Dmitri Rostovsky's *menaion* reader (first edition: Kyiv, 1689), which is based on the Latin translation of the Metaphrastian version, Eustratios is described as holding the rank of a *voivode*: коеводскаго бо чина баше, cf. *Kniga zhitii s(vę)tŭkh' na tri mesetsa vtorŭę, ezhe est': Dekemvrŭi, Īannŭarŭi, i Fevrŭarŭi...*, Kiev – Pechersk Lavra, 1764, p. ѿев. In the modernized version, the formulation is slightly different, cf. *Zhitiia svŭtŭtykh. Dekabr'*, Moscow, 1904, p. 355: он занимал должность военачальника.

⁹⁴ A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, I, Oxford, 1964, p. 295, 412, 449-450, 589, 605; C. N. Tsirpanlis, “John Lydos on Imperial Administration”, *Byzantion* 44/2, 1974, p. 496-498; R. Delmaire, *Les institutions du Bas-Empire romain, de Constantin à Justinien*, I. *Les institutions civiles palatines*, Paris, 1995, p. 66 and *passim*; W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army. 284-1081*, Stanford, 1995, p. 91; R. Rubin, “Priests, soldiers, and administrators: Society and institutions in the Byzantine Negev”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 12/1, 1997, p. 67; W. Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen Administration im 6.-9. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, p. 64-72; F. Onur, “The Anastasian Military Decree from Perge in Pamphylia: Revised 2nd Edition”, *Gephyra* 14, 2017, p. 148.68, 184, n. 4.

⁹⁵ Therefore, I believe that only the scholars who generally speak of Eustratios as a public official or quote his office of *skrinarios* with no further comments are right, cf. T. Chatzidakis-Bacharas, *Les peintures murales de Hosios Loukas...*, p. 74; M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images...*, p. 97. Others, however, seek to offer a more specific description of his profession and describe him as a scribe, cf. D. Mouriki, *Nea Moni...*, p. 143; S. Gabelić, “Predstave Petozarnih mučenika...”, p. 191. The *Passio* does once state that Eustratios' duties included writing but that only applies to his early career, cf. *infra*. Cf. also N. Patterson Ševčenko, “The Posthumous Miracles...”, p. 273, who believes that Eustratios served as an “official record-keeper.”

⁹⁶ Cf. the works listed in n. 3, and O. Karagiōrgou, “Περὶ ἀλφαριθμητισμοῦ, αἰρέσεων, εἰκονογραφίας καὶ πολιτικῶν φιλοδοξιών στα μολυβδόβουλλα του Νικηφόρου Βοτανειάτη (περίπου 1001/2-1081)”, *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 18, 2008, p. 97-98, εικ. 14-17.

belonged to the military-administrative apparatus, which some scholars have already noted.⁹⁷ As is well known, ever since its introduction under Diocletian, the term *doux* referred to military commanders in the provinces, and from the mid-tenth century, it began to include the commanders of territorial units (*doukata*).⁹⁸ Moreover, the *Passio* recounts that Diocletian had given the *doux*, called Lysias, command over border troops, and the report that he resided in Satala is consistent with the historical fact that, in Roman times, there was indeed a military stronghold in the city.⁹⁹ The *Passio* goes on to provide more details from the life of Eustratios. His earlier life is first referenced in the episode of the trial of the priest Auxentios, in whose defense he spoke out, intentionally revealing his own Christian faith. Provoked by a daring and firm retort from Eustratios, Lysias ordered that the saint should have his belt and cloak removed and continue the trial lying prostrate on the floor, naked and tied up.¹⁰⁰ The trial further reveals that Eustratios spent almost his entire career in the army. After Lysias asked his officials to inform him about how much time the accused had spent “in this army,” he was told that Eustratios had served for twenty-seven years, that he had joined in his early youth and worked as an *exceptor*, i.e., secretary.¹⁰¹ St. Eustratios’ military calling is referenced again in the text, in the

⁹⁷ Cf. ODB II, p. 789 (A. Kazhdan), says that Eustratios was “an officer (*scriniarios*) in the army of the *doux* Lysias”. P. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour...*, p. 58, n. 4, also believes that Eustratios served in the army but misnames his title (“skinarios”) and incorrectly claims that he was in the service “of the *comes* of Lysia.” D. Gorgievski, “Prilog...”, p. 123, observes that, according to the *Passio*, the leader of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia obviously served in the army but as an official rather than a soldier. In the same text, however, the author groundlessly claims that St. Eustratios was a “*doux-skriniarios*”, cf. *ibid.*, p. 121.

⁹⁸ ODB I, p. 659 (A. Kazhdan); B. Krsmanović, *The Byzantine Province in Change (On the Threshold Between the 10th and the 11th Century)*, Belgrade – Athens, 2008, p. 80-82, 150-152 et passim; M. Ž. Cvetković, *Niže jedinice tematskog uređenja u Vizantiji (9-11. vek)*, doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet u Beogradu, 2017, p. 161-182. On the titles of *doux* and *megas doux* from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, with an exhaustive list of older literature, cf. M. Marković, “O poreklu vojne titule svetog Dimitrija na prestonoj ikoni iz Markovog manastira”, *Niš i Vizantija* 13, 2015, p. 87-96.

⁹⁹ PG 116, col. 469 A.7-9: τὸν μὲν ἕνα Λυσίαν ὀνόματι πάντων τῶν λιμιτανέων ἐπιτροπεύειν ἐπέτρεψεν. Cf. S. Mitchell, *Hagiography and the Great Persecution*, 69, 72.

¹⁰⁰ PG 116, col. 473 B.4-8: Ἀρθήτω γοῦν ὁ εστῶς τῆς περικειμένης αὐτῷ χλαίνης καὶ ζώνης, καὶ ἐκ τούτων τῶν σημείων οεικνύτω εαυτὸν ξένον τοῖς πᾶσι τῆς προσοῦσης αὐτῷ ἄχρι τῆς δεῦρο στρατείας, εἰθ οὕτω, γυμνὸς τῷ σώματι, σχοινίοις διαταθεὶς χειρᾶς καὶ πόδας ἠπλωμένος ἐν τῇ γῆ, ἐχέστω τῆς δορυφοροῦσης αὐτὸν δημηγορίας.

¹⁰¹ For the rank of *exceptor* (Gr. ταχυγράφος), which was very similar to imperial and ecclesiastical *notarii*, cf. H. C. Teitler, *Notarii and Exceptores. An Inquiry into Role and Significance of Shorthand Writers in the Imperial and Ecclesiastical Bureaucracy of the Roman Empire (From the Early Principate to c. 450 A.D.)*, Amsterdam, 1985, especially p. 73-85; W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army...*, p. 91; G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar (eds.), *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, Cambridge, MA – London, 1999, p. 611-612. Interestingly, the same title is mentioned in the so-called *Passio altera* of St. Demetrios (BHG 497) as his first position in the army, cf. PG 116, col. 1173B.6; P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius*,

description of his journey to Aauraka, where Lysias had decided to continue the trial of Eustratios and Eugenios, his friend who had in the meantime also discovered that he was a Christian. Mardarios, an ordinary man, saw the procession in the vicinity of Aauraka. Before joining the group of imprisoned Christians to follow in the martyrial footsteps of St. Eustratios, he praised Eustratios to his wife in their native Armenian. Mardarios first told her that Eustratios came from a wealthy family, adding that he had distinguished himself in the army (καὶ ἐν τηλικαύτῃ στρατείᾳ διαπρέφαντα).¹⁰² Finally, the *doux* Lysias references Eustratios' military rank in a letter to his regent Agricola in Sebasteia, to whom he had sent him for trial, together with Orestes, a young man who was also found to be a Christian. Having informed the administrator of the province, who would ultimately execute both Christians, that Eustratios had committed a great transgression, Lysias says that the accused showed remarkable pride, and that he had served in his army and acquired his rank (ἀλλὰ κἄν στρατείας τῆς ἐξυπρετουμένης μοι καὶ τιμῆς ἔτυχεν).¹⁰³

Besides hagiographic texts, in the quest to find the textual sources for representing St. Eustratios of Sebasteia as a soldier, i.e., his representation together with well-known warrior saints, liturgical poetry also deserves close attention. In fact, hymnographic texts, based on succinct poetic images, provide even clearer evidence that St. Eustratios could be seen as a warrior. Unlike in the *Passio*, which informs us that the saint was a public official in the army but not that he was a warrior, in hymnography, he is unambiguously identified as a soldier.

Thus, for example, in a sticheron at the beginning of the Service to the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia (13 December),¹⁰⁴ St. Eustratios is praised as a “good soldier of the King of Forces”: Ὡς καλῶς στρατευσάμενος, Βασιλεῖ τῶν δυνάμεων¹⁰⁵; Ἰἴκο δοεβρ

II. *Le commentaire*, Paris, 1981, p. 199-200; R. Cormack, “The Making of a Patron Saint: The Powers of Art and Ritual in Byzantine Thessaloniki”, in I. Lavin (ed.), *World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity. Acts of the XXVIIth International Congress of the History of Art*, III, University Park – London, 1989, p. 548; M. Marković, “O ikonografiji svetih ratnika...”, p. 583, n. 127; Ch. Walter, *The Warrior Saints...*, p. 69; M. White, *Military Saints...*, p. 19.

¹⁰² PG 116, col. 480 C.10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, col. 488 A.11-13. Makarios' menaion reader states: но аште воннѣства свѣтлаго мнѣ н чѣсти полѣти, cf. *Velikie Minei Chety...*, col. ۱۳.

¹⁰⁴ Since, in addition to the territory of Byzantium, i.e., in Greek painting, examples of including St. Eustratios in a group of holy warriors or his representation in military attire have survived in Serbian monuments (Treskavac) and Russian painting, it seems apposite to include the relevant quotes from Russian and Serbian medieval menaia along with the Greek original of the Service. The Russian text is quoted after *Gottesdienstmenäum für den Monat Dezember nach den slavischen Handschriften der Rus' des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts. Teil 2: 9. bis 19. Dezember*, ed. by H. Rothe, E. M. Vereščagin, Opladen, 1997, and the Serbian after the Menaion for December from the Dečani library (MS 37) from the last decade of the fourteenth century, based on the photographs of this manuscript available at: <https://www.decani.org>. Cf. Bogdanović et al., *Opis...*, p. 117-119. Differences in the structure and contents of the three services are irrelevant for the topic at hand.

¹⁰⁵ *Μηναίον του Δεκεμβρίου*, Venice, 1843, p. 105-106; *Μηναῖα τοῦ ὄλου ἐνιαυτοῦ*, II, Rome, 1889,

воннѣ бѣвѣ цѣсаревн снльнѣ|моу¹⁰⁶; ꙗко доврѣ воннѣствѣвавѣ црѣвн снлаамѣ.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in the closing part of the *akolouthia*, in the verses of Patriarch Germanos, he is described as “a soldier of Christ” – ὁ Χριστοῦ στρατιώτης¹⁰⁸; χρисτοὺς воннѣ¹⁰⁹; χβ̄ς воннѣ¹¹⁰ – who moved infidels with the wisdom of his words and defeated them with endurance and martyrial suffering. Perhaps the most interesting parts of the Service for the problem at hand are the verses from the first hymn of the canon, which are a poetic interpretation of a specific event in his *Passio*: the first relevant event in the life of St. Eustratios, after which he decided to stop hiding his Christian faith. In this episode, it is recounted that his servant left his belt in the church in Arauraka and the priest Auxentios found it, which Eustratios took as a sign that he should consciously become a martyr.¹¹¹ John Damascene, the author of the canon, plainly describes the belt of St. Eustratios as a military insignia, i.e., as the “belt of the earthly army”: Τὴν ζώνην, τοῦ ἐπὶ γῆς στρατεύματος, ἀπεκδυσάμενος, τῷ ἀληθεῖ προσάγει Βασιλεῖ, τῆς ἀθλήσεως σύμβολον, παρὰ Χριστοῦ Εὐστράτιε, δι’ Αὐξεντίου κομισάμενος¹¹²; Ποια сь земльнаго воннѣства отрѣшь | сь себе, къ истиньноꙗмоу приносши | цѣсаревн, пострадавниа образъ отъ хри|ста, еврѣстатне сь ав̄зентниемѣ, приимамѣ :-¹¹³; Поясъ земльнаго воннѣства ѿрѣшь · истиньноꙗмоу привѣносши црю · ст̄р̄анѣа ѡбразъ ѿ х̄а еврѣстатне авкентниемѣ приимамѣ :-¹¹⁴

Finally, the extensive encomium in honor of the Holy Five by Michael the Monk speaks of St. Eustratios as a warrior. For the author of this celebratory text, Eustratios is an “exceedingly famous soldier” who “had spat on the transient and fugitive military service of this life,” for which he was awarded by Christ after having been martyred.¹¹⁵ Not unlike in the abovementioned excerpt from the Service of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, the belt is here described as the “belt of the transient military service”.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Michael the Monk twice refers to St. Eustratios as the “general of the martyrs” (ὁ τῶν μαρτύρων ταξιάρχης; στρατηγός

p. 478; S. Eustratiadēs, “Ἀκολουθία τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων Εὐστρατίου, Αὐξεντίου, Εὐγενίου, Μαρδαρίου, καὶ Ὁρέστου”, *Εκκλησιαστικός Φάρος* 24/4, 1909, p. 347.

¹⁰⁶ *Gottesdienstmenäum...*, p. 300.81-82.

¹⁰⁷ Dečani no. 37, fol. 82.

¹⁰⁸ *Μηγαίον του Δεκεμβρίου...*, p. 112; *Μηγαῖα τοῦ ὅλου ἐνιαυτοῦ II...*, p. 486.

¹⁰⁹ *Gottesdienstmenäum...*, p. 298.69.

¹¹⁰ Dečani no. 37, fol. 94v.

¹¹¹ PG 116, col. 469, 471.

¹¹² *Μηγαίον του Δεκεμβρίου...*, p. 107; *Μηγαῖα τοῦ ὅλου ἐνιαυτοῦ II...*, p. 480; *Analecta Hymnica Graeca IV. Canones Decembris*, ed. by A. Kominis, Rome, 1976, p. 250-251.13-18.

¹¹³ *Gottesdienstmenäum...*, p. 314.159-164.

¹¹⁴ Dečani no. 37, fol. 86v.

¹¹⁵ D. Krausmüller, “The Encomium of the Five Martyrs...”, p. 314/315.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 318, 319, 321.

τῶν μαρτύρων),¹¹⁷ and in his closing words, glorifies his overall effort through a battle metaphor, recounting that he “was armoured with the Trinity through the faith in Jesus” and that he “battled with the one who had innumerable perishable troops and pursued them in the Lord and threw all of them down without exception.”¹¹⁸

To conclude, St. Eustratios, an Armenian saint from Arauraka, the leader of a group of Early Christian martyrs from Sebasteia, has often been shown in Eastern Christian art without his companions. In the Middle Byzantine period and later, he could be depicted together with well-known warrior saints. Furthermore, in Late and Post-Byzantine art, and particularly in Russian painting from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, there are examples where he is represented as a soldier. This alternative iconography of St. Eustratios could have been based on hagiographic testimonies of his military service, some verses from the *akolouthia* of the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, and perhaps even on the encomium composed in their honor by Michael the Monk.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 324/325, 326/327.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 334/335.