Painting or Relief: The Ideal Icon in Iconophile Writing in Byzantium

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This text is focused on the transformation of the definition of the icon in Byzantine image theory from an identification of graphe with painting in the writings of John of Damascus (ca. 675–754) to the equation of graphe with typos understood as the imprint of an intaglio on matter in the theory of Theodore Studites (759–826).

The virtues of painting, therefore, are that its masters see their works admired and feel themselves to be almost like the Creator. Is it not true that painting is the mistress of all the arts or their principal ornament? If I am not mistaken, the architect took from the painter architraves, capitals, bases, columns and pediments, and all other fine features of buildings. The stonemason, the sculptor, and all the workshops and crafts of artificers are guided by the rule and art of the painter. Indeed hardly any art, except the very meanest, can be found that does not somehow pertain to painting. So I would venture to assert that whatever beauty there is in things, it has been derived from painting.

Alberti, Della Pictura II, ch. 26.¹

According to Alberti, painting interpenetrates and bonds together all other forms of art. It exceeds these crafts and becomes high art. This perception of painting as the queen of all the arts has a continuous strong hold of our imagination to the extent that we are still predisposed to equate the Byzantine icon with tempera or encaustic painting on wood panels.² While it is true that the majority of both the earliest and later surviving icons are painted images, this painted tradition might not have been the privileged medium right after Iconoclasm, and especially in a place like Constantinople. Only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a relatively large corpus of painted icons was formed on Mount Sinai. I therefore would like to posit the question: was the painted tradition equally strong in Byzantium earlier on but left no material traces, or was the icon right after Iconoclasm associated with relief rather painting? If the latter is the case, then we have retrojected a false dominance of the painted image over the relief icon in the earlier periods, and thus fabricated a new memory of the past that fits better in our post-Albertian system of painting as the highest form of art.

What explains our continuing fascination with painting? According to Alberti, the esteem of painting is seen to stem from its veristic mode. Its goal is to represent things as they are seen in nature, to convey a sense of three-dimensionality by imitation: “the function of the painter is to draw with lines and paint with colors on a surface any given bodies in such a way, that at a fixed distance and with a certain, determined position of the centric ray, what you see represented appears to be in relief and just like those bodies.”³ This concept of painting as naturalism is equivalent to the Greek word zographia translated as “painting from life, from nature”. This is the meaning of the word in Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman sources: Plato, Plutarch, Philostrates.⁴ Yet, naturalist painting, zographia, cannot be further removed from the Byzantine notion of graphe.

How did Byzantium reconcile zographia to its iconic tradition? The answer lies in the Iconophile separation of the icon from painting. In this article I will show how graphe in both iconodoule writing and in Post-Iconoclast icon production shifted from painting to relief and thus cancelled any links with the zographia of the Hellenistic and Roman traditions. Byzantium thus had a different hierarchy in which the relief icon – the icon in metal, enamel, ivory – presented the ideal iconic form, which conformed to the theoretical definition of the eikon as the imprint of Christ’s morphe on matter. While we have privileged painting by adopting the Albertian hierarchy of pictura as the pinnacle of human artistic creation, for Byzantium this hierarchy was reversed. What we regard as minor arts – enamel, metal, steatite, ivory – constituted in fact the major and privileged iconic mode in Byzantium.

² H. Belting, Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art, Chicago 1994. This summation of the iconic tradition in the East and West focuses entirely on the painted icon. The Byzantine realm is predominantly discussed on the basis of the Sinai painted-icon production. Absent from Belting’s discussion is the vast metal-relief icon tradition preserved in the Republic of Georgia or the examples of Byzantine relief icons mentioned in monastic typika, or the treasury of San Marco. The significance of the relief icon in Byzantine iconic thought and production is addressed in Pentcheva, Sensual Splendor. The Icon in Byzantium (University Park, forthcoming) and eadem, The Performative icon, Art Bulletin 88/4 (2006) 631–56.
³ Alberti, Della Pictura III, ch. 52. See also II, ch. 30: “Painting aims to represent things seen”.
In my discussion I will focus on the writings of John of Damascus in the early eighth century and Theodore Studites in the late eighth and early ninth centuries to show the progression from painting to relief. While John of Damascus regarded the icon as painting in colors and wax, Theodore Studites propelled a new formulation: the icon as an imprint of intaglio on matter. The icon as imprint leads to the bas-relief object and thus suggests a hitherto unrecognized importance of relief in the Middle Byzantine iconic production.

**John of Damascus and the Icon as Painting**

John of Damascus (born ca. 675, died in the Lavra of St. Sabas ca. 753/754, Feast day, March 27) received an excellent education and was a member of the administrative elite of the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus before he decided to take the monastic habit. His writings were aimed at a systematization of Christian knowledge and expanded on the previous work of Theodoret of Cyrus. John composed his polemical treatises against heresies and especially Iconoclasm outside the borders of the Byzantine empire, hence the strength of his polemical voice against imperial policies. In his three texts on the icon, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, John of Damascus associates the icon with many different forms: the image reflected in a mirror or painted with wax and pigments on wood boards. It is the Incarnation, Christ’s acquisition human form that legitimizes the modeling of his form in matter.

For if we make an image of God who in his ineffable goodness became incarnate and was seen upon earth in the flesh and lived among humans, and assumed the nature and density and form and color of flesh, we do not go astray. For we long to see his form; as the divine apostles says ‘now we see puzzling reflections in a mirror (1Cor. 13, 12)’. For the image (eikon) is a mirror and a puzzle, suitable to the materiality (‘density’, in Louth’s tr.) of our body. For the intellect greatly tired, is not able to pass beyond the bodily, as the divine Gregory says (John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, II.5 and III.2, English tr. Louth).\(^6\)

The Incarnation opens the possibility for depicting Christ in the icon. Just as he acquired flesh, so too his human body could be pictured in the icon. The image addresses itself to the body, to matter. The icon is metaphorically equated to the reflection of the carnal logos in a mirror.

John of Damascus then gets more specific when he writes that the icon is the modeling of likeness with wax and pigments on a board. Here the image reflected in a mirror is coupled with the painted tradition of zographia. Likeness is secured through veristic painting. But the naturalism of zographia also creates an anxiety with the painted image, for it can create a false impression of presence:

*So when I venerate the icon of Christ, I do not venerate the nature of the wood or the colors – God forbid! – but, venerating the lifeless form of Christ (apsychos charakter), through it I seem to hold and venerate Christ himself (John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, III.87, English tr. Louth).*\(^7\)

While the icon is equated to the painted likeness in encaustic on a wood board, an anxiety about this object creeps in. The zographia gives rise to a deceptive perception as if one is holding the archetype (auton Christon doko krattein). Through its seducing naturalistic mode, the painting of the lifeless (visible) form could falselyendorse this form with life. The subjective, interpretative element lurks in this model. Already the skill of the painter could mar the precision in transmission of likeness, or...
the artistic perfection of transmission could endow the image with a false sense of the archetype’s presence.

This unease with the painted image could also be sensed in the following passage:

*The divine beauty is not made resplendent in a certain external figure or fortunate shape through certain beautiful colors, but is beheld in the ineffable blessedness of virtue. Just as painters transfer human forms onto tablets by means of certain colors, applying corresponding paints by imitation, so that the beauty of the archetype is transferred with accuracy to the likeness (John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes* tre, I.50 and II.46, tr. Louth)*.8

The first part of the passage insists on the invisibility of divine beauty, which could only be contemplated (*theoretai*) in the virtue developed in saints. Then in paradoxical way this invisible, ineffable beauty mapped in the virtue of saints is linked to the material form/human appearance (*morphē*) that is captured in the likeness (*oikeia*) modeled by the painter on wood boards. The elusive divine beauty is paired with human form on the one hand, while on the other, virtue is linked to likeness. Both virtue and likeness are dialectic, they are about the modeling, transformation, the mapping and delimitation of something elusive and fleeting. In the case of virtue, it is the modeling of something invisible; in the case of likeness, it is the modeling of something visible and breathing in inanimate matter. Virtue is contemplated, likeness is seen.

Perhaps as a reaction to this growing danger in the painted image to give a false impression of life due to the painter’s exceeding skill or to fail in achieving likeness due to the artist’s lack of skill that stirred John of Damascus to suggest a different model of the icon in his third treatise. He here distanced himself from the definition of the icon as likeness achieved through pigments and wax on a wood, by defining it instead as the imprint of a pattern and impression (*paradeigma* and *ektypoma*). It is the word *ektypoma*, meaning ‘impression’ that would soon become the dominant understanding of the icon, and move the definition of this object from painting to bas-relief.

Similarly, in the passage, where John of Damascus discusses the miraculous image of Christ for King Abgar, he disassociates *zographia* from painting and links it instead with imprint. Christ created this *acheiropoietos* (*a-, without, *heir-* hand, *poietos*- made) by imprinting his face on a piece of cloth. This impression functions as the perfect *zographia*, painting from life; painting is assimilated by the imprint: the *enapomagma*.9 The result-

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8 “Τὸ δὲ θείου κάλλος οὐ σχηματίζεται καὶ μορφής εὕμορος διὰ τόνος εὐχρών ἐναγάγεται, ἀλλ’ ἐν αἰρέσει μακαρίητης κατ᾽ ἀρέτην θεωρεῖται. Ὕστερ τοινυν ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀνθρωπον μορφᾶς διὰ χρωμάτων τινῶν ἐπὶ τοὺς πίνακας οἱ γραφὲς μεταφέρονται τὰς οἰκείας τε καὶ καταλλήλους βαράβας ἐπαλείφοντο τὸν θεμάτι, οὐκ ἄν δὲ ἀκριβείας τὸ ἀρχέτυπον κάλλος μετενεχθεῖ πρὸς τὸ οἰκείον” (John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes* tre, I.50 and II.46).

9 “Λόγος ἐνθευθὲν εἰς ἡμᾶς παραδόθηκεν κάτεστις, Ἀγαθόν, τοῦ Εὐσεβῆς ἄνωτα, φήμη τῆς τοῦ κυρίου πρὸς θείου ἐκτυπωθέντα ἐρωτα ἑπεστάλκεται πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐπίσκεψιν ἐξευτέλουτα. Εἰ δὲ ἐνεργῆται τοῦτο δράσις, τὸ τούτου κελεύτη ἐμάνωμα Δημάρφων ἐκκαθάρισθαι ὁ γνώτα τοῦ πάντων εὐδοκίας καὶ πάντως δυνάμεων τὸ ὄρκος εἴληφται καὶ τὸ προσώπῳ προσενεκαμένον ἐν τούτῳ τούν
evidence for the legitimacy of icons. Consequently, natu-
ralist painting sits awkwardly with the growing anxiety
about the validity of the man-made icon. This is perhaps
the reason why in the segments where John of Dama-
cus uses zographia outside the patristic tradition, as for
instance in the Abgar story, he moves away from paint-
ing as the naturalistic modeling of likeness with colors
on wood boards and offers instead the concept of the im-
print, enapomagma. While John’s move towards graphe
as imprint is tentative, it becomes the rule in the iconic
theory of Theodore Studites.

Theodore Studites and the Icon as Imprint

Theodore Studites (759–826) was born in the fam-
ily of civil functionaries in Bythnia. At the age of twen-
ty-one he entered the family monastery, where he later
became a hegoumenos (abbot). In 798 he moved to Con-
stantinople, where he restored and reformed the Studios
monastery. Being opposed to imperial policy and the sec-
ond outbreak of iconoclasm, he was banished from Con-
stantinople, but then recalled in 821. His writings encom-
pass many areas: katekheseis (teachings) on monastic life,
labor and spiritual work, letters, epigrams, hymns, hom-
ilies, panegyrics, and apologiai of icons.11 I will focus on
his three treatises on the icon, Antirrheticus I–III.12 Here
Theodore built the most sustained theory of the icon as
imprint. His model emerges clearly in Antirrheticus III,
chapter 3. It is entitled: On the one and indivisible veneration
of both Christ and his eikon. The icon is defined as
the imprint of Christ’s form (morphē, charakter) on mat-
ter (hyle):

It is not the essence of the image (eikon) which we
venerate, but the form (charakter) of the prototype which
is stamped (aposphragisthai) upon it [. . .] but the proto-
type is venerated together with the form and not the es-
sence (ousia) of the image (Antirrheticus III, ch. 3, sect. 2,
tr. Roth).13

The intaglio (charakter) of Christ’s form (mor-
phe) is imprinted on matter. It is this intaglio that bears
Christ’s likeness and thus legitimizes the image by virtue
of its reciprocal stamping into matter. The act of imprint-
ing secures the legitimacy of the intaglio and links the
imprint (typos) to the prototype (prototypos).

Theodore Studites expressed the same idea also in
the following statement:

Is not every image (eikon) a kind of seal (sphragis)
and impression (ektyposis) bearing in itself the proper ap-
pearance (eidos) of that after which it is named (Antirrheti-
cus I, ch. 8, tr. Roth).14

By insisting of the parallel between the relation-
ship of intaglio and imprint and that between icon and

Christ, Theodore Studites establishes the validity of the
icon. Just like the imprint preserves the intaglio relief un-
changed, so too the icon preserves the morphe of Christ
unchanged, thus securing the resemblance, which in turn
legitimates the artificial, man-made image. No space is left
for the gulf of craft and skill, which pertain to the subjec-
tive modeling of likeness. The mechanical reproduction of
likeness preserves the legitimacy of the iconic mode and
the aura of the original dwells in the copy. Both archetype
and copy receive the same indivisible veneration.

In contrast to Walter Benjamin’s concept that the
mechanically reproduced image has lost the aura of the
original,15 it is this very reproducibility that ensures the
aura of the iconic copy in Byzantium. The Byzantine im-
image theory thus asserts that the only means of preserving
aura (aura in Byzantium is equivalent to skhēsis, the
indestructible relationship between prototype and copy),
is through the mechanical imprint of charakter/mor-
phe on matter. In fact, the power given to the mecha-
nical reproduction in the Byzantine iconic mode has been
overlooked in modern image theory because Benjamin
himself was unaware of it. His discussion stops with the
Greeks and resumes with the etching and woodcut of the
Late Middle Ages.16 Yet, Byzantium could have served as
the precedent of what Benjamin describes as the modern
phenomenon, where the increased number of mecha-
nically reproduced copies reactivate the power of the or-
iginal.17 However, rather than shattering tradition,18 the

11 “The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduc-
ition can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the
quality of its presence is always depreciated. (. . .) One might sub-
sume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say:
that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura
of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance
points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the
technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the
domain of tradition”, from W. Benjamin, Art in the Age of Mechani-
II, 223.

12 “In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Men could
always imitate manmade artifacts. Replicas were made by pupils in
practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, fin-
ally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of
a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it ad-
vanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with acceler-
ated intensity. The Greeks knew only two procedures of technically
working reproductions of art: founding and stamping. Bronzes, terra cot-
tas, and coins were the only art works which they could produce in
quantity. All others were unique and could not be mechanically repro-
duced. With the woodcut graphic art became mechanically reproduc-
able for the first time, long before script became reproducible by print.
The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction
of writing, has brought about in literature are a familiar story. How-
ever, within the phenomenon which we are here examining from the
perspective of world history, print is merely a special, though particu-
larly important, case. During the Middle Ages engraving and etching
were added to the woodcut; at the beginning of the nineteenth centu-
yang lithography made its appearance”, from Benjamin, Art in the Age
of Mechanical Reproduction, sect. I, 220–221

13 “By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies
for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet
the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reacti-
-ates the object reproduced”, from Benjamin, Art in the Age of Mechani-
cal Reproduction, sect. II, 223.

14 “One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction
detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By
making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for
a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet
the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reacti-
-ates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shatter-

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11 “Ὄὐδ’ ἐν τῇ ὑποσφραγιᾷ ἀποσφραγισθεὶς χαράκτης τοῦ πρωτότυπου (. . .) οὐδὲ γεγένη ἡ ἀν-
συνομομέγερη, ἀλλὰ τὸ πρωτότυπον ἄμα τ’ χαράκτηρι, καὶ ὢν τῇ ὑποσφραγιᾷ ἀποσφραγισθέντος” (Antirrheticus III, ch. 3, sect.2, PG 99 col.
421).

12 “Ἡ οὕτως πάσα εἰκών σφραγίς τῆς ἑστί καὶ εἰκότως ἐν οὐσίᾳ ἄρτηθαι τοῦ κέρων εἰδός” (Antirrheticus I, ch. 8, PG 99, col. 337D).

13 Migne is still the only edition of this text: Theodore Studites, Antir-

Byzantine multiple iconic copies preserve this very tradition. In reproducing likeness (the character), all copies lead back to the prototype: Christ’s visible characteristics: his morphé. To this end Theodore Studites writes:

Those things which do not have the same forms (character) have different kinds of veneration; but those, which have the same form also have one kind of veneration. The icon has one form with its prototype: therefore they have one veneration (Antirrheticus III, ch. 3, sect. 3, tr. Roth).

The passage explains how the shared character (likeness/form) imprinted on matter, allows for the shared veneration given to both prototype and copy.

Theodore promoted the perfect objective reciprocity between intaglio and imprint:

A seal is one thing, and its imprint is another. Nevertheless, even before the impression is made, the imprint (apomagma) is in the seal. There could not be an effective seal, which was not impressed on some material. Therefore Christ also, unless He appears in an artificial image, is in this respect ideal and ineffective (Antirrheticus III, ch. 4, sect. 9, tr. Roth).

If he who looks at the seal and its imprint sees a similar and unchanged form (eidos) in both, then the imprint (ekmagnéon) exists in the seal even before the impression is made. The seal shows its desire for honor when it makes itself available for impression in many different materials (Antirrheticus III, ch. 4, sect. 10, tr. Roth).

In both passages the legitimacy of the image is secured by the oneness of the morphé/charakter, shared and preserved unchanged in both the intaglio and its imprint. Veneration of the icon is based on relationship (skhesis); this is the indestructible, unbreakable, unalienable bond between copy and prototype, established through shared character/form:

We speak of relation inasmuch as the copy is in the prototype; one is not separated from the other because of this, except by the difference of essence. Therefore, since the image of Christ is said to have Christ’s form in its delineation; it will have one veneration with Christ, and not different veneration (Antirrheticus III, ch. 3, sect. 10, tr. Roth).

This non-essentialist relationship between icon and prototype propels Byzantine formalism. The latter rests on the shared morphé, thus preserving likeness, resemblance and granting validity to the man-made image. The mechanical imprinting (typosis) of morphé on a material surface, removed from human error and artist’s guile, defines the Byzantine icon as a seal: a typos, no longer a painting.

Although many synonyms for imprint are deployed in Theodore’s text (typos, ektypoma, ektopyosis, apomagma, apomaxis, enapomagma, aposophragisma, and ekmagneion) in order to explain the icon as impression of form (appearance), most significant in this assembly of words are those sharing the root ‘typos’: typos, ektyposis, ektypoma. Through typos the whole economy of the Byzantine icon comes into existence. The archetypos – Christ – is the prototype. The icon is the typos, the mechanically reproduced copy: the imprint of the morphé of the prototype on matter. The act of imprinting is the ektyposis.

By creating a typos-based theory of the image, Theodore in fact shifted the icon discourse away from the Incarnational economy. The latter explains how the pre-eternal divine could be emptied out in matter and time. Through the Incarnation, the carnal logos became the instrument of God’s plan for the Salvation of humankind. The Incarnational economy thus focused on the legitimacy of Christ’s morphé: the visible form (character as body and face) and thus answered why representation (the icon) was possible. By contrast, Theodore developed the ‘economy’ of the typos, and thus explained what made the icon legitimate. The discourse in Byzantine image theory thus shifted from John of Damascus and Patriarch Nikephoros, who legitimized Christ’s morphé, to Theodore Studites, who gave validity to the imprint of his morphé on matter, i.e. – the icon. The iconic as imprint is also present in the writings of Patriarch Nikephoros (b. ca. 750 – d. 828), but it does not form the dominant line of his discourse. He stated: "Painting (graphe) represents the corporeal shape of the one depicted, impressing (ektypoumai) its appearance (schema) and its form (morphé) and its likeness (emphereia)." The form (morphé) with its likeness and appearance is impressed like an intaglio on a material surface.

The Contested Ownership of Typos

The power of the typos-based iconic theory derives from the way it appropriates words previously tightly linked with the opposing Iconoclast arguments. Typos was associated with two legitimate material forms: the diagram God sent to Moses instructing him how to build and decorate the ark of the Covenant and the figure (ge-
neric copy) of the Life-giving Cross. By co-opting typos to explicate the legitimacy of the icon, Theodore neutralized and cancelled out the power of the Iconoclast argument.

The cross in the Iconoclast theory, referred to as typos or semeion, was given a prominent place in ecclesiastical spaces and Iconoclast discourse. The monumental mosaic cross in the apse of the Church of Hagia Eirene produced in the 740s offers a good example of the Iconoclast use of this symbol in the décor of the church. The legitimacy of the cross was based on the Ur-object: the Life-giving Cross sanctified by its contact with Christ’s body. The Iconoclast emperor Constantine V (741–775) wrote: “We bow down before the body. The iconoclast emperor Constantine V (741–775) produced in the 740s offers a good example of the Iconoclast definitions, Theodore fully expropriated the word typos, which signifies the generic imprint of the cross and bears likeness to the Life-giving Cross, so too in the model of Theodore Studites the icon deserves veneration because it bears the imprint of Christ’s likeness.

Likewise, as much is said about the representation (typos) of the cross as about the cross itself. Nowhere does Scripture speak about representation (typos) or image (eikon), since these have the same meaning, for it is illogical to expect such a mention, inasmuch as for us the effects are present in the power of the causes. Is not every image (eikon) a kind of a seal (typos) bearing in itself the proper appearance of that after which it is named? For we call the representation (apophragisma, ‘imprint’) ‘cross’ because it is also the cross, yet there are no two crosses, and we call the image (eikon) of Christ ‘Christ’, yet there are no two Christs (Antirrheticus, I.8, tr. Roth).

In this passage Theodore Studites sets the parallel between the typos (copy of the Cross) and the typos (the icon of Christ). Both are defined as impressions, imprints, sealings of the prototype. The typos as Cross is superseded by the typos as the icon. The same argument is repeated in Antirrheticus III, ch. 3, sects. 5–6 and ch. 4, sect. 7. In appropriating typos for his iconic theory, Theodore Studites emasculated the typos of the Iconoclast discourse.

The collapsing of the meaning of the typos to coincide with that of the icon marks the final stage of neutralizing Iconoclast terms, and transforming them into mainstream iconophile concepts. The Khleudov Psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum, MS gr. 129, fols. 4 and 86) of the mid-ninth-century presents two visual examples of Theodore Studites’ linguistic argumentation. In both the icon supersedes the typos of the cross.

The miniatures function as a New Testament interpretation of the psalms verses. They prophetically configure the coming of Christ. Yet, the prophecy is realized not just through the image of the cross, but the latter is superseded by the vision of the icon. The first miniature on fol. 4 shows king David pointing towards a medallion icon superimposed on a cross (Fig. 1). It illustrates Ps 4, 7: “The light of thy countenance, O Lord, has been manifested (esimeiothe) towards us.” The image interprets the meaning of the word semeion, the Iconoclast synonym for typos, the cross. The interpretation steers away from symbol and sign, and in the direction of the imprinted icon: an ektyposis shown as a medallion imprint of Christ’s morphe on metal. Icon and cross are unified in a new understanding of semeion: an iconic typos.

The second miniature carries a similar message (Fig. 2). It appears on fol. 86 and interprets Ps. 85, 17: “Establish with me a token for good; and let them that hate me see it, and be ashamed, because Thou, O Lord, has helped and comforted me.” Once again the contested word is semeion, originally linked to the Iconoclast Cross, but now co-opted in the Iconophile imprinted icon: the relief icon. The miniature display king David addressing a medallion icon set at the center of a monumental cross. The following inscription appears in the margin next to miniature: THE SIGN OF THE CROSS. The word semeion is thus again equated with the icon, not with the cross. If we invent a hypothetical Iconoclast psalm like this, its end would be a parenthesis and its beginning a tra-versonal copy. If the icon supersedes the typos, if the typos is a new understanding of the sign, then that sign is not the typos, but the icon. Should this be the case, it cannot be the case that the typos supersedes the icon as in Theodore Studites’ argument where the typos supersedes the icon.

25 “Ὄρα ποιήσεις κατὰ τὸν τόπον τοῦ δεδειγμένου σοι ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ” (Ex. 25, 40). Typos in this case is defined as the divinely sanctified image: the diagram or paradigm given to Moses.


28 Liddell, Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, under kharasso.

29 “Ἄγας σὺν ὑπὸ τῷ νέῳ Κωνσταντίῳ. Ἐτέρου χαράττει τὸν τρισσάπαντον, Καρχήμα παντω 提, ἐν πᾶλιν ἄντικόρων” (PG 99, col. 437 C).


31 Antirrheticus III, ch. 3, sect. 5, PG 99, col. 421D.
The Iconophile appropriation of the Cross into the icon. By collapsing the cross with the medallion, seal-like icon, a reciprocity is established between icon and sign. At the same time, the synonymy of *semeion* and *typos* allows one to activate the link between icon and *typos*. The latter leads to the devouring and assimilation of *typos* from the Iconoclast ‘cross’ into the iconophile ‘icon’. The legitimacy of the icon thus becomes established on the model of the imprint: the *typos*.

The *typos*-based iconic theory of Theodore Studies extricates the icon from the realm of artifice and artistic guise. These were the very accusations thrown against the icon. For instance, the Iconoclasts had separated *typos* from *graphe*. In 815 they set up a *typos/copy* of the Life-giving Cross on the Brazen Gates leading to the palace and surrounded it with poetic verses. These epigrams juxtaposed the artifice of the painted icon to the legitimacy of the *typos* of the cross. In one of these Iconoclast poems addressed to the Logos/Christ, we read: “You disown being pictured on the walls (toikhografeiasthai) here by means of material artifice, as clearly now as before. Behold, the great rulers have inscribed (enkharat-tousin) it as a victory-bringing figure (typos).” The legitimate imprint of the Cross is pitched against the artifice of painting: *typos* is set against *graphe*. Theodore Studies cancelled out this opposition and reversed the arguments. In his militant discourse in defense of icons he took over *typos* and interpreted it as the icon, thus re-invented the meaning of *graphe* to signify almost exclusive-relief: the imprint of intaglio on matter.

**The Christ Chalkites as a Relief Icon**

Theodore’s *typos*-based iconic theory acquired presence on the Bronze gates of the imperial palace. This became the battle-ground for the definition and control of *typos* when the Chalkites icon of Christ replaced the Iconoclast cross in 843. I have argued elsewhere that the Chalkites was a *typos*; a gilded bronze repoussé icon. The relief shape of this icon is attested in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* (written ca. 809). Here the object is defined with the word *charakter* (imprint, relief, and engraved surface). *Charakter* also appears in the description of the Chalkites in Theophanes’ *Chronographia* (early ninth century). In the *Patria* (a compilation of various sources on the topography of Constantinople edit.

37 “Νόμον δέδωκαν σταυρὸν ἐγγράφειν μόνον Ἀπαίσιος δὲ τεχνάσεις ὤλη ὑπὸ 
Τοιχογραφεῖθαι δέδον ὡς πρὸν ἐνθάδε. 
Ἰδοῦ γάρ αὐτὸν ὃι μέγιστον δεσπότα 
Ἐκ νικοποι ἔγχραττοιν τύπον” (PG 99, cols. 436B–437A). For the traduction cf. Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 94.
39 Vita Stephani Iunioris, bk. 10, in: La vie d’Etienne le Jeune par Eti- 
enne le Diacre, ed. and tr. M.-F. Auzépy, Aldershot 1997, 100.
40 Theophanes, *Chronographia* 1, ed. 1. Bekker, Bonn 1838, 623, tr. 
in: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near East-
41 C. Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Impe-
Berger has also translated the passage with ‘brons staty’. Yet, rely-
ing on the evidence of the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, he has sug-
gested that the original Chalke image was a bronze relief, which was 
replaced after 843 by a mosaic, cf. A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den 
44 For the Byzantine definition of both mimēsis and empsychos 
Слика или рељеф: идеална икона у византијским иконофилским списима

Бисера Пенчева

У тексту се разматра промена дефиниције иконе у византијској теорији слика, од идентификације graphe са сликом у списима Јована Дамаскина (око 675–754) до изједначавања graphe са typos-ом, схваћеним као отисак интаља у учењу Теодора Студита (759–826). Јован Дамаскин је иконе посматрао као слике рађене темпером на дрвеним таблама у натуралистичком стилу. Ипак, с временом је прихватљивост такве сликане представе доведена у питање. Њен реализам зависио је од људске вештине, а то је изазивало забринутост. Превише вештине уметника могло је створити лажан утисак божанског присуства, док би премало вештине могло проузроковати губитак сличности с обрасцем. Теодор Студит је сматрала икону као отисак, typos. Механички репродукована копија може пренети форму оригинала без утицаја људске вештине. Нова дефиниција иконе била је заснована на формулацијама иконокластичких расправа о крсту у којима је универзална копија Часног крста називана typos. Сакупљајући иконокластичке епиграме о крсту постављеном изнад главних врата Бронзане капије (Χαλκή) цариградске Велике палате, Теодор Студит је добро проучио иконокластички језик, али га је окренуо против његове суштине. Наиме, typos је у његовим списима, уместо копије Часног крста, постао икона, то јест механички репродукован изглед обрасца. Отеловљење нове теорије постала је славна икона Христа Халкитиса с Бронзане капије, која је подстакла стварање новог идеала – рељефне иконе од метала, емајла или слоноваче.

У савременој науци досад није уочена иконофилска теорија заснована на typos-у. Због тога није проучен утицај те теорије на настанак икона, иако је реч о могућности да се суштински измени наше познавање историје византијског иконописа. У том контексту веома је важна чињеница да је познато више рељефних него slikanih ikona iz Цариграда.