

The Worship of Saints in Greece between Popular Religion and Local Identity: A Case Study

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Abstract

In this paper we examine the contemporary conflict between the people of the Greek islands Samos and Kephallenia, about the cult of three saints of the 4th c. As part of the misconstruing of the hagiological texts regarding the saints, masses have been published and it has been maintained in a series of popularizing articles in newspapers that these saints are exclusively tied to Kephallenia. This has occurred, moreover, despite the fact that the worship of the three saints returned to Samos as early as 1996, on the initiative of Eusebios, Metropolitan of Samos and Ikaria. At the same time, in 2007, a church dedicated to the three military saints was built on Samos, whose inhabitants honour them as an indivisible part of Samian religious folk tradition. These adventures, so to speak, of the saints that have occurred in the Greece of today indicate the existence of an excessive piety, in that they show how historical research can suffer badly from localism of every kind. In any case, the three saints, in addition to the fact that as saints they are to be held in honour by all the faithful, belong both to Samos, where they were hermits and worked miracles through their relics, and to Kephallenia, where their relics rested for some time, on their way to Venice and where they also worked miracles. All other types of exclusiveness, so to speak, do not form part of the remit of academic research. Rather, they form the problems that characterise current religious life and pastoral practice in religious life in Greece today.

Keywords: Popular religion, cult, saints, Samos, Kephallenia.

Introduction

Hagiology is a branch of theology and history that investigates the lives of the saints from every aspect (PASCHOS 1995: 167-202. TSAMIS 1985: 30-32). The *synaxaria*, or *Lives of Saints*, however, are not, of course, historical texts and so their aim is not to transmit historical information, although they are historical sources. In this regard, the information that they offer is to be examined carefully and requires cross-checking and verification, before they can be used as evidence for the period in which they were written or with which they deal. Here, in what follows, we attempt such a critical reading regarding three lesser saints of the 4th c AD, who date to the reign of Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, namely, Gregorios, Theodoros and Leon.

The first source for these saints is their *synaxarion*, written in Latin by the Dominican monk Petros Calotius, of the late 13th and early 14th c and published by the Bollandists in 1743 in their series of *Acta Sanctorum (Acta Sanctorum Augusti 3*. Antwerp, 1743, p. 768-773. VARVOUNIS 1997-1998). Petrus de Natalibus also dealt with these saints in his work on Christian hagiology, published in Venice in 1516 (: 309, chap. CVIII). Lastly, references to these saints occur in various hagiological works, particularly those of the Roman Catholic church (VARVOUNIS 2010d: 154-156). Thus they are mentioned in the *Additiones Usuardinae*, published in Cologne in 1515, in the martyrs' lives of Witford, of 1526, and of Francesco Maurolycus, of 1568, in the catalogue of saints by Philippus Ferrarius and in the work of Petros Equilinus on Christian hagiology. Furthermore, the *synaxarion* in the *Acta Sanctorum*, published in 1749, was republished in the works of F. Corner, of 1749 (: 327-328), and of G. Cappelletti, of 1855 (: 140-145) on the history of the church in Venice. More recently, mention is also to be found in a work of 1999 by the present writer dealing with Samiot hagiology (VARVOUNIS 1997-1998: 261-263).

The Hagiological, Historical and Archaeological Evidence

Nevertheless, certain vital points regarding details of the life and passing away of the saints are missing and require clarification. This is because of the so-called hagiological myths, which, as Hippolyte Delehaye notes (DELEHAYE 1955: 10-15. DETORAKIS 1985 : 10), are to be discerned in various *synaxaria*, in just the same manner as folktale types exist, either on their own, or in conjunction with others, in fairytales and texts in the folk literature of various peoples.

The first major question relates to the place in which the saints pass away. The text from the *synaxarion* mentions Samos. The Bollandist, however, who makes introductory comments on the text ponders the three islands that in Classical and Hellenistic texts bear this name, namely, Samos, Samothrace and Kephallenia. Having rejected Samothrace, the commentator considers the two other islands and finally settles on Kephallenia. Thus the identification of the Samos in the *synaxarion* with Kephallenia arises from the Bollandist commentator, and not from the text itself.

The main argument in favour of this identification of the Samos of the text with Kephallenia, rather than being any reference in certain sources to Kephallenia also as Samos¹, is in fact a piece of topographical information offered by the *synaxarion* itself.

This states that opposite the Samos valley on the islands where the saints passed away is located the island of Thous, the site of the valley of the Compatres. The Bollandist editor of the text, who, of course, had no first-hand knowledge of the area and was reliant upon the sources to which he had access, identifies Thous with the island of Thoe, that is, with Ithaki, and the Compatres valley with the island, which lies near Kephallonia, of Volcompare or Valle di Compari > Vallis Compatrum > Comparum. Thus it is clear that, if these attempts at identification can be refuted, then the identification of the 'Samos' of the *synaxarion* with Kephallenia is also to be doubted or refuted. Furthermore, if it can be ascertained that this geographical information belongs to another compositional phase of the *synaxarion*, then doubt is cast upon both the geographical and topographical reliability of the text itself and upon attempts to locate the action in Kephallenia, where the Bollandist commentator and editor of the *synaxarion* wished to locate it.

It is tempting to identify Thous with the ancient city of Teos, on the Asia Minor coast opposite Samos (KALPHOGLOU 2002: 70, 123-124), or the Compatres valley with the *Livadi ton Kalogeron* ('Meadow of the Monks'), in the north of Patmos (PHLORENTIS 1980: 85, 90, 120), that is, the *Koilada ton Pateron* ('Valley of the Fathers')². It would seem, however, that the solution to the problem is not so simple and that in fact one is confronted here with various phases in the composition of the text of the *synaxarion*, which follow the history and fortunes of the remains of St. Grigorios, St. Theodors and St. Leon.

The Bollandist editor, however, remarks that Petrus Equilinus notes that the relics of Grigorios and Theodoros were at some point transported to Venice and deposited in the monastery of St. Zaharias. Equilinus is followed by Ferrarius, who, presumably from oversight, adds that the remains of Leon were also deposited in the monastery, although it would seem that they in fact remained for some time on Samos Fr. Maurolycus, Philippus Ferdinandus Ughellus and Janningus also follow Equilinus, although Janningus confuses the relics of Grigorios with those of Gregory of Nazianzos. He thereby reproduces the mistaken identification that was probably a commonplace for Venetians of the time. Equilinus is also followed by Petrus de Natalibus, on whom later, in 1886, Epameinondas Stamatziades (: 170-171. VARVOUNIS 1997-1998: 256-257) also relied. Stamatziades states that the relics of Grigoris and of Theodoros were transported to Venice, whilst those of Leon remained on Samos until the end of the 14th c. (P. de NATALIBUS 1519: 309).

It would seem that the answer to our problem is to be found in the matter of how the relics were transported. The three saints are honoured today on Kephallonia as the 'Holy Ones Who Have Become Manifest' and, in fact, as 'martyrs', in a monastery in the area of Same, (TSITSELIS 1960 : 374 ff. TSITSELIS 1877 : 8. KAVVADIAS 1997: 34)³. The first reference to this worship on Kephallonia is dated to 1264 and is found in the *Praktiko tis Latinikis Episkopis tis Kephallenias* ('Records of the Latin Bishopric of Kephallenia'). It is also found in the *Epitome* of the *Praktiko*, written in 1677, in which the three saints are recorded as being 'neophaneis' ('newly appeared') (TZANETATOS 1965: 46, l. 241 - 96, l. 1059). On Kephallenia itself, there are icons depicting the saints, the oldest of them being dated to 1654 (TSITSELIS 1960: 375. KAVVADIAS 1997: 36) and they have been constantly worshipped and honoured there, whilst the monastery is mentioned by various foreign travellers who visited the island (ANTZOULATOS 1994: 279-291. ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 48)⁴.

According to popular tradition on Kephallenia, firmly stressed in various sources and records, a miracle was responsible for the discovery of the relics of the three saints in a cave on the hill of Avlochori (PARTS 1892: 175), in the

¹ Regarding this confusion, see also *Acta Sanctorum Januarii* 3, p. 554, *Acta Sanctorum Septembris* 8, p. 654 n e, *Acta Sanctorum Septembris* 1, p. 150, n. 5 and SOUSTAL – KODER 1981: 254.

² P. G. KRITIKOS, *Πατριακά τοπωνύμια*, in *Δωδεκανησιακόν Αρχαίον*, 2 (1956), p. 109-110; D. KALLIMACHIS, *Πατριακής Βιβλιοθήκης Συμπλήρωμα*, in *Εκκλησιαστικός Φάρος*, 12 (1913), p. 536.

³ P. ANINOS-KAVALIERATOS, *Η μονή Αγίων Φανέντων*, in *Η Κεφαλονίτικη Πρόοδος*, 55 (1976), p. 10.

⁴ Which gathers the arguments used in the past by Fr. Antzoulatos, who believes that the saints are to be linked with Kephallenia alone.

area of Same, and that the saints were monks and perhaps related to each other, possibly being father and two sons⁵. The relics were later stolen from Same, put on board a ship with the aim of transporting them to the west, although the ship sank ‘before Cape Pagana of Fiskardo’ (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 186.). Fr. Giorgios Antzoulatos makes various conjectures regarding the identity of this stretch of coast and settles upon the shoreline at Giagana, on the route to Fiskardo (LYKOUDIS 1930: 301). He then proceeds to offer various thoughts on the historical basis of this tradition and concludes that ‘these (that is, the relics) will be found in some crypt, perhaps, or some church in western Europe, where it is most likely that they are located’ (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 187. PAPAIOANNOU 2010: 10).

What emerges from all this is that the popular tradition of worship on Kephallenia regarding the matter is mistaken and involves problems. It is ignorant of the true identity of the saints and of the relationship between them and their particular character. Moreover, it links the discovery of their relics with the cave, where they were supposedly ‘hidden’ and it is ignorant of the fate of their relics, which today, naturally, are not located on the island (ANTZOULATOS 2019: 121-156)⁶. It is obvious that the Kephallenian tradition is ignorant of the saints’ *synaxarion* and the details involved. What, then, has happened and how are all these details and contradictions to be combined and interpreted?

If one considers the information offered by the sources and views them in combination with historical and archaeological data, one is in fact led to conclude that the island where the saints passed away is Samos, rather than Kephallenia. The ancient city of Samos is located in the southeast of the island of Samos. It was capital of the island until the early Byzantine period and is today’s Pythagorio. The whole of this valley is frequently referred to as ‘Samos’ in the sources (LAUFFER 1989: 599-605. MÜLLER 1987: 1008-1009), as it is by the *synaxarion*. In this area, towards the heights that rise above it, where the so-called ‘Tunnel of Eupalinos’ and the monastery of the Virgin of the Cave are located, there was for centuries thick and extensive scrub, until the fires of the twenty years between 1980 and 2000, which denuded the area of vegetation. Furthermore, this was the site, at the foot of the hill, since ancient times of the Glyphada marshes. Here, in the past, grew reeds and the thick vegetation usually found in marshy areas, until the development of tourism led to the clearance of a large part of this vegetation. It was in this area, then, not far from the part of the coastline where, according to the *synaxarion*, the saints disembarked, that they found the remains of the ancient temple of Artemis⁷, which is where the saints then remained, to pass away in sanctity.

At this point, at the edge of the marsh, within the limits of the early Christian cemetery of the Panayitsa (‘Little Virgin’), archaeological research has revealed the ruins of a Christian martyr’s shrine, where three empty and plundered sarcophagi were found (TSAKOS 1998: 28-29, 33-36). It is highly likely that it was here that the *archon* Michael of the *synaxarion*, having been miraculously cured of the leprosy that was tormenting him, laid to rest with full religious honours the remains of the three saints that as a consequence of a vision he had discovered in the scrub, where they had passed away. It was also he who wrote their first *synaxarion* (STADLER 1869: 744. STADLER 1966: 403). These details are to be found in the Latin *synaxarion* produced by the Bollandists

In view of these attempts at identification and given that the Kephallenian tradition is so inadequate, it is, I think, clear that the island where the relics originally lay is to be identified as Samos, despite the opposing view of the Bollandist commentator and editor. On the other hand, Kephallenia, too, is most certainly linked to the three saints at a secondary level. As is well-known, during the Crusades, particularly the Fourth, many religious relics were stolen and carried off from the Orthodox East to the Catholic West (SAINTYVES 1931: 494 ff. PASCHOS 1995: 150-153. TSAMIS 1985: 72-75). Thus it would seem that during the first half of the 13th c., the relics of Grigorios and Theodoros, too, were stolen from Samos, since the relics of Leon had very probably already been moved from their original place⁸.

⁵ G. APOSTOLATOS, *To ερειπωμένο μοναστήρι των Αγ. Φανέντων Σάμης, Κεφαλονίτικος και Θιακός Λόγος*, 71 (1995), p. 8; G. PH. ANTZOULATOS, *Οι Φανέντες άγιοι μάρτυρες στην Κεφαλονία*, in *Κεφαλληνιακά Χρονικά* 8 (1999), *Αφιέρωμα στον Γιώργο Γ. Αλισανδράτο*, p. 180-181.

⁶ G. PH. ANTZOULATOS, *Άγιοι Φανέντες*, in *Λόγος Κεφαλλήνων και Ιθακησίων*, 91 (1997), p. 5.

⁷ K. TSAKOS, *Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα Αθηνών* 13 (1980), p. 305-318.

⁸ The remains of St. Grigorios and of St. Theodoros were deposited beneath the altar of the *katholikon* of the monastery of St. Zaharias in Venice, in the same *ciborium* as the relics of the father of St. John the Baptist. See TSAKOS 1989: 35. STAMATIADIS (: 171) believes that the remains of St. Leon remained on Samos until 14th c. In the *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis* 3, op. cit., p. 610 (cf. *supra*, n. 9), it is stated that the relics of St. Leon were transported to Venice in 1124. This view is accepted by A. SCHNEIDER, *Samos in frühchristlicher und byzantinischer Zeit*, in *Athenische Mitteilungen* 54 (1929), p. 99. This, however, probably refers to the transporting of the relics of Leon, bishop of Samos, rather than to St. Leon, as is explained below (n. 35).

Kephallenia was one of the points on the route by which such relics were carried to the west, where they usually ended up in some collection (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 187-188). In 1087, the ship bearing the relics of St. Nicholas from Myra, in Lycia, to Bari in Italy, put in to port in the area of Same⁹. In 1122, Doge Domenico Micheli transported the relics of St. Donatus from Lefkada to Venice, via Kephallenia (MACHAIRAS 1957, p. 365). These two cases, to which the sources bear witness, indicate the existence of a ‘relic route’, as it were, from the east to the west, with Kephallenia as an intermediate stop. The same route was followed by the relics of two of the three military saints of Samos and it was very probably then that the shipwreck mentioned by Kephallenian folk tradition occurred in the Giagana bay, on the north-eastern coast of Kephallenia, on the route from Same to Fiskardo, the northernmost port on Kephallenia.

Thanks to the shipwreck, the relics remained for some time on Kephallenia. They were kept in the cave to start with, where the Christians of the area mistakenly believed that they had been discovered. Thus the narrative regarding the supposed discovery of the relics in a cave became linked to the story of the three saints, who as early as 1264 were termed *neophaneis* (‘newly appeared’)¹⁰. That is, they were initially unknown on Kephallonia and then became *phanentes* (‘manifest’). In other words, they became known to the folk-tradition of the island, which was previously ignorant of them. The word *phanentes* does not necessarily mean that the saints were previously concealed. Rather, it indicates that immediately after the shipwreck and the salvaging and bringing ashore of the relics, the saints became known to the popular religious awareness and practices of the people of Kephallenia (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 200-201), very probably also thanks to some tradition regarding the miraculous powers of their relics. Those who were transporting the relics knew the identity of the saints and so on Kephallenia there would have been talk of three saints, although in the end the relics of only two of the three saints stolen from Samos ended up on Kephallenia. Out of the narratives concerned, which those who were transporting the relics themselves had heard on Samos, was formed the Cephallonian folk tradition regarding the three military saints, which, for this reason, was vague and historically somewhat inaccurate. Indeed, this process explains the inaccuracies of the Cephallonian tradition and its failure to agree with that in the saints’ *synaxarion*.

This is perhaps the point at which we should offer an explanation regarding the relics of St. Leon. In the present article, in general terms we accept the information offered by the sources that the relics of St. Leon remained for some time on Samos and were then transported to Venice in 1124 or during the 14th c.

What is certain is that in Venice today there are the relics of St. Grigorios and of St. Theodoros alone. Thus the remains of St. Leon either remained on Samos and were lost or were transported to some other destination, without this being mentioned in the surviving sources, or they were indeed transported to Venice and were lost there or remain forgotten in some church in Venice or the surrounding area. It is not at all impossible that the three sets of relics were transported together from Samos and that those of St. Leon were lost during the shipwreck, so that in the end only two sets of relics survived on Kephallenia, as did, however, the living memory of three saints, in the same way just as it had been heard by those who had been transporting the saints on Samos. The state of the sources allows only speculation at this point.

Later, after their temporary sojourn on Kephallenia, the relics were transported to Venice, where they are preserved today, although the relics of St. Leon remain hidden to this day¹¹. At the same time, on Kephallenia a popular hagiological tradition emerged, as usually happens in such cases throughout the Greek world (LOUKATOS 1978: 151-

⁹ ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 188 n. 53. D. RIGAKOS, *Η μονή των αγίων Φανέντων Σάμης και οι τοιχογραφίες του ναού του αγίου Νικολάου*, in G. MOSCHOPOULOS (ed.), *Κεφαλονιά ένα μεγάλο μουσείο. Εκκλησιαστική τέχνη*, Argostoli, 1996, p. 243.

¹⁰ TH. TZANNETATOS, *Η τοπογραφία της Κεφαλληνίας από το Πρακτικόν του 1264 και την Επιτομήν αυτού*, in *Αθηνά*, 65 (1961), p. 180. Cp. N. G. MOSCHONAS, *Φοροδοτικός πίνακας της Κεφαλονιάς του 1678*, in *Δελτίον της Ιονίου Ακαδημίας*, 1 (1977), p. 111.

¹¹ The fate of the relics of St. Leon are dealt with above. Here, however, one should note that TSAKOS 1989: 35 identifies the third military saint, St. Leon, with the personage referred to as Leon, Bishop of Samos. [STAMATIADIS 1886: 177. VARVOUNIS 1997-1998: 263-264. CORNEL 1749: 91. CAPPELETI 1855: 78-79. M. LE QUIEN 1740: l. 929], whose feast falls in April and of whom it is reported that his remains, too, were transported to Venice. He identifies St. Leon with the bishop, on the grounds that “there cannot exist two saints of the same name on Samos.” The subject seems to me still probably a matter for further research, although I do not think it probable that Bishop Leon is to be identified with the military saint Leon.

157. ROMAÏOS 1980: 135-137). Such traditions, however, are most certainly not to be regarded as reliable historical sources.

The saints continued independently to be worshipped on Kephallenia¹², whilst on Samos, thanks to the various adventures undergone by island in terms of history and population, they were no longer the object of worship. It is in this context that the icons, the masses and the religious tradition concerned are to be placed. This latter is comprehensively described by Fr. Georgios Antzoulatos, although he is not aware of the saints' *synaxarion* (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 196-197) and identifies our three saints with the saints mentioned in the *synaxarion*. It is here that the reasons for the many hypotheses that the *synaxarion* propounds and for the various obscurities centring on the three military saints are to be found. We will recur to these matters below. Naturally, the reports given by the fair number of foreign travellers who visited the monastery of the saints, such as Leake, Stackelberg, Warsberg, Riemann, Biedermann, and Partsch¹³, reproduce the local tradition that these travellers heard on Kephallenia and are no indication of the origin of the saints or of the fate of their relics. Furthermore, in the translation of other miracle-working relics of saints as well, such as that of St. Nicholas from Myra to Bari, mentioned above, local cults and religious customs are instituted in the places through which the relics passed, as Loukatos showed (LOUKATOS 1973: 1307-1317).

The evidence of the Names

The second part of the problem involving the three military saints, St. Grigorios, St. Theodoros and St. Leon, is connected with the linkage of the Cephallonian worship of the saints to earlier cultic traditions on Kephallenia. In the past, Amilkas Alivizatos (A. ALIVIZATOS, *Η θρησκευτικότητα και οι άγιοι της Επτανήσου*, in *Νέα Εστία* (1964), p. 41; Idem, *Κεφαλληνιακή θρησκευτικότητα*, in *Ηώς*, 58-60 (1962), p. 30 and n. 1) made a connection between the title *hagioi Phanentes* ('Manifest Saints') and the information given in the sources that in the area, during 2nd c AD, the heretic Epiphanes was worshipped in the area. Mention of this local cultic tradition is found in Clement of Alexandria (AD 150 – 215) (Epiphanes was a gnostic dating to the early years of Christianity DE FAYE 1925: 413-419. CHRISTOU 1964: 799. PAPAPOPOULOS 1977: 187. TORHOUDT 1963: 61. LEISEGANG, *La Gnosis* 1927: 47) and indeed the monastery of the 'Manifest Saints' is located in the same area, perhaps on the very spot where the church of the heretic Epiphanes stood (*Βιβλιοθήκη Ελλήνων Πατέρων και Εκκλησιαστικών Συγγραφέων*, vol. 8, Athens, 1956, p. 12. LOUKATOS 1946: 19 n. 4. AVOURIS 1966: 29. ZERVOS-IAKOVATOS 1861: 49. MILIARAKIS 1890: 224). Fr. Georgios Antzoulatos doubts whether this is the case (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 199-200), although it is a general rule that the Christians usually built on top of pre-existing churches and shrines. This is because the new religion wished to sanctify, as it were, older sacred sites and because, in semiological terms, it wanted to make it clear that Christianity had completely replaced all previous religions. In this context, there could be no more suitable spot for the foundation of a church dedicated to the new saints who had appeared on the island after the shipwreck than the old church of the heretic Epiphanes. Thus his memory would be forgotten, since it would be absorbed into the tradition regarding the new saints and the new saints themselves would enjoy a solid foundation of faith and popular religious concepts in order to consolidate their spiritual and cultic domination of the area.

Linguistically speaking, a convincing explanation for the origin of the title of the saints may be as follows: 'Επιφάνης' > 'επιφανής' > 'φανής' > 'φανείς' (sc. 'άγιος', homophone) > 'φανέντες' (sc. 'άγιοι'). If this is accepted, it does not imply, however, that the saints did not exist, as some scholars have maintained in the past (A. ALIVIZATOS, *Η θρησκευτικότητα και οι άγιοι της Επτανήσου*, in *Νέα Εστία* (1964), p. 41. Idem, *Κεφαλληνιακή θρησκευτικότητα*, in *Ηώς*, 58-60 (1962), p. 30) and we have already looked at matters concerning their existence and their history over time. Nevertheless, this linguistic correlation indicates that perhaps the tradition regarding Epiphanes may have been responsible for the absorption of his traditional worship into that of the saints. It may have been because of this that they acquired the title of *phanentes*, which led to the later creation of the Kephallenian tradition regarding the supposed discovery of their relics in this spot, so as to justify their title. It should not be forgotten that the relics ended up on Kephallenia very probably after a shipwreck and that relatively little information existed as to their identity, with the result that the inhabitants of Kephallenia were compelled to invent a tradition to justify the existence and possible

¹² A. SCHNEIDER, *Samos in frühchristlicher und byzantinischer Zeit*, p. 98 n. 2 is of the view that the tradition and the narrative of the *synaxarion* relates to Same, on Kephallenia. He thus follows the view of the Bollandist editor and commentator on the *synaxarion*.

¹³ ANTZOULATOS 1994: 285, with the testimonia analytically presented and bibliography. Cp. P. OIKONOMOU-MOSCHONA, *Παλιοί περιηγητές στην Κεφαλονιά*, in *Κεφαλονίτικη Πρόοδος*, 3:25 (1974), p. 16.

miraculous powers of the relics. Moreover, such aetiological traditions exist in Greek folk tradition¹⁴, whilst names and nicknames of saints who either do not exist or are wrongly identified (DIMITROKALIS 1999-2000: 381-398) around met with in the traditional religious behaviour in various areas of the Greek world.

Thus the title, rather than the existence, of the saints would seem to be directly related to the tradition regarding Epiphanes and it is highly likely that the traditions concerned evolved later, to justify this title. The description of the saints as ‘newly manifest’ (*neophaneis*)¹⁵ in 1264, in the *Praktiko tis Latinikis Episkopis tis Kephallenias* (TZANNETATOS 1965: 46, 96) seems to convey the core of the matter more faithfully than anything else.

Local Identity and Popular Religiosity

Fr. Georgios Antzoulatos, in a piece published in the local Samiot press, has expressed doubts regarding the link between the three military saints and Samos (ANTZOULATOS 2004: 3). In recent years, the Metropolitan of Samos and Ikaria, Eusebios, has instituted a feast in honour of the Samiot saints, which takes place on the first weekend of August. Thus, as is natural, the saints Grigorios, Theodoros and Leon are also celebrated (PAPALIS 1967: 35. KLEIDONIARI 1997: 35-37). The Metropolitan in fact visited Venice at the head of a pilgrimage made by the Samiots and requested pieces of the two surviving sets of relics in Venice, in order for the Samiots to return them to Samos. Fr. Georgios Antzoulatos, however, is of a different view. He believes that the relics should be returned to Kephallenia, where, according to the local folk tradition, mistaken though it is, as we have demonstrated above, supposedly the saints passed away.

From everything that has been said in this paper, the facile nature of Fr. Antzoulatos’ assertion is, I believe, clear. The fact that on Kephallenia the worship of the saints is still alive, whilst it has been forgotten on Samos, cannot be used as evidence, since the Kephallenian tradition is both more recent, dating to after 1264, and deficient, for it shows no connection with the saints’ *synaxarion*, it is ignorant of the conditions of the life and passing away of the saints, it imagines that the saints were related and were martyrs, although they were not, and it is ignorant of matters pertaining to the discovery of the relics and of the very date on which their memory is celebrated, which is defined exactly by the text of the *synaxarion*. Fr. Antzoulatos himself refers several times to the supposed ‘absence of a compiler of a *synaxarion*’ (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 197), although, of course, the *synaxarion* exists. Thus he offers arguments to the effect that the saints were genuine and existed, accompanied by historical and theological arguments, although this is not in the slightest necessary.

At the end of his study, Fr. Antzoulatos proceeds to make some suggestions regarding the recognition and ‘notification throughout the Orthodox world’ (ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 202-204) regarding the worship of the saints, on the basis, of course, of Kephallenia. However, in the light of what has been ascertained above in this paper, this suggestion has no real point, since the link between the three saints and Kephallenia is more recent, secondary and somewhat nebulous. The saints, however, are part of universal human reality and should be honoured by Christians everywhere and, naturally, the fact that they enjoy worship today on Kephallenia cannot, of course, be simply written off.

For these reasons, the suggestion that the saints should be recorded in the *List of Saints* should be amended, so that it takes into account the circumstances of their life, of their saintly passing away and the fate of their relics after their death. Thus celebration of the memory of ‘our holy fathers Grigorios, Theodoros and Leon, confessors, who passed away in Samos and became manifest in Kephallenia¹⁶, should be made formal, to be celebrated on 14 September, in accord with their *synaxarion*, both in the church dedicated to them that already exists at Same and in their church that is to be built on Samos. In fact, Fr. Antzoulatos recently returned to the subject, as the author of a popularizing piece (ANTZOULATOS 2005a: 17-18. VARVOUNIS 2010a: 4). In this short text, he attacks the idea of linking the three military saints to Samos and casts doubt on all the arguments involved, without, however, offering any bibliographical

¹⁴ PH. KOUKOULES, *Αγίων επίθετα*, in *Ημερολόγιον της Μεγάλης Ελλάδος* (1931), p. 392.

¹⁵ VAR. ARCHONTONIS, Metropolitan of Philadelphia (now Ecumenical Patriarch Bartolomios I), *Νεοφανείς αστέρες του νοητού στερεώματος*, in *Επιστημονική Παρουσία Εστίας Θεολόγων Χάλκης*, 1 (1987), p. 237, where the definition of a ‘newly appeared’ saint is also given.

¹⁶ ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 204. PAPALIS 1967: 36 is of the view that their memory was celebrated on 11 September and that on 24 August the memory of St. Leon was celebrated separately. Here he is clearly conflating Leon, Bishop of Samos with the other Leon, in a confusion that we have dealt with above. This he does, despite the explicit references in the *synaxarion*, which is given in translation in the appendix to the present work. In Kephallenia the three military saints are celebrated on All Saints’ Sunday. See ANTZOULATOS 2005b: 193-196.

references, except for the publication of the Latin *synaxarion*. He repeats the same arguments and forgets to state that in his earlier publications on the topic he is unaware of the existence of the saints' *synaxarion*. He also forgets to mention the point that the Cephallonian folk tradition regarding the saints is defective. He does not, for example, mention that the tradition imagines the saints to be martyrs, although they are not, and so does not mention that the tradition is also unreliable (VARVOUNIS 2005a: 23-24 [= *Μεταμόρφωσις* 12: 131 (2007), p. 38-39]). This piece by Fr. Anzoulatos, although it offers no argument in support of the existence of an unambiguous link between the three saints and Kephallenia alone, nevertheless weakens his position, in that it rests upon a defensive approach and the piece, rather than contributing to any interpretation of the hagiological texts, constitutes an ecclesiastical proclamation in printed form.

Conclusion

As part of the misconstruing of the hagiological texts regarding the saints, masses have been published¹⁷ and it has been maintained in a series of popularizing articles in newspapers that these saints are exclusively tied to Kephallenia. This has occurred, moreover, despite the fact that the worship of the three saints returned to Samos as early as 1996, on the initiative of Eusebios, Metropolitan of Samos and Ikaria (VARVOUNIS 2010c: 5). At the same time, in 2007, a church dedicated to the three military saints was built on Samos (VARVOUNIS 2007a: 9. VARVOUNIS 2007a: 5), whose inhabitants honour them as an indivisible part of Samian religious folk tradition.

These adventures, so to speak, of the saints that have occurred in the Greece of today indicate the existence of an excessive piety, in that they show how historical research can suffer badly from localism of every kind (VARVOUNIS 2006: 3. VARVOUNIS 2005b: 1, 3. VARVOUNIS 1997: 3). In any case, the three saints, in addition to the fact that as saints they are to be held in honour by all the faithful, belong above all to Samos, where they were hermits and worked miracles through their relics. They belong secondarily to Kephallenia, where their relics rested for some time, on their way to Venice and where they also worked miracles. All other types of exclusiveness, so to speak, do not form part of the remit of academic research. Rather, they form the problems that characterise current religious life and pastoral practice in religious life in Greece today.

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¹⁷ A mass with similar contents was published by the Holy Metropolis of Glyphada. See TSAOUSOGLOU 2010: 10. However, in the *Ασματική ακολουθία πάντων των προστατών αγίων της Εκκλησίας της Σάμου*, composed by Fr. Nikodimos Aerakis and published by the Holy Metropolis of Samos and Ikaria in 2000 and approved by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece in 1999 (Church document with protocol no. 2314 / 28 September 1999) the three saints of Samos are honoured and at many points are referred to as 'saints of Samos'. VARVOUNIS 2010b: 4.

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