

# AKRITAN IKONOGRAPHY ON BYZANTINE POTTERY

(PLATE 22)

THE longevity of the Greek tradition, which extends from the days of Mycenae to modern Greece, is such that we can see in it certain recurrent patterns. One of the most interesting is the refraction of the κλέα ἀνδρῶν in oral poetry and on the surface of painted pottery. The Geometric, Protoattic, Black-and Red-figured vases are filled with figures of the heroic age of Greece which also find expression in the oral poetry of Homer and the Cyclic epics. Thus vases no less than the epic are a medium for the expression of the heroic spirit. The student of the Greek tradition would have considered this interrelationship of pottery and the epic a classical phenomenon had not the excavations of the American School of Classical Studies in Corinth and Athens uncovered a counterpart in the Byzantine period.<sup>1</sup> The reward for Professor Morgan, Miss Frantz and others, who have catalogued and studied this Byzantine pottery, is a major contribution to our knowledge of the Byzantine epic of Digenes Akritas.

That Byzantium had a brilliant period in the epic is only a relatively recent discovery.<sup>2</sup> This epic is centered on Digenes Akritas, the Byzantine frontier hero of the ninth or tenth century who outgrew historicity and enmeshed in myth emerges as a fusion of Achilles, Herakles, and Alexander. This epic has both an oral and literary expression. The Akritan oral cycle begins, as far as our information shows, in the tenth century. A scholium by Bishop Arethas of Caesarea (850-932) on a passage in Philostratos' *Life of Apollonios of Tyana* speaks of "wandering beggars, like the cursed Paphlagonians, who now make up songs about adventures of famous men and sing them for pennies from door to door."<sup>3</sup> These famous men of adventure are Digenes, Andronikos, Armouropoulos, Konstantas, Theophylaktos and others whose historical identification has been the concern of such Akritan scholars as Polites,

<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Morgan, II, *Corinth, XI: The Byzantine Pottery*, Cambridge, Mass., 1942; F. O. Waagé, "The Roman and Byzantine Pottery," *Hesperia*, II, 1933, pp. 308-328; M. A. Frantz, "Middle Byzantine Pottery in Athens," *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, pp. 429-467; "Digenes Akritas: A Byzantine Epic and its Illustrations," *Byzantion*, XV, 1940-1941, pp. 87-91; and "Akritas and the Dragons," *Hesperia*, X, 1941, pp. 9-13. I am indebted to Prof. H. S. Robinson, Director of the American School of Classical Studies, for making available to me and giving permission to publish photographs of several Akritas fragments from the Corinth Excavations 1959-1960, and to Miss Theodora Stillwell (Mrs. Pierre MacKay) who prepared brief notes on these fragments.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent survey cf. J. Mavrogordato, *Digenes Akrites*, Oxford, 1956, Introduction, pp. xi-lxxxiv; Δημ. Α. Πετροπούλου, 'Ελληνικά Δημοτικά Τραγούδια, Α', Athens, 1958, pp. ιη-κδ'.

<sup>3</sup> Σ. Β. Κουγέα, Αἱ ἐν τοῖς σχολίοις τοῦ Ἀρέθα λαογραφικαὶ εἰδήσεις, Λαογραφία Δ', 1912-1913, pp. 239-240. For other early reference to these bards, cf. Γ. Κ. Σπυριδάκη, Ποιηταὶ δημῶδων ἀσμάτων εἰς Τραπεζοῦνα, Ἀρχαῖον Πόντον, XVI, 1951, pp. 263-266.

Kyriakides, Grégoire, Baud-Bovy and others.<sup>4</sup> The earliest text of these ballads goes back to the fifteenth or sixteenth century and one of them, dated in the middle of the seventeenth century, is found with musical text in *codex Athous Iber. 1203* from the monastery of Iviron on Mt. Athos.<sup>5</sup> The oral ballads about these frontier heroes, which have continued to be sung uninterruptedly in Asia Minor, the Greek islands, Cyprus and on the Greek mainland, began to be collected by folklorists in the late nineteenth century. At once it became evident that these ballads had influenced the klephtic ballads of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were the source of many folksongs of Greece. An historical accident added to our knowledge of them. After the exchange of minority populations between Greece and Turkey in 1922 folklorists recognized in these ballads, collected from the refugees of Pontus and Cappadocia, where the Akritan ballads were born, the same themes as were sung in the Akritan ballads in the mainland, the Dodecanese, Crete and Cyprus. Their origin was traced by folklorists to the frontier provinces of the Byzantine empire and the probable stages of their diffusion delineated. The oral transmission of the Akritan cycle for a thousand years has made it for students of Homeric oral poetry a laboratory for a comparative study of the epic technique of oral composition.<sup>6</sup>

The literary phase of the Byzantine epic begins sometime in the middle of the eleventh century when a poet, probably a monk, wrote the original *Digeneid* from which are derived the various manuscripts of the literary epic, such as the Grottaferata (XIV c.), Andros (XVI c.), Escorial (XVI c.), Trebizond (XVI c.), Oxford (1670). In addition, there are one prose version in Greek (Paschales, MS., 1632), two in Russian (Speransky, MS., XVIII c., Kuzmina, MS., 1761). The oldest of these and closest to the original is the Grottaferrata.<sup>7</sup> All of these versions are the products of written literature with the exception of the Escorial which is an oral poem in the dialect of Crete, based on a literary prototype but probably recorded by dictation in the sixteenth century. All of these versions were only discovered in the nineteenth century. The relation of the oral and the literary versions of this epic has become a literary problem of almost the nature of the Homeric question.<sup>8</sup> Scholars differ on the interrelation of the ballads and the literary epic. The scholium of Arethas settles the question of the priority of the ballads but whether the literary epic grew from the

<sup>4</sup> For a bibliography cf. H. Grégoire, *Ὁ Διγενὴς Ἀκρίτας*, New York, 1942, pp. 295-299; Π. Π. Καλονάρον, *Διγενὴς Ἀκρίτας*, Athens, 1941, I, pp. μ'-μθ'; D. C. Swanson, *Modern Greek Studies in the West, A Critical Bibliography*, New York, 1960, no. 118-126, 153, 654-689.

<sup>5</sup> B. Bouvier, *Δημοτικά Τραγούδια ἀπὸ χειρόγραφο τῆς Μονῆς τῶν Ἱβήρων*, Athens, 1960, pp. 11, no. 4 and pp. 31-33; J. Leatham and E. Wellesz, "Early Folk-music from Mount Athos," *The Listener*, Nov. 19, 1959, pp. 877, 883.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. A. Notopoulos, Introduction to Album, "Modern Greek Heroic Oral Poetry," Ethnic Folkways Library, FE-4468, New York, 1959, pp. 3-33.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, pp. xv-xxvi.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Καλονάρον, *op. cit.*, I, pp. λγ'-λζ'; Πετροπούλου *op. cit.*, pp. ιθ'-κδ'.

oral ballads like the literary *Kalevala* or the oral ballads, as we have them, have the literary epic as their source is still *sub indice*. The most recent study of the Akritan epic by Professor Mavrogordato comes out for complete independence of one genre from the other.<sup>9</sup> The ikonography on the Byzantine plates from Athens and Corinth will not solve this problem but will throw new light on their relationship.

Our ikonography of the Akritan epic begins in the twelfth century, perhaps contemporary with the source of the Grottaferrata manuscript and surely with the ballads, as we shall see. Our only source of information on the Akritan epic in the twelfth century comes from the poet Theodore Prodromos who hails the emperor Michael Komnenos (who died in 1180) as

τὸν πολεμάρχον τὸν στερρόν, τὸν νέον τὸν Ἀκρίτην <sup>10</sup>  
the mighty warrior, the new Akritas.

In denouncing some glutton abbots he also prays for the appearance of some Akritas, armed with a club,

ὦ τις Ἀκρίτης ἕτερος ἐκεῖ νὰ εὐρέθῃ τότε  
καὶ τὰς ποδέας του νὰ ἔμψηξῃ, νὰ ἐπῆρῃ τὸ ῥαβδὶν του  
καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἐσυνέτριψεν τοὺς παλαμναίους μίσσους <sup>11</sup>

O would that some new Akritas were found then  
To tuck his pleats, to take up his club  
And shatter these old gluttons.

In the latter passages Prodromos gives a clue for the source of his reference. The phrase *καὶ τὰς ποδέας του νὰ ἔμψηξῃ*, “to tuck in his pleats” comes from the Grottaferrata or its source. In G., IV, 116 Digenes is described as

καὶ τὰς ποδέας ὀχυρῶς πῆξας εἰς τὸ ζωνάρι  
fastened his kilts up firmly in his belt,

a line which is repeated in IV, 1058. There is no mention of this detail in the ballads. These lines are triply valuable for they tell us (1) the early popularity of Akritas; (2) the existence of the source of the Grottaferrata by the twelfth century; (3) that Digenes wears kilts which appear in the Byzantine plates as the fustanella, the key for the identification of the warriors in the plates. The story of the ikonography on these

<sup>9</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, pp. xxvi-xxix.

<sup>10</sup> *Poèmes Prodromiques en grec vulgaire*, édités par D. C. Hesseling et H. Pernot, Amsterdam, 1910, III, 400. It is to be noted that the name is ‘Akrites’ in the epic, ‘Akritas’ in the ballads.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 164-166.

plates will show that by the twelfth century, the date of the plates, there is independent evidence for the existence both of the oral and literary phases of the Byzantine epic.

The story of the Akritan ikonography begins with some illuminated MSS of the literary epic. Professor Weitzmann has shown the role classical mythology plays in the Byzantine illuminated MSS.<sup>12</sup> To this story we must now add the epic. In the eighteenth century the monk Caesar Dapontes (1714-84) tells us that he saw in the library of the monastery of Xeropotamos on Mt. Athos a manuscript of the Akritas epic with illustrations.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately this manuscript has never been found. It would have cleared up many problems that arise in the Akritan ikonography found in Byzantine sculpture and in the plates found in Constantinople, Salonika, Sparta, Athens and Corinth. Nor was this the only illuminated manuscript. Professor Hesselting in editing the Escorial MS remarks, "Le poème y occupe les feuilles 139r°-185 v° et 198r°-201r°; entre les feuilles 185v° et 198r° il est évident que nous avons affaire à une faute du relieur. Le manuscrit était destiné à être illustré; . . . On avait donc l'intention d'accompagner de 34 dessins les 1867 vers que nous a conservés le manuscrit."<sup>14</sup>

The first actual manifestation of Akritan ikonography occurred when Miss Frantz identified certain figures on Byzantine plates, found in the Athenian Agora excavations and in Corinth, with Digenes Akritas. Her brilliant discovery opened a new phase in the study of the Byzantine epic. It now, like Homer, has a ceramic facet. Her discovery also opens up a new series of questions, e.g., did the Akritan scenes stem from the literary or the oral epic or both, do the scenes stem from an illuminated manuscript such as Dapontes saw on Mt. Athos? That this last possibility is not to be excluded may be seen in the fact that there is nothing strange in using pottery as a medium for epic illustrations which are taken from book illustrations. The earliest scenes of the eleventh century epic of Shah Firdausi are on a goblet.<sup>15</sup> The next stage in the unfolding of the Akritan ikonography came in 1956 when Professor Pelekanides identified Digenes Akritas as the figure on a sculptured relief found in the excavations and restoration of the ancient church of St. Catherine in Salonika.<sup>16</sup> It shows a warrior in bas-relief dressed in a breastplate (λωρίκιον), with a silken band fluttering from one shoulder and a low cap on his head, tearing apart the jaws of a lion. He is Digenes Akritas performing an exploit mentioned in the Grottaferrata MS (III, 92 ff.). This relief is the first that we have so far in Byzantine sculpture which illustrates episodes from the epic of Digenes Akritas.

<sup>12</sup> K. Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art*, Princeton, 1951.

<sup>13</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, pp. xx-xxi.

<sup>14</sup> D. C. Hesselting, "Le Roman de Digènes Akritas," *Λαογραφία*, I', 1911, pp. 537-538.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ars Islamica*, X, 1943, pp. 148 ff. For the epic cf. J. Atkinson, *The Shah Nameh of Firdausi*, London, 1886.

<sup>16</sup> St. Pélékanides, "Un Bas-Relief de Digènes Akritas," *Cahiers Archéologiques*, VII, 1956, pp. 215-217.

Professor Pelekanides dates the relief in the first half or the middle of the twelfth century. Since the Akritan scenes of the slaying of the dragon on the Byzantine plates belong mostly to the second half of the twelfth century, the relief is the earliest surviving bit of Akritan ikonography. He concludes that both the Salonika relief and the Byzantine plates have as their prototypes illuminated MSS of the epic which must go back to the eleventh century.

We have now reached a stage in our studies of Akritan ikonography where a re-examination of the entire evidence is needed. Pelekanides' ascription of the prototype of both the sculptured relief and the Byzantine plates to an illuminated manuscript(s) of the eleventh century does not square with the facts. As Miss Frantz has shown, some of the scenes on the Byzantine plates come from the Akritan cycle rather than the literary epic.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as will be seen, there is a marked difference in the portrayal of our hero in the relief and in the plates. They could not have come from the same source. We know that oral literature influenced vase painters of the Geometric and Archaic periods<sup>18</sup> and we must not exclude the possibility of such an influence in the Byzantine period. A more detailed investigation is needed of all the facets of the Byzantine epic, its literary, its oral, and its ceramic expression. Though Miss Frantz had examined all the Byzantine pottery in Athens and Corinth she selected only eight plates which definitely can be identified with Digenes Akrites. It will be shown that this pottery exhibits a wider range of these frontier heroes who will be identified with troops described in an early military treatise of Byzantium. Moreover, this pottery through its interest in dragons, centaurs and other classical motifs illustrates the mythopoeic mentality of Byzantium which emerges in the Akritan epic. A more systematic study is needed of all the material in Morgan's catalogue,<sup>19</sup> as well as Byzantine plates found in Athens, Sparta, Salonika, Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> In addition excavations in Corinth in 1959-60 have turned up new Akritan material. All these plates, whose provenience is at the moment unknown, show that the range of the Akritan ikonography extends to various centers of the Byzantine

<sup>17</sup> *Hesperia*, X, 1941, pp. 9-13.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. J. Fontenrose, *Python, A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins*, Los Angeles, 1959, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Morgan's inventory includes 1788 pieces, but not the new pottery found in the Corinth excavations of 1959-1960.

<sup>20</sup> R. M. Dawkins and J. Droop, "Byzantine Pottery from Sparta," *B.S.A.*, XVII, 1910-1911, pp. 23-28; H. Wallis, *Byzantine Ceramic Art: notes on examples of Byzantine Pottery recently found in Constantinople*, London, 1907; J. Ebersolt, *Catalogue des poteries byzantines et anatoliennes du Musée de Constantinople*, Constantinople, 1910; D. Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Glazed Pottery*, Oxford, 1930; W. F. Volbach, *Mittelalterliche Bildwerke aus Italien und Byzanz*, Berlin, 1930; O. K. Wulff, *Beschreibung der Bildwerke der Christlichen Epochen in den Kgl. Museen zu Berlin*, Bd 3, T. 1, 1: "Die altchristl. Bildwerke," Berlin, 1909, T. 1, 2: "Die mittelalterlichen Bildwerke," Berlin, 1911; Supplement to this in 1923. For pottery from Macedonia cf. *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 438, note 2.

empire.<sup>21</sup> Finally, a re-examination of the evidence is needed because some doubts have been expressed about Miss Frantz's identification. The slaying of the dragon by a hero is one of the most pervasive themes in Greek folklore and hagiography. It is found in the folklore traditions of St. George, St. Demetrios, even Alexander the Great.<sup>22</sup> Alexander's mythical exploits have been so mixed up with the Akritan tradition that it can be claimed that we cannot be sure whether the plates deal with Digenes, St. George or Alexander. For example, Mavrogordato questions the identification made by Miss Frantz and is inclined to believe that the hero in the plates is St. George.<sup>23</sup> Although his doubt has not been backed up by proof to the contrary, it requires examination. Finally, Mavrogordato's view that there is no connection between the literary epic and the Akritan ballads must be examined on the basis of the evidence of ikonography as well as the traditional literary arguments on both sides of the question. A re-examination of the whole problem is needed to lay a good foundation for the further study of the Byzantine epic.

We can dispose of any lingering doubts as to the identification of the hero with Akritas rather than St. George or Alexander by considering one important piece of evidence that has not been exploited before, namely, the fustanella, the pleated kilt worn by the dragon slayers and by many other figures in the Byzantine plates. We have already seen that the twelfth century poet Prodhromos describes Digenes as wearing kilts, a detail which is also mentioned in the Grottaferrata version. The Byzantine plates corroborate this key detail in the identification. Thirty-five plates show such warriors wearing the fustanella. Of these at least eight plates, on which the identification with Digenes rests, show a warrior slaying a dragon. Yet the fact that the other twenty-seven plates show identical warriors wearing the same fustanella is proof that the dragon slayers cannot be St. George or Alexander. The kilted dragon slayer is an individual but he is also associated with a class of warriors, as the common fustanella shows. Who are these?

A comparison of the fustanella warriors on the Byzantine plates with the klephts of the Greek Revolution of 1821-30, shown in the primitive paintings of Makriyiannes,<sup>24</sup> shows that we are dealing in both instances with a garment which is peculiarly

<sup>21</sup> For the problem of the provenience of this pottery cf. Frantz, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 438, and Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-177.

<sup>22</sup> K. Krumbacher, "Der heilige Georg in den griechischen Überlieferung," *Abh. Ak. München*, XXV, 3, 1911, pp. 296 ff.; J. B. Aufhauser, "Das Drachenwunder des heiligen Georg," *Byzantinisches Archiv*, X, 1911, pp. 163 ff.; Fontenrose, *op. cit.*, Appendix 4, pp. 515-520; for Alexander the Great on Byzantine pottery and folklore, cf. A. Ξυγγοπούλου, 'Ο Μέγας Ἀλέξανδρος ἐν τῇ Βυζαντινῇ Ἀγιογραφίᾳ, Ἑπ. Ἑτ. Βυζ. Σπ., XIV, 1938, pp. 276-277 and Παραστάσεις ἐκ τοῦ Μυθιστορήματος τοῦ Μ. Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐπὶ Βυζαντινῶν Ἀγγείων, Ἀρχ. Ἑφ., 1937, pp. 192-202; Γ. Κ. Σπυριδάκη, Παραδόσεις καὶ Δοξασίαι περὶ τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀλεξάνδρου, Ἑτ. Μακεδονικῶν Σπ., IX, 1953, pp. 385-419.

<sup>23</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv, note 2.

<sup>24</sup> Γ. Μακρυγιάννη, Ἀπομνημονεύματα, ed. Γ. Βλαχογιάννη, Athens, 1952, I, pp. 88-89, II, pp. 97 ff.; J. Gennadius, *Histoire picturale de la guerre de l'indépendance hellénique*, par le General Makry-

suited to a fast, mobile guerrilla mountain type of warrior. Professor Keramopoulos' study of the fustanella throws light on our problem.<sup>25</sup> This highland kilt, which in 1833 was legally made part of the dress of the Greek army and survives today in the royal palace guard at Athens, has a long history. The fustanella evolved from the Roman toga, shortened and with pleats added, as may be seen in statues of Roman emperors who wear a breastplate (lorica) above and a tunic ending in pleated kilts reaching to the knees. The transference of this shortened toga to central Europe, where the climate is colder, was accompanied by an increase in the number of folds to provide greater warmth. The fustanella as worn by the Greek peasants until recent times and by the Vlachs, whom Wace studied,<sup>26</sup> is descended from the Roman military dress. The kinship of the Vlachs with the Romans may also be seen in the close relation of the Vlach dialect to Latin. In fact these Vlachs are descendants of Roman armies who kept watch on the Roman frontiers. Being a military dress, as seen in the statues of emperors, it became the Roman dress of regular and mercenary troops who came from the conquered regions of Greece and the East. Since the mountain regions are barren, their hardy peoples turned to military service for a livelihood, remaining twenty years in the legions, and twenty-five in the auxilia. Dressed in their kilts these mountain-bred troops of the Roman army lived as *militēs limitanei* in the distant frontier provinces of the Roman empire. Among such contingents in the Byzantine armies were the *akrites* who, as the name shows, guarded the frontiers.

A study of Byzantine art which portrays the Byzantine armies shows two types of kilted warriors. One is associated with the imperial Byzantine armies, officers, or emperors who usually wear a military helmet. They are heavily armed with a breastplate and are always pictured on horse. The other is worn by foot soldiers who are described in the tenth century Byzantine treatise, *Περὶ Παραδρομῆς Πολέμου*, as *οἱ ταχεῖς ψιλοί, ταχεῖς τοῖς ποσὶ*, and it is to this contingent of Akritan troops that our plates belong. They are not clad in armor, nor in helmets. They wear a cap, a cloth doublet, and their pleated kilt is unmistakably different from that of the other class of warriors. Their kilt resembles the klepht fustanella; it is longer, more flared, fluid, and ornamented with decorative stripes, horizontal or vertical. It is this difference in kilts that distinguishes the warriors in the Byzantine plates from the imperial forces depicted in other manifestations of Byzantine art.<sup>27</sup> The kilts in our plates belong to the akrites, whose garb is required by their way of life and the guerrilla type of warfare described in the Byzantine military treatise. These akrites living on the

jannis, Geneva, 1926; A. Γ. Προκοπίου, *Τὸ Εἰκοσιένα στὴ Λαϊκὴ Ζωγραφικὴ του*, Athens, 1940; Ὁ Ἑλύτης, *Οἱ Εἰκονογραφίαι τοῦ Στρατηγοῦ Μακρυγιάννη*, Ἀγγλο-ελληνικὴ Ἐπιθεώρησις, II, 1946, pp. 2-7; C. Woodhouse, "Two Greek Primitives," *Greek Heritage*, I, 1963, pp. 55-64.

<sup>25</sup> A. Δ. Κεραμοπούλλου, *Ἡ Φουστανέλλα, Λαογραφία*, ΙΕ, 1954, pp. 238-247.

<sup>26</sup> A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans*, New York, 1914.

<sup>27</sup> See plates selected for illustration in editions of *Digenes Akritas* by Kalonaros and Grégoire (*supra*, note 4).

frontiers had a military organization of their own. Freed from the payment of taxes, given pay and homes and lands which they farmed, they furnished their own arms, kept guard on the frontiers and went on military expeditions when ordered by their leaders. Their type of warfare, as described in the tenth century treatise,<sup>28</sup> was adapted to the frontier raids of the Saracens, known as *κούρσα*. To meet these raids the akrites posted watchers (*βιγλάτορες*) three or four miles apart along the whole frontier. Some of these watch posts were located in the mountains, some in the plains. At the first sight of the enemy the watcher signalled to the next watch and so on until the general was notified by a mounted courier. These watchers kept their posts for fifteen days before being relieved and carried their own food with them.<sup>29</sup> When notified the general had to do three things: 1) collect the families and send them to fortified castles or mountain hide-outs; 2) collect his foot-soldiers (*ψιλοί*) or cavalry who were scattered throughout their properties; 3) seize the mountain passes (*κλεισούρες*) and post foot-soldiers over-looking the passes so as to ambush or engage the enemy in enfilade action. This kind of warfare, also described in the Akritan ballads, called for a fast mobile guerrilla type of soldier. What kind of dress is suitable for this kind of warfare? Nothing better than the fustanella worn by the Akritan warriors in the Byzantine plates.

It remains to explain why the fustanella warriors on the Byzantine plates differ from the Akritan warrior on the Salonika relief who wears armored plate, a military taenia fluttering in the wind from his shoulder and carries a cross on his chest.<sup>30</sup> The cover of an ivory box from Troyes shows Byzantine warriors in the same dress.<sup>31</sup> It is evident that the Akritas of the Salonika relief is dressed in the style of the imperial official class. The explanation is to be found in the significance of the cross on his chest. Here Akritas represents the emperor as the "second Akritas," as the poet Prodhomos refers to him. In the relief Akritas is the symbol of the emperor fighting for Christianity. To put it in different terms, the Akritas on the relief is an imperial symbol; in the plates he is the epic figure. This contrast reflects one of the significant differences between the literary and the oral Byzantine epic. As Professor Mavrogardato remarks of the literary epic, "Digenes is a symbolic hero; the facts [of history] are rearranged to give a universalized image of conflict on the eastern

<sup>28</sup> *Περὶ Παραδρομῆς Πολέμων*, ascribed to Nicephoros Phocas. Cf. *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn, 1828, V, pp. 179-259. For the tactics cf. especially, pp. 189-191, 211-213-214, 252, 255-257.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Trebizond version of Digenes Akritas, IV, 1072-1074 in Kalonaros' edition.

<sup>30</sup> Pelekanides, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216, 219; the *ἐπιλωρίκιον* is also found in the hagiographic tradition, cf. *Ξυγγόπουλος*, *Ἑπ. Ἑτ. Βυζ. Σπ.*, XIV, 1938, pp. 268, 271. For the cross on the shield of a centaur fighting a dragon on a Byzantine plate cf. Wallis, *B.C.A.*, pl. II, fig. 3. For a different interpretation of the Centaur cf. A. *Ξυγγοπούλου*, *Βυζαντινοὶ καὶ Ἰσλαμικοὶ Κένταυροι*, *Ἀρχ. Ἑφ.*, 1953-1954, pp. 104-114.

<sup>31</sup> C. Diehl, *Manuel d'Art Byzantin*, Paris, 1910, fig. 305-306.



frontier.”<sup>32</sup> Thus we have in the relief and in the literary epic Digenes as a symbolic hero, as in the world of the *Aeneid*, while in the ballads and in the plates we have the non-symbolic epic figures of the Homeric poems, figures which we enjoy for sheer epic action.

The spectrum of Akritan ikonography on Byzantine pottery is far more extensive than the few plates on which Miss Frantz bases her identification. To grasp the full implications of our problem the plates must be examined in their completeness in all the centers of the Byzantine empire where they have been found. A survey of plates published by Professor Morgan and others, including some relevant fragments from the Corinth excavations of 1959-60, published here for the first time, shows the following categories of subjects. One hundred and ten plates are considered. A plate reference is listed under each subject it may be identified as; a given plate, therefore, often appears under several categories. The numbers both in this list and in the text hereafter refer to Morgan's catalogue of Byzantine pottery from Corinth.

## A. EPIC

### 1. FUSTANELLA WARRIORS:

432, 1275-1276, 1497, 1502-1503, 1516-1517, 1520-1523, 1534, 1536, 1542-1543, 1568, 1681-1683; *Hesperia*, II, 1933, p. 311, fig. 8, b; VII, 1938, p. 456, A 91, fig. 17, p. 465, E 2, fig. 30; X, 1941, p. 10, figs. 1-2; Wulff, *Altchristliche und Mittelalterliche Bildwerke*<sup>2</sup>, Part II, pl. XXI, No. 2603, pl. XX, no. 2720; Corinth Inv. C-59-47<sup>33</sup> (Pl. 22, 1), C-59-129<sup>34</sup> (Pl. 22, 2).

### 2. FUSTANELLA WARRIORS WITH DRAGON OR SERPENT:

1052, 1517, 1521, 1681; *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 465, E 2, fig. 30; X, 1941, p. 10, figs. 1-2; Corinth Inv. C-59-47 (?; Pl. 22, 1) C-59-130<sup>35</sup> (?; Pl. 22, 3).

<sup>32</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, p. lxxxiii.

<sup>33</sup> C-59-47. Plate.

Red clay with whitish grits. White slip and yellowish glaze all over, inside and out. Incised-sgraffito decoration, but with thick lines all through. Profile much like Morgan, fig. 128 A. Standing warrior, facing, dressed in checkered hose and fustanella. Very little of upper garment can be seen, but that also checkered. Preserved: legs, left elbow and extreme left side. He may be holding a sword. Dragon cannot be made out, if present at all. Crude rinceaux patterns used as filling ornament. Max. pres. dim. 0.18 m. Est. orig. diam. 0.26 m.

<sup>34</sup> C-59-129. Bowl or plate.

Fairly coarse, light red clay. White slip inside and out, thin on outside; yellow glaze inside. Rather coarse potting. Incised-sgraffito decoration. About one quarter of a thin ring foot preserved, together with part of flat floor above. Part of fustanella and a leg (upper thigh) in checkered hose. To the right of the leg, a hand (? six fingers). In the field, a sort of palm leaf design. Max. pres. dim. 0.07 m. Est. orig. diam. of foot 0.12 m. Found with late pottery, including proto-majolica, which suggests early 13th c.(?)

<sup>35</sup> C-59-130. Plate or bowl.

Light red orange clay. White slip and yellowish cream glaze on inside; no trace of slip on outside. Finely made; clay quite good. Incised-sgraffito decoration. Only a very small fragment preserved; very shallow ring foot, with flat floor. Hand, apparently grasping a spear; the wrist and lower arm completely incised, indicating a long-sleeved garment. Irregular lines to the right of the

## 3. WARRIORS:

82, 133, 429(?), 675, 685, 984, 1066-1067, 1122, 1123(?), 1182, 1191, 1202, 1204, 1496, 1508-1511, 1514-1515, 1519, 1522(?), 1527, 1535, 1537-1538, 1541, 1545(?), 1547, 1561-1562, 1564, 1567, 1569-1570, 1595, 1599, 1600, 1668, 1723, 1749, 1754; *B.S.A.*, VII, 1910-11, pl. XVII, 43; Rice, *Byzantine Glazed Pottery*, pls. XI, XIX,b; Corinth Inv. C-60-49<sup>36</sup> (Pl. 22, 4), C-59-130 (Pl. 22, 3).

## 4. WARRIORS WITH DRAGONS OR SERPENTS:

662, 981, 983, 985, 986, 1121, 1181, 1504, 1518, 1523, 1525-1526, 1533, 1750; Corinth Inv. C-60-27<sup>37</sup> (Pl. 22, 5), C-60-31<sup>38</sup> (Pl. 22, 6), C-59-47(?) (Pl. 22, 1), C-59-130(?) (Pl. 22, 3).

## 5. DRAGONS OR SERPENTS WITHOUT HUMAN FIGURES INVOLVED:

672, 967, 1019, 1026, 1101; *Hesperia* II, 1933, p. 311, fig. 8,g; VII, 1938, p. 445, A 30; fig. 6; Rice, *B.G.P.*, pl. XV,a.

## 6. EPIC AND AKRITAN THEMES (other than dragons):

1191, 1274, 1279, 1535-1536, 1537-1538, 1568, 1668, 1685, 1704, 1748; Rice, *B.G.P.*, pl. XI; Corinth Inv. C-59-120<sup>39</sup> (Pl. 22, 7), C-60-42<sup>40</sup> (Pl. 22, 8).

hand (if taken with the thumb down) may be part of dragon, or merely decoration. Max. pres. dim. 0.05 m.

<sup>36</sup> C-60-49. Bowl or small plate.

Bright orange red clay, fairly fine. White slip inside and out; on the outside very thin. Inside glazed a yellowish cream color. Sgraffito decoration. *Ca.* one quarter of base preserved, but little of the rest of the bowl. Base a very shallow ring foot. The side of the bowl, which is fairly flat over the base begins to curve up sharply 0.035 m. from the outside of the foot, but too little is preserved to tell more about the profile. Left side, to waist, and arm of warrior, facing, wearing armor (either scale-armor or conventionalized rendering of chain mail). He holds a small circular shield decorated or reinforced with "spokes" and circles, perhaps representing rivets, between them. Above the arm a rather crudely drawn rinceau.

<sup>37</sup> C-60-27. Shallow bowl.

Fairly fine, bright orange red clay. Thin white slip outside and a little glaze around edge of rim. Inside, yellowish cream-colored glaze over white slip. Decoration in incised-sgraffito technique, mostly sgraffito; incision limited to details such as eye of warrior, tongue of dragon. Complete profile preserved. Form is a shallow even curve very similar to Morgan, fig. 128 E. Base is a substantial ring, 0.01 m. high. *Ca.* one quarter of ring foot preserved; *ca.* one-fifth of rim. Warrior, preserved to waist, helmeted, and with long hair trailing down back; armor (?) represented by high collar and a series of parallel lines on chest. He faces right, confronting a dragon, apparently with horns, of which only the head is preserved, upside down relative to the warrior, who has presumably spitted him. Est. original diameter 0.24 m.; max. pres. dim. 0.10 m. Associated pottery mainly late 12th to early 13th c., much incised and late sgraffito, some coarse glazed 13th c. pottery. Latest coin of Manuel I.

<sup>38</sup> C-60-31. Chafing dish.

Coarse red clay, shading to gray on exterior; shiny, dark brown glaze. Plastic decoration augmented by inscribed circles. Apparently of the type illustrated in Morgan, fig. 24C. Plastic, relief decoration: bearded figure in gnome's cap wrestling with dragon, whose jaws he has grasped and is forcing apart. Only snout and ears of dragon preserved; warrior preserved to waist. Max. diam. 0.10 m. Est. orig. diam. 0.17 m. From a confused area with pottery ranging from Roman to late 13th c. Presumably of the category which Morgan places more or less under John Tsimisces; our evidence cannot add anything to help the dating.

<sup>39</sup> C-59-120. Bowl.

Coarse reddish clay. White slip outside and on exterior of rim. Yellow glaze over slip.

## B. MYTHOLOGICAL SCENES

1. CENTAURS :  
651, 968-969, 1539, 1684(?) ; Wallis, *Byzantine Ceramic Art*, pl. II, fig. 3.
2. CENTAURS ENGAGING DRAGONS OR SERPENTS :  
969, 1539; Wallis, *B.C.A.*, pl. II, fig. 3.
3. HARPIES :  
668; Rice, *B.G.P.*, pls. XV,b, XIX,a.
4. PERSEUS AND MEDUSA :  
1221
5. PEGASOS :  
1668(?)
6. MAN-HEADED MONSTER :  
1025

In the above classification it must be kept in mind that only a very few of these plates survive in their entirety, hence there can be no rigidity in the classification of the genres. The fragmentary character of many of these plates prevents us from conjecturing how many of the warrior plates would be included in the fustanella category. The same holds for the category of warriors engaged with a dragon or serpent. The fact that the upper part of some plates shows the garb to be the same as those of the fustanella warriors makes this conjecture probable in some instances. Yet the distribution of plates dealing with the various genres shows that the Byzantine ceramic painter, like his counterpart in the Geometric and Archaic periods, is mainly interested in the world of the epic. This world is more suffused with magic and the supernatural than is the Homeric. The Byzantine world inherited from classical myth the theme of a god or hero slaying a monster, and adapted it for its saints and for its Akritan epic. The classical world, furthermore, left its influence on the plates in the form of centaurs and harpies, themes which are also found in other phases of

Sgraffito decoration. Profile somewhat like Morgan p. 129, fig. 103 I, but a bit deeper. Around rim, a wave line pattern. Inside, female with crown; dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves and tight bodice decorated with spirals. Head and right half of torso preserved. Max. pres. dim. 0.105 m.; orig. diam. 0.24 m. Associated with pottery of 13th c.; coins not yet identified.

<sup>40</sup> C-60-42 Plate.

Bright orange red clay, fairly fine. Thin white slip inside and out; thick grayish yellow glaze. Sgraffito decoration. Plate slightly convex above base, then flattens out; the sides curve up sharply. Shallow ring foot. Cf. Morgan, p. 129, fig. 103 C. Full left side of woman wearing skirt and crown. To right, a freely and skilfully done rinceau. Presumably the woman was not alone; there would have been room on the plate for another figure. Drawing and glaze, both in color and thickness, quite different from C-60-49 and C-60-27, but clay seems much the same. Est. orig. diam. 0.25 m.; Max. pres. dim. 0.21 m. Associated pottery late green and brown painted ware, some proto-majolica, late 12-13th c. incised and sgraffito ware. Only legible coins were of Manuel I.

Byzantine art.<sup>41</sup> The interest in Christian themes was satisfied more in ikons and church paintings, hence we have few instances of them in the plates.<sup>42</sup> Thus a survey of these plates shows that their focus is in the world of the Byzantine epic. The plates therefore constitute a new facet of the Byzantine epic.

In order to bring this world into sharper focus with the Akritan epic we must examine more closely the Byzantine epic as it appears in these plates. An examination of the physiognomy, arms, technique of representation of them, and themes will help us get a picture of the Akritan epic as it existed in the twelfth century. This examination will be followed by a comparative study of the plates with the literary and oral phases of the epic.

The fustanella warriors constitute a remarkably coherent group. The painter selects a certain position in which to present his Akritan warrior. He is presented either in the frontal view or moving to the right or left. Movement toward the right and frontal view are the favorite positions. Occasionally the frontal view is combined with the inclination of the head to the right or left. As in archaic art, some of the plates show the fustanella in frontal view even when the warrior is engaged in combat with the dragon or serpent. The fustanella warrior usually wears a cap, low, rounded or conical. The latter is the favorite, usually on top of the head or in the form of elongated conical caps which stream horizontally to the back or side. These caps are often hatched or crosshatched, or decorated with striated vertical or horizontal bands. The hair of the fustanella warrior sometimes consists of ringlets about the head or of curly or wavy locks which fall to one side or the other or at the back. A few of the plates show the hair in crude unkempt fashion. The faces of the fustanella warriors enable us to identify certain individual painters. Four warriors have moon faces, identical noses and eyes and these plates can be attributed to the same artist.<sup>43</sup> Several warriors have prognathic jaws and can be attributed to the same master.<sup>44</sup> The dress of the fustanella warriors shows a wide variety of decoration on the doublet and hose. In some plates the entire costume of doublet and hose is crosshatched. One has a doublet hatched with wavy incised lines, another a doublet with incised rectilinear split palmette design. One has a crosshatched sash, another hose with incised cross-gartering. Two in the group are exceptions to the doublet garment. Several wear chain mail, one a chlamys over a doublet. The fustanella of the warriors is sometimes simple, sometimes elaborate. Often it is decorated with parallel patterns of vertical or horizontal bands, repeating contrapuntally the same decoration in the doublet. The fustanella is always pictured so as to emphasize the swiftness of the warrior.

<sup>41</sup> Weitzmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 112 ff., 125 ff., 143 ff., 159 ff., 166 ff., 179 ff.

<sup>42</sup> There are only four plates with Christian themes (1047, 1102, 1172; *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 458, fig. 21).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *infra* pp. 127, 131.

<sup>44</sup> Nos. 1202, 1232, 1277, 1502, 1522, 1525, 1527, 1568; C-60-49 (Pl. 22, 4).

The armor of the fustanella warrior consists of shield, spear, sword, with occasional mace, battle-ax<sup>45</sup> or bow. The shield, which is generally carried in the left hand, has a variety of shapes. Sometimes it is oval, but more often it resembles a long leaf tapering to a narrow point. One is six-sided and one is of such peculiar shape that it is difficult to tell whether it is a shield or the musical instrument carried by Akritas.<sup>46</sup> The shields are decorated with incised or imbricated patterns. The sword is sometimes carried in the right or left hand, at the level of the waist or across the body. The long scabbard, when present, hangs at the side. The spears are sometimes held horizontally in the left hand, or in oblique angles to the body, sometimes held by both hands. A pennoned spear, which we see in the imperial armies, is also found among the fustanella warriors. A mace replaces the spear in one of the most striking plates of a fustanella warrior slaying a dragon.<sup>47</sup> In the background of the scenes there is often, as in Geometric pottery, filling ornamentation, usually in the rinceau or pine-cone pattern. The latter is often attached to the shoulders of a doublet.<sup>48</sup> Occasionally a falcon, bird, rabbit or dog forms part of the background which is usually one and the same as the foreground.

Though the plates present us with a homogeneous group of warriors, whom we have identified with the *ψυλοί* Akrites mentioned in the tenth century treatise on frontier warfare, there are certain exceptions which must be noted. Four of the warriors slaying a dragon are riding horses.<sup>49</sup> In the literary and oral ballads there is no mention of Digenes slaying a dragon on horseback. These four warriors are either such saints as George or Demetrios, or the painter has fused the Akritan with the hagiographic tradition. Certain plates present warriors closer to the warrior in the Salonika relief, whom we have seen to be a symbol of the emperor or Christianity, or to the imperial high officers. A fustanella warrior (1536) wears a taenia of silk streaming from his shoulders, a feature in portraits of imperial armies or in the hagiographic tradition. Similar features are the chlamys worn over the doublet of a warrior (1683) and a metal helmet (C-60-27; Pl. 22, 5). Two fustanella warriors (1275, 1536) and nine warriors (985, 1066, 1121, 1123, 1532-1533, 1541, 1561; C-60-49, Pl. 22, 4) wear metal corselets, such as we find in the warrior of the Salonika relief. But these are exceptions. The conclusion is inescapable that in general the Byzantine plates portray the common frontier foot-soldier (*ψυλοί*) rather than the officers who belong to the upper echelons of the Byzantine armies. It is obvious that these Akrites of the frontier enjoyed the popularity that we see in the later klephts or

<sup>45</sup> I interpret the object at the left of C-60-27 (Pl. 22, 5) as a battle-ax.

<sup>46</sup> *Hesperia*, X, 1941, pp. 9, 11, fig. 1, 2. The *θαμπούρι*, a lute, is often carried by Digenes in the literary epic (G., IV, 397) and in the ballads (Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, II, p. 230, line 67, and p. 233 line 123).

<sup>47</sup> *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 464, fig. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Nos. 1502, 1520; *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 464, fig. 30.

<sup>49</sup> Nos. 981, 983, 986, 1181.

the evzone divisions in the Balkan wars of 1912-13. The flavor of this popularity can only be known by those who can feel the meaning of the word *πολιάς* in modern Greek, the demotic for the popular evzone.

The ikonography of the Byzantine plates should now be compared with the portraiture of Digenes Akritas in the literary and oral phases of the Byzantine epic. This comparison will enable us to determine more clearly whether the hero in the plates comes from the literary epic, the oral cycle or both. The Grottaferrata is considered the oldest of our literary texts, hence its source is more likely to preserve data somewhat contemporary with the Byzantine plates.<sup>50</sup> It gives us the fullest portrait we have of Digenes Akritas.<sup>51</sup> Digenes' cap is described in two passages as:

*καμηλανκίτζιν* <sup>52</sup> *χαμηλὸν βαλὼν εἰς τὸ κεφάλι* (IV, 117)

and putting on a low cap upon his head.

*βαλὼν τε καὶ σγουρούτζικον κόκκινον καμηλαύκιν* (VI, 716)

and putting on a red cap of curly fur.

This low cap agrees with some of the caps in the fustanella warriors, though many of them wear conical caps. It also agrees with the cap of the warrior in the Salonika relief which Professor Pelekanides identifies with the *καμηλανκίτζι*. The description of Digenes' physiognomy agrees in general with what we find in the plates,

*κόμην ξανθήν, ἐπίσγουρον, ὀμμάτια μεγάλα,  
πρόσωπον ἄσπρον, ῥοδινόν, κατάμανρον ὀφρύδιν,  
καὶ στῆθος ὥσπερ κρύσταλλον, ὀργυιὰν εἶχε τὸ πλάτος* (IV, 197-199)

And fair hair, curly a little, and large eyes

A white rosy face, a brow all black,

His breast like crystal was a fathom broad

The curly hair and large eyes are a general characteristic of the warriors in the plates (cf. 1531-1532) and the broad shoulders are particularly illustrated in 1532. The ringlets in Digenes' hair are almost a constant feature in the ikonography (cf. 1520, 1685).

The clothes worn by Digenes in the Grottaferrata text agree mostly with the Salonika relief rather than the fustanella warriors. He wears an *ὑπολούρικον* (IV,

<sup>50</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, p. xv-xvi. For evidence of the knowledge of the Grottaferrata text in the twelfth century cf. *supra* pp. 110-113. The text and translations of Grottaferrata used in this paper are those of Mavrogordato.

<sup>51</sup> The grotesque relief figures in conical hats often found in both green and brown glaze chafing dishes are probably not Akrites, but come most likely from the games of the circus. I owe the suggestion to Miss Frantz.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. note on *καμηλανκίτζιν* in Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, p. 73; Pelekanides, *op. cit.*, p. 219, note 3.

115) which Mavrogordato translates as a tabard, i.e., a cloak or a mantle. He also says it may be a tunic worn under the cuirass.<sup>53</sup> In view of the fact that in this passage he wears a *περιστήθιον* (IV, 118), a breastplate, and he takes off the *ὑπολούρικον* before he takes off the breastplate it is most likely that it is a tunic or cloak. If so, we have an instance of it in 1682 which shows a fustanella warrior with a cloak, the ends of which appear at the left. It seems to be the dress of an officer, as may be seen in the illustrations of Byzantine imperial armies. The *περιστήθιον* in G., IV, 118 is a breastplate which also appears in the Salonika relief and in several plates (985, 1121, 1275, 1532-1533, 1536). The majority of the plates, however, show the warrior in tight-vested cloth doublets which give the akrites less protection but more speed of movement. The Grottaferrata also portrays Digenes wearing a *ζωνάρι* (IV, 114), a belt and a *ποδέα* (IV, 116, 1058), kilts which, as we have seen, is a key in the identification of the warrior with Digenes. In the Grottaferrata Digenes is also wearing leggings

*τουβία ἐφόρει ἐξάκουστα, γρύψους ὠραῖσμένους* (IV, 226)

He wore fine leggings with griffins embellished

This is the language of the ornamented literary epic. In the plates he wears simply hose. It is obvious that the plates picture the warriors as they were, while the literary epic, which seems to be followed closely by the Salonika relief, pictures him in the tradition of literary ornamentation.

The Grottaferrata pictures Digenes also when he is resting from war. On these occasions he puts on a single-piece thin gown,

*βάλλει στενὰ μοχλόβια* <sup>54</sup> *διὰ τὸ καταψυχῆσαι* (IV, 220)

Thin singlets he puts on to cool himself,

*Καί, εἰς τὴν τένδαν μου ἐλθὼν, ἀπέβαλον τὰ ὄπλα,  
καὶ ἐδυσάμην θαυμαστὸν λεπτότατον μαχλάβιν.* (VI, 714-715)

I came into my tent, put off my arms

Drew on a very thin and wondrous singlet.

It is such a gown that he wears in the love scene in 1685 (Morgan, pl. LII), a scene which, as will be shown below (pp. 130-131), portrays Digenes and Maximo, the Queen of the Amazons.

In the Grottaferrata Digenes is pictured as a mounted warrior,<sup>55</sup> fighting on foot

<sup>53</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. note of Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>55</sup> G., IV, 105, 232 ff., 376, 586, 663, 781, 789, 1040. The Grottaferrata presents Digenes sometimes as a nobleman and general (IV, 58 ff.) but other times as a solitary figure roaming the frontiers (IV, 956; V, 22).

once when he is surprised by the Apelates, the brigands Philopappos, Kinnamos, Ioannikios. Here again we have a contrast to the akrites of the plates who are foot-soldiers. The arms of Digenes in the Grottaferrata generally correspond to those found in the plates. He carries a sword, a spear, a bow, a club, a combined sword and club called *σπαθορράβδιν*, a mace, a shield, all of which we find singly or in varied combinations in the plates.<sup>56</sup>

The Akritan ballads unfortunately do not give us as much descriptive information about Digenes as the Grottaferrata. Though his weapons are emphasized there is little or no description of his appearance or clothes. The ballads, we must remember, have a character, form and oral style all their own and have come down to us in shorter forms and many of them have taken on a lyrical character. Hence epic ornamentation is reduced and they gain in speed of dramatic narrative. They do not give us the biography of Digenes, from birth to death, as the epic does but concentrate on certain episodes in the life of Digenes and other frontier heroes. Yet we do get some details worthy of note. For example, the hero Mavroïdes wears an iron belt (*σιδεροβρακοζώνι*).<sup>57</sup> Armourès on foot wears a breastplate (*πεζὸς μὲ τὸ λουρίκιν*).<sup>58</sup> In the ballads, as in the literary epic, the heroes are presented as riders; in the plates they are represented as foot-soldiers. Here we see that the plates are closer to the historical status of the guerrilla type of warrior, described in the tenth century treatise. The transformation of Digenes and other Akritan heroes from foot-soldiers into riders in both the literary epic and the ballads is one of the interesting pieces of information that the plates give for our study of the Byzantine epic. This historical distortion is one of the obvious characteristics of the epic in general, and the Byzantine, full of magic, is no exception. The appeal of magical horses is best seen in the Akritan ballads. The steeds of the Akritan heroes are prominent. Like Achilles' horses they speak to their master, they fly with fantastic speed. Digenes is usually the magic warrior on horse except in one ballad where he is presented as a foot-soldier posted on watch (*βίγλα*), a detail which is singled out in the tenth century treatise on frontier warfare.<sup>59</sup> The arms of Digenes and the other frontier heroes of the cycle correspond to those of the hero in the Grottaferrata. They carry swords, spears, clubs, some of them inlaid with saints of gold.<sup>60</sup> As may be expected in oral transmission they also carry pistols and guns.<sup>61</sup> Some of the weapons, like the club and spear, are of prodigious weight. Thus the evidence of the ballads on the whole tends to corroborate the details of the Grottaferrata with respect to clothes and armor.

<sup>56</sup> For the variety of weapons carried by Digenes, cf. G., IV, 110, 119, 175, 250-251, 378, 465; V, 27, 183; VI, 61, 96, 144, 157, 204-205, 224 ff., 506, 702 ff., 719, 746.

<sup>57</sup> Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, II, p. 248, line 36.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 215, 96β.

<sup>59</sup> *Περὶ Παραδρομῆς Πολέμων*, chapter 1.

<sup>60</sup> Petropoulos, *op. cit.*, I, p. 57, line 8.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 52, lines 19, 20, p. 17, line 22.



The result thus far of this comparative study of the ikonography of the Byzantine plates with the Salonika relief, the Grottaferrata and the Akritan cycle shows similarities sufficient to verify the fact that we are dealing with the Akritan world in the plates. The study also shows sufficient differences in the way the writer of the epic, the singer of the ballads, and the painter of the plates treat their common material. The Grottaferrata epic selects one hero and treats his life biographically with literary ornamentation and details borrowed from other literary sources.<sup>62</sup> The Akritan cycle selects some heroes, concentrates on a limited number of episodes, invests them with the supernatural and magic; it tells the tale with the swiftness of dramatic action and uses the formulaic technique of the oral poet. Though the plates have much in common with the Grottaferrata, the Salonika relief and the Akritan cycle and focus on the dragon slaying, they present a different facet of Akritan life. They agree most with the Byzantine treatise on Akritan warfare, and hence are closer to history.

Comparative study must also be extended to themes. The theme of the slaying of the dragon is the most prominent in our ikonography. Twenty-six plates show warriors, three show centaurs, all engaged in dragon slaying. As has been shown by Professor Fontenrose, the slaying of a dragon or serpent by a god or hero is a folk motif which first emerges in Greek mythology with Apollo slaying the python.<sup>63</sup> The Byzantine world inherited the motif and adapted it to the hagiographic and epic traditions; it appears also in the fourteenth century romance, *Callimachus and Chrysorrhoe*,<sup>64</sup> and pervades Greek folklore as the *στοιχίο*. Following the Herakles tradition of a hero slaying monsters the Byzantine mind continues to have its epic hero slaying supernatural monsters. This heroic tradition of dragon slaying also becomes symbolic. One of the centaur plates shows a centaur holding a shield with a cross.<sup>65</sup> Since the cross also appears in the Akritas relief from Salonika it is clear that the dragon or serpent has also acquired a symbolic meaning—the enemy of Christianity, be it the Saracens or sin itself. The similarity of the dragon to the serpent in *Genesis* makes this interpretation a natural one for the Byzantine mind, as may be seen in the Byzantine play, *Christus patiens*, where Mary speaks in the prologue,

Εἴθ' ὦφελ' ἐν λειμῶνι μήδ' ἔρπειν ὄφεις  
μήδ' ἐν νάπαισι τοῦδ' ὑφεδρεύειν δράκων.<sup>66</sup>

However, we must not forget the fact that the ceramic artist of Byzantium as a decorator is also interested in the dragon. His plates are filled with twining patterns,

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxix-lxxx; Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, I, pp. ιη'-κδ'.

<sup>63</sup> Fontenrose, *op. cit.*

<sup>64</sup> *Le Roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoe*, ed. M. Pichard, Paris, 1956, lines 1538 ff.

<sup>65</sup> See *supra*, note 30.

<sup>66</sup> *Christus Patiens*, ed. Fr. Dübner.

rincaux, spiral decorations and interlaced designs.<sup>67</sup> The popularity of the dragon on these plates is in large measure due to the adaptability of the coils of the dragon for spiral ornamentation. Some plates are decorated only with the spiral coils of a dragon. This concern of the Byzantine ceramic artist for spiral ornamentation may be seen in the variety of patterns on dragons on the plates.<sup>68</sup> In some the head of the dragon faces right, the tail on the left, and in others the positions are reversed. In some the coils are painted in full blown circularity, in others the coils drag. In some they are set in a floral background, reminiscent perhaps of the garden of Eden. The head of the serpent takes a variety of forms; it is stippled (1502, 1504, 1681); sometimes a tongue of flame issues from its mouth or its tongue protrudes between the jaws, and even a rococo floral spray issues from its mouth. Several of the dragons have equine ears and mane. The coils and tail are crosshatched or scaly. The action of the warrior engaging the dragon takes a variety of forms. They attack it with a sword, spear, mace or ax. A warrior sometimes grasps it by a coil or the throat; he presses it with a spear and in the plate which Miss Frantz identified with a ballad about Digenes Akritas (*Hesperia*, X, 1941, p. 10, figs. 1, 2) it has five spears in its neck. In one plate the painter has the warrior in frontal view with his eyes turned toward the dragon who is on his left. In another the dragon is already expiring. It must be remembered in comparing the plates with the epic that the painter even when depicting an Akritan theme is ever conscious of the decorative problems of his art.

The question arises whether the dragon slaying in the plates is drawn from the literary epic or from the Akritan ballads. In order to answer this question we must briefly review the evidence in the Grottaferrata epic and in the Akritan cycle. In the Grottaferrata at the age of twelve Digenes tells his father that his desire is "to try myself in fighting with the wild beasts."<sup>69</sup> At first he fights bears choking them with his arms.<sup>70</sup> He also uses his bare hands to slay the lion in the Salonika relief, and if the warrior in Inv. C-60-31 (Pl. 22, 6) is to be identified with Digenes we have the same situation. His next encounter with lions is when he meets the brigand chiefs Philopappos, Kinnamos and Ioannikios.<sup>71</sup> In the initiation of Digenes into border-fighting Philopappos tells him to take a club and go off to kill lions and bring back the skins. In Book VI Digenes has his first encounter with a dragon at Blattolivadi which changed into a youth to seduce his wife.<sup>72</sup> Digenes draws his sword and brings it down upon the three well-grown heads of a serpent from each of which a flame

<sup>67</sup> Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-35.

<sup>68</sup> Nos. 672, 967, 1019, 1026, 1101; *Hesperia*, II, 1933, p. 311, fig. 8g; VII, 1938, p. 443, fig. 6, A 30; Rice *B.G.P.*, pl. XV,a.

<sup>69</sup> G., IV., 74.

<sup>70</sup> G., IV, 127.

<sup>71</sup> Treb., 1075.

<sup>72</sup> G., VI, 45 ff.

issues. Then with his cudgel he kills a lion which besets his bride in a grove.<sup>73</sup> In Book VIII when Digenes is dying he recapitulates among his exploits the killing of the dragon at Blattolivadi and the lion.<sup>74</sup> These exploits are repeated with variations in the other manuscripts of the epic. In our ikonography we have no illustration of a bear. The lion appears in the Salonika relief and Inv. C-60-31 (Pl. 22, 6), and in 1274 we have a fragmentary man and a lion confronting each other, and identification is hazardous.

Before we can answer the question of whether or not the plates with the dragon scenes are inspired by the epic, the ballads or both, the theme of dragon slaying must be examined in the ballads. There is killing of lions, bears, and dragons in the cycle. In addition there is the killing of a monstrous crab, but the slayer is not always Digenes, but other heroes of the cycle as well. Digenes' repertory of feats is hyperbolic in its slaying of lions and dragons. He kills a lion and a dragon at once by a stone.<sup>75</sup> In one version armed on foot he kills 300 bears and 62 lions.<sup>76</sup> In another he kills a dragon with one kick, a lion with a blow.<sup>77</sup> As he lies dying and recapitulates his feats he says that he killed 60 lions and 400 dragons.<sup>78</sup> Other versions of the same scene list nine buckets full of noses of dragons and the tongues of lions.<sup>79</sup> One of these dragons is similar to the Blattolivadi monster. Digenes described it as having 60 coils and 72 arches,<sup>80</sup> a monster which he kills with an arrow. Unfortunately for our exact identification of the slayers of dragons in the Byzantine plates there are other slayers of dragons and lions besides Digenes. Yiannes, an Akritan hero, slays a dragon who with his dragon wife guarded the water, a common theme in Greek folktales.<sup>81</sup> Theophylaktos also slays lions and dragons, as does Alexinos.<sup>82</sup> In view of the variety of heroes in the cycle who kill dragons the question arises do all the dragon slayers in our Byzantine plates represent Digenes or other heroes as well? If the plates draw their inspiration from the literary epic all the dragon slayers must be identified with Digenes; if from the Akritan cycle the dragon slayers may include a variety of Akritan heroes. The question is made more difficult by our lack of knowledge whether in the course of oral transmission the feats of Digenes spread to other Akritan heroes, or the singers of these ballads in the tenth century, whom Arethas mentions, included other heroes who performed the same exploit. The ikonography of the plates combined with certain ballads helps us at least in identifying certain

<sup>73</sup> G., VI, 91 ff. For this motif in modern Greek folklore, cf. Bouvier (*supra*, note 5) pp. 51-55.

<sup>74</sup> G., VIII, 87, 90.

<sup>75</sup> Petropoulos, *op. cit.*, I, p. 13, lines 193 ff.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24, line 12.

<sup>77</sup> Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, II, p. 235, lines 198-199.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241 K', line 12.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243, line 68-69.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246, line 54.

<sup>81</sup> Petropoulos, *op. cit.*, I, p. 21, lines 20 ff.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53, line 58; Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, II, p. 240.

warriors in the plates who can only be identified with Digenes. The evidence for this comes from plates 1531-1532, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 465, E 2, fig. 30, and X, 1941, p. 10, figs. 1-2. All of these plates show a unique moon-faced warrior, with an S-nose, and the same type of eyes.<sup>83</sup> These plates obviously come from the same master and represent a single hero.<sup>84</sup> This hero is Digenes Akritas by reason of the exact identification, by Miss Frantz, of a scene in one of these plates with an Akritan ballad. The plate is *Hesperia*, X, 1941, p. 10, figs. 1-2, which shows a dragon with equine ears, mane, and a tongue of flame issuing from its jaws. Its neck is pierced by five spears or arrows according to Miss Frantz. She quotes for the identification an Akritan ballad which Professor N. Bêes collected in Arcadia in 1905. A fuller text with a literal translation follows:

Ξήντα λοντάρια σκότωσα καὶ τετρακόσιους δράκους  
 Σὰν ἓνα φίδ' δικέφαλο, φίδι μὲ δυνὸ κεφάλια,  
 ποτές μου δὲ φαντάστηκα πῶς θὰ χε ν' ἀπαντήσω.  
 Εἶχε τὰ πόδια ἀλοῖνά, καὶ μάτια σὰν τὸ βόιδι,  
 κ' εἶχε καὶ κάτι κέρατα πὸ μάλαμα καθάριο,  
 σὰν ἔκανες γιὰ νὰ τὰ ἰδῇς τὰ μάτια σου χυνόνταν,  
 καὶ πῶς ἐγὼ τὸ τήραξα, πῶς τό βανα σημάδι!  
 Πέντε κοντάρια τοῦ δωκα καὶ μιὰ σπαθιὰ στὴ μέση  
 μάϊδε τὸ βόλι τὸ κολλᾶ, μάϊδε σπαθὶ τὸ παίρνει  
 καὶ μόνο μὲ τὸ δαμασκὶ τὸ τρύπησα μαχαίρι.<sup>85</sup>

Sixty lions did I kill and four hundred dragons.  
 But a two-headed serpent, a serpent with two heads,  
 Never did I dream that I would meet.  
 Its feet were those of a horse, its eyes those of an ox  
 And it had horns of pure gold.  
 Did you but look upon them your eyes would pour forth.  
 And how did I look upon them, how take my aim!  
 I gave it five spears, and a sword blow in the middle  
 But neither the throw would stick, nor sword undo it,  
 And only with my Damascus sword did I pierce it.

This finest of the ballads about the killing of the dragon makes no mention of Digenes but since the song deals with the recapitulation by a hero of his exploits he

<sup>83</sup> For another group characterized by a prognathic jaw see *supra*, note 44.

<sup>84</sup> For the relation of the Agora to the Corinth plate cf. *Hesperia*, X, 1941, p. 10, note 2.

<sup>85</sup> Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 241-242; Professor Bêes collected this ballad from the village of 'Ατσίχολος in Καρύταινα. For the survival of Akritan songs in Peloponnesos cf. Δ. Α. Πετροπούλου, 'Ακριτικά Τραγούδια στὴν Πελοπόννησο, Πελοποννησιακά, Β', 1957, pp. 335-368. For Peloponnesos versions of Akritas and the dragon see in particular, pp. 338 ff.

clearly must be identified with Digenes. The ballad agrees with the ikonography of the plate so closely that we can be sure of the identification. The ballad gives some details, such as two heads, horns of gold, horse's feet, which are not found in the plate but the essential details are there. It has a horse's mane and ears, five spears in its neck (the spears are truncated so that the full length of the spears may not jut into the central picture) which are not sufficient to kill it and Digenes holds upraised in his left hand his sword to finish the monster. The sequence of details, five spears and finally the sword, both in the plate and the ballad shows that the ceramic artist was definitely influenced by the oral cycle and not by the literary epic in which no such details of action are mentioned. Here we have the first clear proof for the existence of the ballads in the twelfth century and their influence on Byzantine ikonography.

Miss Frantz quotes another ballad from Cyprus which she applies to the identification of the same plate. A fuller text of it follows:

Κάτω στὲς νάκρες τῶν νακρῶν στὸν ἀρκοκαλαμιῶναν  
 τοσεῖ μέσα ἔν ποῦ γύριζα τσαὶ νύχταν τσαὶ ἡμέραν.  
 Εἶχα τσαὶ τὴν καλίτσαμ μου πίσω μου πὰ στὸμ μαῦρον  
 τσ' ἐφέγγαν μου τὰ κάλλη της τὴν νύχταν νὰ γυρίζω.  
 Τσαὶ πὰ στὰ γλυκοξίφωτα, ποῦ πᾶ νὰ ξημερώση  
 στσιαστήκασιν τὰμμάδκια μου τσ' ἕναν μεγάλοφ φύν·  
 ἐξήντα τσὺκλους ἔκαμνε, βδομηνταδκνὸ καμάρες,  
 τσ' ἀκόμα δκνὸ τσνκλίσματα τὸν ἔλενον νὰ φάη.  
 Μὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆδ δύναμιν, μὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆχ χάριν,  
 μπαίννω τσαὶ σαῖττεύκω τὸν στῆμ μεσατσὴν καμάραν.<sup>86</sup>

Down by the ends of the earth, by the wild fields of reed,  
 There I was wandering day and night.  
 I had my love behind me on my black charger  
 And her beauty shone to guide my way in the night.  
 And at the sweet dawn, when day lights up,  
 My eyes were startled at a great serpent.  
 He made sixty circles and seventy-two vaults  
 And two more circles to eat hapless me.  
 With the aid of God, and with the grace of God  
 I go and shoot an arrow into its middle vault.

This ballad, however, does not fit the previous plate. Despite the fact that the coils

<sup>86</sup> Kalonaros, *op. cit.*, II, p. 246, lines 48-57. The text of Miss Frantz, which is that of Polites (Λαογραφία, Α', 1909, p. 209, lines 52-57) reads "Ἐλενον" in line 55. The word is equivalent to ἐλεεινός, "one to be pitied"; cf. A. Σακελαρίου, *Κυπριακά*, Athens, 1890, II, p. 590, *s.v.* ἐλενή.

of the serpent are emphasized<sup>87</sup> there is a difference in the manner of the slaying of the serpent in the Cyprus and in the Arcadia ballads. In the Cyprus ballad the verb is *σαῖττεύκω*, to pierce with an arrow, whereas in the Arcadia ballad the verb is *κοντάρια τοῦ δῶκα*, I attack it with spears.<sup>88</sup> This difference shows that the two ballads do not apply to the same plate. Fortunately we have a plate in the Corinth inventory which fits the details of the Cyprus ballad. Plate 1532, which belongs to the homogeneous group of Digenes portraits mentioned above, shows Digenes armed with a bow facing the dragon. Since the Grottaferrata text in all instances of Digenes' encounters with the dragon never mentions the bow, but only the sword or club, I am inclined to believe that plate 1532 follows the prototype of the Cyprus ballad.

The complete agreement of two Akritan ballads from such widely separated areas as Arcadia and Cyprus with two plates, one from Corinth and the other from Athens, shows that we must consider the ballads as well as the epic as sources for Akritan ikonography. The ballads definitely help us identify the figure of the dragon slayer in plates 1531, 1532, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 465, E 2, fig. 30 and *Hesperia*, X, 1941, p. 10, fig. 1 as Digenes Akritas. How far we can extend this conclusion to the rest of the plates showing warriors, fustanella clad or otherwise, engaged with dragons or serpents cannot be determined. If we believed that only the literary epic influenced all the plates we could definitely identify all the dragon slayers with Digenes. But since the ballads also influenced the ikonography of the plates and they make the dragon theme common to other Akritan heroes besides Digenes, we cannot be sure whether other Akritan heroes are to be included among the dragon slayers.

Besides the dragon theme our plates include others. Of these the love theme in plate 1685 (Morgan, pl. LII) is most striking. Does it belong in the Akritan ikonography or not? Morgan describes the plate as follows: "Interior: large medallion containing scene of a man with long curling locks, wearing doublet and hose, seated on a folding stool, holding in his lap a woman wearing a crown on her head, and a long-waisted garment with pleated skirt; at right, a rabbit running upward; at left, a tree-trunk (?); behind figure appear two odd objects possibly interpreted as wings of a throne; scattered vegetable motives in field; feet of figures and stool extend beyond margin of medallion. Slip and yellow glaze all over, thin on exterior."<sup>89</sup> It is in incised style, dated the latter part of the twelfth century. Repetition of this love theme on other fragments (1704, 1708, Morgan, pl. LIII, 1, n) suggests that all plates were part of a dinner service of single design. Miss Frantz identified this love scene with Digenes and Haplorabdis' daughter.<sup>90</sup> In the Grottaferrata epic (V, 18 ff.,

<sup>87</sup> It must be remembered that the plate in *Hesperia*, X, 1941, is combined by J. Travlos with Corinth plate 1681, thus producing the synthetic drawing in fig. 2.

<sup>88</sup> By assuming that the two texts describe the same plate Miss Frantz conjectures that 5 *κοντάρια* replaced an earlier version of 5 arrows. There is no evidence for this.

<sup>89</sup> Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

<sup>90</sup> *Byzantion*, XV, 1940-1941, pp. 90-91.

58-59), the daughter elopes with one of her father's prisoners who abandoned her after three blissful days and nights in the desert. Digenes after discovering her and rescuing her makes love to her in the desert. Before this identification is accepted a more thorough study of the details of the plate and the grounds for the identification is needed.

The scene on the plate cannot be laid in a desert. Miss Frantz thinks that the tree on the left side of the plate is a palm tree.<sup>91</sup> However, several details show that the locale is far from a desert. In the first place it must be realized that the painter geometrizes nature in the plate. The geometric configuration under the folding stool can now be identified by means of the Salonika relief. Professor Pelekanides interprets the post and the geometrical configuration extending from its bottom as, "a l'extrémité inférieure de l'angle se dresse la tronc d'un arbre-buisson qui se termine par deux fleurettes en forme de trèfle."<sup>92</sup> That this geometric configuration is a cluster of flowers may also be seen in the plate 1531 which shows a cluster of geometrized flowers under the feet of a warrior. Another detail besides the rabbit shows that the scene cannot be a desert. What Morgan has interpreted as possibly the wings of a throne cannot be, for the lovers are not seated on a throne but a folding stool (cf. *θώκῳ χαμαιζήλῳ*, on a groundling seat, G., V, 64). The mistaken wings of a throne turn out to be the extended long branch of a tree on the left which the artist depicts in geometric elongation. Since the scene cannot be a desert, the identification of the lovers with Digenes and Haplorhabdis' daughter cannot stand.

There is only one scene in the Akritan epic that fits this scene in all details. That is the scene in the Grottaferrata text where Digenes makes love to Maximo, Queen of the Amazons whom he has defeated in battle. The scene in the epic takes place under the branch of a tree in a meadow by the Euphrates where Digenes, already dressed in a thin and wondrous singlet (G., VI, 715), the dress he wears in the plate, tells Maximo:

“ Λοιπὸν δεῦρο ὑπὸ σκιὰν ἀπέλθωμεν τοῦ δένδρου,  
καὶ διδάξω σε ἅπαντα τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ ὡς ἔχουν.”  
Ἐλθόντες δὲ πρὸς ποταμοῦ τὰ γειτνιώντα δένδρα,  
ἡ Μαξιμού . . . . .  
ρίπτει τὸ ἐπιλώρικον, πολὺς γὰρ ἦν ὁ καύσων  
καὶ ὁ χιτῶν τῆς Μαξιμοῦς ὑπῆρχεν ἀραχνώδης  
πάντα καθάπερ ἔσοπτρον ἐνέφαινε τὰ μέλη,  
καὶ τοὺς μαστοὺς προκύπτοντας μικρὸν ἄρτι τῶν στέρνων.  
Καὶ ἐτρώθη μὲν ἡ ψυχὴ, ὠραία γὰρ ὑπῆρχε.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>91</sup> For a palm tree on a twelfth-century ivory panel, cf. Diehl, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>92</sup> Pelekanides, *op. cit.*, p. 127; cf. p. 219.

<sup>93</sup> G., VI, 775-778, 781-785.

“ Come let us go under the tree’s shadow,  
 And I will teach you all that me concerns.”  
 We came to the trees bordering the river,  
 And Maximo . . . . .  
 Threw off her tabard, for the heat was great.  
 Maximo’s tunic was like gossamer,  
 Which as a mirror all her limbs displayed,  
 And her small paps just peeping from her breast.  
 My soul was wounded, she was beautiful.

At this point in the Grottaferrata a page describing the amorous scene is torn by someone who was scandalized by the details of Digenes’ adulterous love here. This action, however, is supplied for us by the Trebizond MS., lines 2643-2646, which tell us,

Ἡ Μαξιμὼ τὸν ἔρωτα ἐξῆπτεν ἔτι μᾶλλον,  
 τοξεύουσα ταῖς ἀκοαῖς λόγοις παγγλυκυτάτοις,  
 ἦτον γὰρ νέα καὶ καλή, ώραία καὶ παρθένος,  
 ἠττήθη οὖν ὁ λογισμὸς βεβήλῳ ἐπιθύμει.

Maximo lighted up my love all the more  
 Shooting upon my hearing sweetest words,  
 And she was young and fair, lovely and virgin,  
 Reason was conquered by profane desire.

The ikonography of our plate fits exactly all the details in this scene. The locale of the plate is a meadow, with flowers, with lovers sitting under the tree’s shade. The lover is dressed in a thin tunic such as Digenes wears (G., VI, 175) in the love scene. His hair, eyes and face resemble the features of Digenes among the fustanella warriors.<sup>94</sup> The girl who wears a crown fits the description of Maximo, Queen of the Amazons. Her gown is diaphanous and plate 1704, which belongs to the same dinner set, elaborates the erotic details of the missing scene in the Grottaferrata. There is no doubt that plates 1685, 1704, 1748 (Morgan, pl. LII, LIII 1, n) all deal with the ikonography of Digenes and Queen Maximo, a romantic theme which the painter borrowed from the literary epic.

In the Corinth excavations of 1959-60 two fragments were discovered which extend the ikonography of the Amazon Queen. In the first plate, C-59-120 (Pl. 22, 7), we have a female with crown. A comparison of this head with that of Queen Maximo in plate 1685 establishes the identity with certainty. The moon face, eyes, and nose are so similar to the Digenes master in 1531, 1532, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 465, E 2, fig. 30 and *Hesperia*, X 1941, p. 10, figs. 1-2 that it must be by the same hand.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. No. 1502, 1520, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, p. 464, fig. 30.



Whether Digenes was associated with her on the plate cannot be known for the plate is fractured. What scene in the epic this fragment represents cannot be known through lack of further details. The second plate, C-60-42 (Pl. 22, 8), shows the full left side of a woman wearing pleated skirt and crown as shown in plate 1685, which once again establishes identity with Queen Maximo. As in C-59-120 she seems to be wearing a leg-of-mutton sleeve which is only partially shown. She is tall but the pose in this fragment is puzzling. The angle of the head is tilted back at an almost impossible angle. The scene involves violent action; either the figure is dancing with her head in the position of heads of Bacchanals in classical art or she is being abducted against her will. Though these fragments picture Queen Maximo they are so unlike the theme in the other plates that we must wait further fragments from future excavations in Corinth to give us ikonographic clues for interpretation.

Though the themes of the dragon and the love affair with Maximo are clearly identifiable in terms of the Akritan tradition there are many scenes in the plates that defy precise identification. Plate 1191 shows two warriors engaged in combat with swords, while plate XI in Rice's *B.G.P.*, again shows two warriors fighting. Plate 1274 shows a fragmentary man and lion confronting each other, which, as has been said, could be Digenes or another Akritan slaying a lion. Plate 1279 shows a "figure (hand preserved) in front view, wearing a crudely drawn pointed cap, being struck down with a heavy sword." Miss Frantz has identified this scene with Digenes being overcome by Charos,<sup>95</sup> one of the most widely sung themes in the Akritan cycle. Plate 1535 shows in the interior a very fragmentary warrior wearing a crosshatched doublet and raising a bow in his right hand; in the field of this plate we see a fallen warrior clad in incised hose. Plate 1536 shows a battle scene with a fustanella warrior in the center, and smaller similar warriors scattered about the field. Plate 1537 shows fragments of a battle scene with a warrior figure in the center and smaller figures at right angles to it. Plate 1538 shows a battle scene involving many small fragmentary figures, one of which holds a sword. In addition to the battle scenes we have several Akritan figures engaged in sports. In plate 1568 we see a fustanella warrior playing ball, while in 1497 we see a fustanella warrior accompanied by a hound; in plate 1498 we see a hunter accompanied, according to Morgan, by a "hound?", and according to Miss Frantz, by a leopard, a scene she identifies with Digenes receiving leopards as part of a wedding present.<sup>96</sup>

The question arises whether any or all of the above plates can be identified with Digenes Akritas. We have already seen that the ballads have a cluster of heroes with divers episodes attached to them. The ikonography is not specific enough for positive identification. These plates show many generic scenes and here we come across the same problem and difficulties which we meet in Geometric vases when we try to

<sup>95</sup> *Byzantion*, XV, 1940-1941, pp. 89-90.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

identify genre scenes. It must also be kept in mind that the Byzantine plates are not completely dependent either on the epic or the oral cycle. They show us independent phases of Akritan life and dress which do not appear in the epic tradition. They show us in the fustanella warriors portraits closer to the historical Akrites of the twelfth century and many of the above unidentifiable fragments may be giving us "snapshots" of the Akritan world which neither the epics or the cycle has preserved for us.

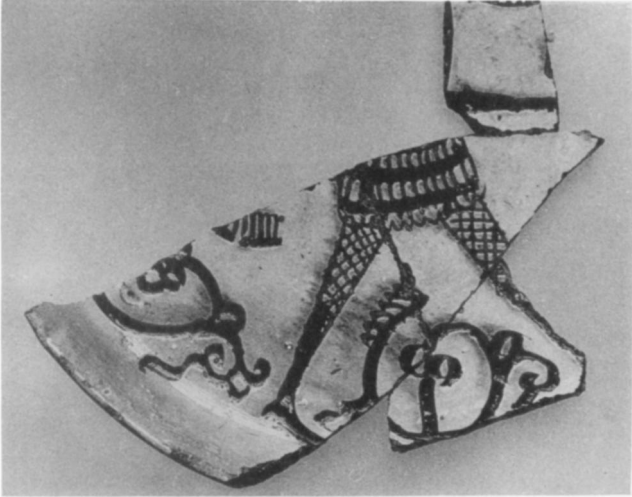
In conclusion, our study of the Akritan ikonography on the Byzantine pottery has shown that the Byzantine epic has now three facets, the oral, the written, the pictorial. Future Akritan studies must use these plates to get data which supplement the written and oral epic tradition while at the same time giving us an insight into the twelfth century through its own art. In them we see the Akrites who could be used historically to illustrate the treatise *Περὶ Παραδρομῆς Πολέμων*. Yet these plates do not reflect history in the raw. They are influenced both by the literary and oral tradition of the epic; they fall under the sway of the "marvellous" which we see in the epic and in a more exaggerated form in the cycle. Though these plates concentrate their interest in the world of the epic they also show an interest in classical mythology and supplement this story as told by Professor Weitzmann.

The sources of some of the ikonography could well be the illustrations in the literary epic whose existence is assured for us by the evidence of Dapontes and the Escorial MS. Most likely the dragon theme and the Maximo episode found their way into the plates via these illuminations. We also have evidence for the influence of the oral cycle on some of the ikonography. If the plates cannot give us all the exactitude we should wish in tracing the respective influence of the written and the oral phase of the Byzantine epic they do shed light on the relation of the ballads to the literary epic. They show us for the first time that both phases co-existed in the twelfth century when Professor Mavrogordato claims a divorce between the two, saying, "we do not know what these ballads were like when first sung. If they were recognizably the same as they are now, they have obviously nothing to do with our Digenes."<sup>97</sup> If so we are confronted with evidence to the contrary in our study of Akritan ikonography. The plates show that the literary epic and the oral ballads have much in common as early as the twelfth century; furthermore they show, where the plates are tangent to oral episodes, a high degree of fidelity in the oral transmission of the ballads. Finally these plates by giving us portraits of the historical Akrites, as presented by twelfth century art, give us a valuable *tertium quid comparationis*, which constitutes a new facet in Akritan studies.

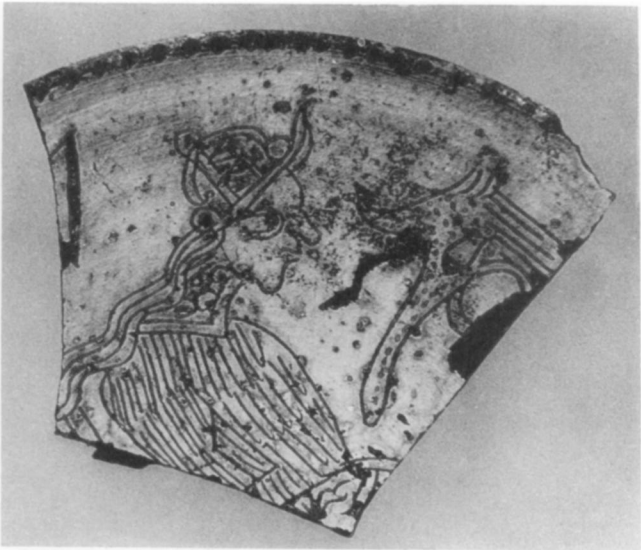
JAMES A. NOTOPOULOS

TRINITY COLLEGE, HARTFORD

<sup>97</sup> Mavrogordato, *op. cit.*, p. xxviii.



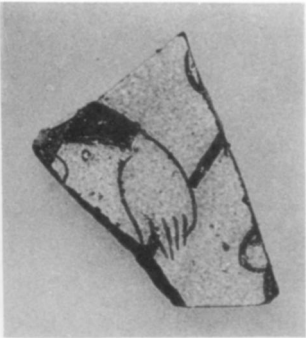
1 (C-59-47)



5 (C-60-27)



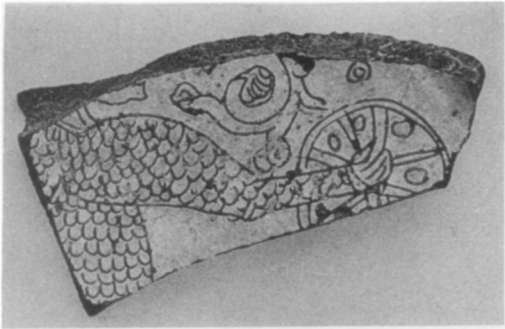
2 (C-59-129)



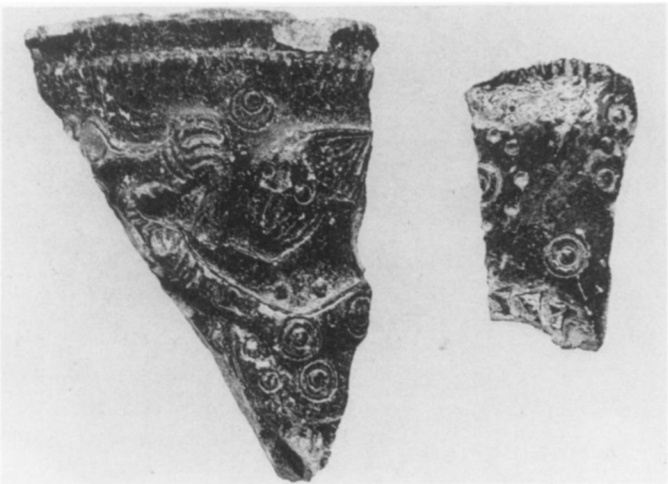
3 (C-59-130)



7 (C-59-120)



4 (C-60-49)



6 (C-60-31)



8 (C-60-42)