

THE CHURCH FOUNDERS PICTURED IN THE MONASTERY OF SELTZO

B y
ELIAS BAKOS

In the area of Radovizi-Arta, by the northern side of the mountain Ningosi and on the right bank of the Acheloos river stands the Holy Monastery of the Assumption of the Holy Mother also known by the name Seltso. This Monastery was originally established at the beginning of the 10th century and the present one standing today was erected again on its ruins and restored in 1698.

On the right apse of the main temple the masters of Arta and sibling brothers, Nickos and Apostolis, are depicted. They are both pictured, life size, offering a model of the church to the Holy Mother. On the inscriptions the brothers Nickos and Apostolis are referred to as «founders» of the church, «most honorable noblemen» and «masters of Arta». Painters of these pictures are a person named Nikolaos, a priest of Arta, and his children. The attire of the masters is remarkable. On their heads they wear head-covers, differing one from the other, and bear halos as if they were saints. On their shoulders they wear pea-jackets of hieratic style. Underneath they have double waistcoats which cover white shirts with wide sleeves. Their breeches («vraka») present particular interest and are identical. On their waists they wear belts and their feet are in slippers. Their portraits are pictured with rigorous manly characteristics. Although such pictures of founders exist in almost all the Greek territory: Peloponese, Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus, Crete and elsewhere, these pictures are nevertheless original and very interesting.

In conclusion we note the following:

—The founders, with whom we have dealt, are sibling brothers, rulers, i.e. masters or notables of Arta, of whom Modern Greek History has no knowledge. This matter requires special study and investigation to prove from the historic view-point, whether or not said founders are related in any way to the *Armatoloi* (non-regular armed forces of that time) and especially those of Aspropotamos, where

they are pictured, and to establish what was their relationship to the first *armatolos* Meindanis, (who died in 1715) and what was their general national activity.

—Further these frescoes should be studied from the point of view of attire because their clothing, on the whole, is original, almost primary and popular in their stage of development, which on the one hand is worn for the first time in the Epirotic area, especially by officials, and on the other hand combines the byzantine liturgical style with the secular-popular.

—These pictures are equally interesting for folklore study which, through the study of popular art and clothing, can better understand popular civilization.

— These frescoes also present elements for study to the artist-painter, mainly because of the combination of the perpetual and timely factors in the picture.

—They also supply the theologian with material to carry out theological study, from the view-point of Hagiology and the theology of icons.



1. The Monastery of Seltso.



2. The church founders pictured in the Monastery of Seltso.

—They also provide the psychologist with the opportunity to observe, among other things, that moment when the pictured founders are passing from secular life to that of the saints.

—Finally, sociology also is afforded the opportunity to study, through the pictures of officials, the political life and the local administrative organization of that time.

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