

Itinerant Suspicions: Russian Icon Traders in the Macedonian Hinterland Through the Eyes of Greek Consuls and Agents

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Abstract:

Itinerant Russian icon traders, colloquially known as afenya, one of the main channels through which various objects of Russian religious art found their way to the Ottoman-dominated Balkans, were seen by Greek nationalists during the late 19th century as the spearhead of a Pan Slavist thrust designed to hit Hellenism's soft religious underbelly. Two sets of documents from Greek diplomats and their agents in the Macedonian hinterland, dealing with two emblematic incidents involving such Russian traders, shed light on this trade, its features and its reception by local communities at the era of Balkan national revivals.

Keywords: *Russian icon traders, Afenya, Macedonian Question, Voden (today Edessa), Florina*