ИЗКУСТВОВЕДСКИ ЧЕТЕНИЯ
Тематичен рецензиран годишник за изкуствознание в два тома
2017.I – Старо изкуство

ВИЗАНТИЙСКО
И ПОСТВИЗАНТИЙСКО ИЗКУСТВО:
ПРЕСИЧАНЕ НА ГРАНИЦИ

BYZANTINE
AND POST-BYZANTINE ART:
CROSSING BORDERS

ART READINGS
Thematic Peer-reviewed Annual in Art Studies, Volumes I–II
2017.I – Old Art

Съставители
Емануел Мутафов
Йда Тот

Edited by
Emmanuel Moutafov
Ida Toth

София, 2018
Content

Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art:
Crossing Borders, Exploring Boundaries ..........................................................11
Emmanuel Moutafov, Ida Toth

Words and Images in Early Christian Inscriptions
(3rd–7th Century) ...............................................................................................39
Antonio E. Felle

“Das Licht Christi leuchtet allen” – Form und Funktion
von Kreuzen mit Tetragrammen in byzantinischen
und postbyzantinischen Handschriften .............................................................71
Andreas Rhoby

Between Princes and Labourers: The Legacy of Hosios Christodoulos
and his Successors in the Aegean Sea (11th–13th Centuries.) .........................91
Angeliki Katsioti

Essay on a Visual Perspective of Medieval Writing ...........................................129
Vincent Debiais

The Inner Portal of St Mark’s Basilica in Venice
between East and West .......................................................................................151
Valentina Cantone

Images and Texts across Time:
The Three Layers of Mural Paintings
in the Church of St George in Sofia .................................................................171
Elka Bakalova, Tsvetan Vasilev

The Balkans and the Renaissance World ..........................................................193
Jelena Erdeljan

Panagia Eleousa in Great Prespa Lake:
A symbolic artistic language at the Beginning of the 15th Century ..................209
Melina Paissidou

Un cycle hagiographique peu étudié
de la peinture extérieure moldave:
La vie de saint Pacôme le Grand .................................................................231
Constantin I. Ciobanu
Post-Byzantine Wall Paintings in Euboea: 
The Monastery of Panagia Peribleptos at Politika ....................................................249
Andromachi Katselaki

A Unique 15th Century Donation to Vatopedi: 
A Pair of Wood-carved Lecterns .................................................................265
Dimitrios Liakos

Between Loyalty, Memory and 
the Law: Byzantine and Slavic Dedicatory Church Inscriptions 
Mentioning Foreign Rulers in the 14th and 15th Centuries .........................303
Anna Adashinskaya

The Illustrated Slavonic Miscellanies 
of Damascenes Studite’s Thesauros – 
a New Context for Gospel Illustrations in the Seventeenth Century ...............325
Elissaveta Moussakova

Jovan Četirević Grabovan – an 18th-Century Itinerant Orthodox Painter. 
Some Ethnic and Artistic Considerations ..................................................349
Aleksandra Kučeković

Painters of Western Training Working 
for Orthodox Patrons – Remarks on the Evidence 
of Late-medieval Transylvania (14th–15th Century) ..................................369
Dragoş Gh. Năstăsoiu

The Scene of the Road to Calvary 
in St George’s Church in Veliko Tarnovo ...................................................391
Maria Kolusheva

Костадин Геров-Антикаров – даскал и зограф ..............................................411
Владимир Димитров

Religious and National Mythmaking: 
Conservation and Reconstruction of the Social Memory ..........................427
Antonios Tsakalos

List of Contributors .........................................................................................446
Images and Texts across Time: 
The Three Layers of Mural Paintings in the Church of St George in Sofia

Elka Bakalova¹
The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Tsvetan Vasilev²
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Abstract. With a history stretching back about sixteen centuries, the church of St George in Sofia is one of the most emblematic landmarks of the city. The three mural layers represent the leading trends in the Byzantine art of the period when they were created: from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. This study offers a new interpretation of the epigraphic data from the scrolls of the saints, which are depicted in the second layer. By analyzing the relevant literary sources – wherever possible – the study reveals the importance of these texts for the spiritual aspirations of their reading publics.

Key words: Byzantine art, wall painting, Byzantine epigraphy, Greek inscriptions.

The church of St George in Sofia is one of the oldest structures with a central plan in the territory of Bulgaria. The church is a monumental brick building on a square foundation with four semi-circular

¹ Prof. Dsc. Elka Bakalova is a Corresponding Member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. All her research, teaching, and public activities focus on medieval Bulgarian and Byzantine art, Christian rites, as well as on the preservation of the monuments of culture.

² Dr. Tsvetan Vasilev is an Assistant Professor in Classics at the Department of Classical Philology at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”. His research interests focus on Medieval Greek and Medieval Latin epigraphy and palaeography.
Fig. 1. The Church of St George, general view

niches at the corners of the square and a large rectangular niche on the eastern wall; when it was converted into a church, the niche became an altar apse. The upper part of the building is shaped as a cylinder (the actual rotunda) with a diameter of 9.5 m; it is completed with a semi-spherical dome. The total height of the church is about 14 m (Fig. 1).

The initial function and the dating of the building is still under discussion. According to some scholars, it was constructed as a Roman bathhouse between the second to the beginning of the fourth century. They regard the remains of a hypocaust system found in the course of excavations as evidence in support of their theory. Others believe that the building was originally a cult structure – a martyrion or a baptisterion, – dating from the first half of the fourth century, and that the system of the rectangular pools were not a hypocaust but there for ventilation and drainage purposes. The earliest pub-
lication on the subject is by Bogdan Filov, but he mainly focuses on the architecture and the architectural context of the monument. André Grabar accepted Filov’s conclusion that the original function of the Rotunda was as a bathhouse. He noted that the dedication to St George could have been influenced by the round church with the same dedication in Thessalonica, although the original function of the two differed, making the similarity of the architectural design purely accidental.

The exact time when the building started to be used as a church is unknown. The first two layers were discovered during restoration work completed in 1971. Until then, only the third layer of the mural paintings and a few older fragments, previously published by B. Filov, were known. Following this stage of restoration, several further studies were published, revealing data about the newly found mural paintings.

The most recent study on the church of St George was carried out by Asen Kirin. His opinion was that the Rotunda of St George is the oldest standing structure in the city of Sofia (ancient Serdica). Built in the early 300s C.E., the structure has been in nearly continuous use for sixteen centuries. Originally a part of a Roman bath, by the second half of the fifth century it was converted into a church. This church served Serdica as its cathedral between the fifth and the sixteenth century, when it was converted into a mosque. The Rotunda became a church again in 1878.

At the time of its construction in the early fourth century, the Rotunda was part of a large architectural complex that comprised the imperial palace in Serdica. In all likelihood, this was the residence of Emperor Constantine the Great during his lengthy stays in Serdica.
at different times between 316 and 321 C.E. The late antique imperial palace in Serdica is virtually unknown and has never received sufficient attention from scholars.

In her latest book, Ani Dancheva-Vasileva presents key data on the early history of Serdica. Based on an analysis of all source data, as well as of scholarly views, the author made the following assumption: “A number of historians believe that the Episcopal church of Serdica Triaditsa that initially contained St John of Rila’s relics was indeed the church of St George, the Rotunda...” And further on: “… after four centuries, upon their return to Sofia, the holy relics will be deposited in the Church of St George. One could assume

that the temple where the relics were deposited the first time would be used again to house them for seven days before their delivery to Rila Monastery”.  

A general description of the murals in the church can be found in L. Mavrodinova and M. Tsoncheva’s publications.

The first layer of the mural paintings consists of the images in the drum and in the large semi-spherical dome (Fig. 2). These represent six angels as a part of a composition of heavenly forces adoring Christ, whose figure was probably at the top of the dome (the exist-

The faded images of four prophets adorn the wall between the windows. Three of them are better preserved: Jonah (judging by Filov’s photograph), John the Forerunner and a third prophet that remains unidentified. Modern scholars unanimously attribute these figures to the eleventh century, but their opinions differ regarding the more precise dating within the eleventh century. We strongly believe that the imposing monumental features of the figures; the marked relief of the forms; the heavy folds of the drapery that enhance the bodies’ stereometric element, and above all the archangel’s face, with its exquisite beauty and modeling, all correspond to the classicizing style in Byzantine Art such as can be found in the eleventh-century mosaics in Daphne near Athens, Greece.

The wall paintings from the second layer include images of church feasts and several figures in full length. Above all, there are eight figures of prophets, depicted two by two between the windows of the drum. L. Mavrodinova has published a study focusing on the prophets’ images from the first and second painting layers of the church⁹.

Below the figures of the monks on the western wall, fragments of a donor’s composition are preserved; its upper part consists of a figure in bishop’s garments holding the model the church and is of particular interest. The donor in this layer of the mural painting could be the Bishop of Serdica. The large circular inscription in Greek at the base of the drum also belongs to this layer. It is very likely that the name of the Bishop of Serdica was also mentioned in it, but this does not survive in the present state of preservation.

E. Pezopoulos and K. Konstantopoulos have provided a more complete reading of the inscription, revealing that in reality it is a piece

---

of poetry composed in the iambic meter. The poetic topoi identified by Pezopulos indicate that the author of the epigram was well acquainted with the works of Middle Byzantine Constantinopolitan literature\(^\text{10}\).

After the completion of the general restoration of the church and its wall paintings, it became clear that the iconographic program of the second wall-painting layer was not changed much in comparison with the first one, as the fragments of images and haloes respectively of prophets and monks from the first layer can be distinguished beneath the frieze with the prophets on the drum and the monks above the western entrance. Restoration provided evidence that the first layer was removed before applying the decoration of the sec-

---

ond layer. However, the dome base with the angel-painted frieze was not decorated anew at that period of time, as the wall paintings of the third layer from the fourteenth century cover the angels’ figures directly. Apparently, the dome was partially destroyed and rebuilt in the period between the first and the third painting of the church.

The images of the Holy Virgin and of Archangel Gabriel that constitute the composition of the Annunciation were depicted on both sides of the altar apse, while the remaining feast scenes are situated, two by two, in the four niches of the church. The Dormition of the Virgin scene is situated on the southern wall, and the scene of the Crucifixion on the northern one.

The images of the four Evangelists belong to the same layer, as well as the full-length images of five holy monks that occupy the entire area above the entrance on the western wall. Four of the monks hold scrolls with inscriptions; the latter have still not been deciphered properly in scientific publications (Fig. 4). At present these images lack identifying inscriptions; it has not been established with certainty whether such inscriptions were written at all and the subject is still debatable, as the upper section of almost all the images is damaged.

The first attempt to read the four inscriptions on the scrolls of the full-length images of the monks was made at the beginning of the twentieth century (1901) by Eftim Sprostranov11. In his comments on E. Sprostranov’s readings about 30 years later, Bogdan Filov concluded that Sprostranov was wrong, and that the inscriptions were unreadable12.

The third attempt to decipher the inscriptions was made by Ivan Dujčev, who identified the second monk from south to north as St Arsenius the Great; however, he could not identify with certainty the monk displayed to the north of Arsenius. He suggested that it could be St Euthymius the Great13.

Irina Kandarasheva has published the most recent publication regarding the monks’ identity that also contains some observations about the inscriptions; her contribution is the discovery of the text of the inscription on St Anthony the Great’s scroll in the famous Painter’s Manual of Dionysius of Fourna. Accordingly, Kandarasheva has suggested that the first figure in the row is St Sabbas the Sanctified, and that the fifth belongs to St John Kalybites. However, her assumptions have been based on stylistic parallels with the Bachkovo Ossuary and Boyana Church, and not on a detailed analysis of the epigraphic data, which lay outside the scope of her study.

After these, there have been no further publications of the four inscriptions nor have their literary sources been identified, in spite of the vital significance that such an investigation would have for a proper interpretation of this epigraphic material. The present contribution aims to fill the gap in this regard.

The southernmost monk (or the first figure from left to right when looking in west direction) is depicted holding a scroll (Fig. 5), which reads as follows:

Diplomatic transcription: + καλὸν φαγῖν κραία κὲ πυῆν

It is better to eat meat and drink wine and not to eat the flesh of one’s brethren through slander.\(^{15}\)

The source of the text is the well-know work, the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, more specifically – the section listing the sayings of St Hyperechius\(^{16}\).

Such an attribution could lead to the conclusion that the depicted monk is St Hyperechius.

Here, an important note should be made concerning all similar cases of problematic identification associated with images of prophets and saints: in the case of missing or obliterated identifying inscriptions, the process of identification is possible only through the interpretation of the texts on the scrolls or in the open books that the figures hold. Even if the sources of these texts are properly identified – a difficult task in itself – the saints’ identity could still remain uncertain, as the same source-text could be displayed on the scrolls of different saints. Such discrepancies between image and inscription have been observed in Byzantine art, yet they grow significantly in number during the Post-Byzantine period\(^{17}\).

For instance, although rarely used in inscriptions, the above-mentioned text is written in Old Church Slavonic on St Mark of Thrace’s scroll on the façade of the church *Resurrection of God* in the Monastery of Suceviţa\(^{18}\).


\(^{16}\) Περὶ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Ὑπερεχίου, De abbate Hyperechio, PG 65, col. 429 C: Εἶπε πἀλιν· Καλὸν φαγεῖν κρέα καὶ πιεῖν οἶνον, καὶ μὴ ἐν καταλαλιαῖς σάρκας ἀδελφῶν.


\(^{18}\) Ciobanu, Constantin. Les sources des Citations peintes sur les phylactères des Saints de la rangée inférieure de la façade de l’Eglise de La Résurrection de Dieu du Monastère de Sucevița.
In general, this phenomenon is an element of a more complex issue; namely, the accurate attribution of a text to an author and the significance of this attribution in the particular church, the particular region and/or the particular period. In essence, such research questions are inevitably associated with two other important aspects of medieval culture: anonymity and literacy\(^{19}\).

However, the names of the second and the third monk from south to north are written precisely on the scrolls that they hold: on them, we read the names Ἀρσένης (in the Vocative case) and Εὐθύμιος (in the Nominative case) respectively.

The name Ἀρσένης has led I. Dujčev to conclude that this scroll belonged to the figure of St Arsenius the Great. The monk holds a scroll with the following text (Fig. 6):

Diplomatic transcription: + Ἀρσέ[ν]ης δἰ ὅν ἐξῆλθες ἐκ τοῦ βείου φεῦγε σιῶπα ἡσύχαζε καὶ σώζου.

Edited text: Ἀρσένιε, δἰ ὅν ἐξῆλθες ἐκ τοῦ βίου φεῦγε, σιώπα, ἡσύχαζε καὶ σώζου.

Translation: Arsenius, why have

you left the world? Flee, be silent, be at peace and save yourself! (TsV\textsuperscript{20}).

This text also comes from the Apophthegmata Patrum, but here the inscription is a combination of two sentences that cannot be found together \textit{verbatim} in the literary source. The first sentence quotes the words of St Arsenius talking to himself toward the end of his life\textsuperscript{21}, and the second is a command given to him by God at the beginning of his ascetic deeds\textsuperscript{22}.

The text on the scroll held by the third monk in the row begins with the name Εὐθύμιος. This should be regarded as a direct invitation to the reader to properly identify the saint’s image. The saint’s name is not syntactically connected to the rest of the inscription, as is the case with St Arsenius the Great’s scroll. The text reads as follows (Fig. 7):

Diplomatic transcription:

```
+ Εὐθύμηος· εὐθὺ στῆτε
dakry(ein) | χαίρετε δὲ

+ Εὐθύμηος· εὐθυ στήτε
dakry(ein) | χαίρετε δὲ

+ Εὐθύμηος· εὐθυ στήτε
dakry(ein) | χαίρετε δὲ
```

Fig. 7. The scroll of St Euthymius the Great (scroll Nr. 3)

\textsuperscript{20} Translations with the initials ‘TsV’ throughout the article are done by Tsvetan Vasilev.

\textsuperscript{21} Note: The underlined words are present both in the inscription and in the sources. Οὗτος δὲ ὁ λόγος τοῦ γέροντος ἦν· Ἀρσένιε, διὸ ἐξῆλθες; λαλήσας, πολλάκις μετεμελήθην, σιωπήσας δὲ οὐδέποτε. PG 65, col. 105 C. Translation: The old man used to say to himself: ‘Arsenius, why have you left the world? I have often repented of having spoken, but never of having been silent.’ (Ward. The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 18).

\textsuperscript{22} Κύριε, ὀδήγησόν με πώς σωθῶ. Καὶ ἦλθεν αὐτῷ φωνή λέγουσα· φεῦγε, σιώπα, ἡσύχαζε, αὐτὰ τοῖς θείοις ἀι διὰ τῆς ἀναμαρτησίας. PG 65, col. 88 B. Translation: ‘Lord, lead me in the way of salvation.’ And a voice came saying to him, ‘Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness.’ (Ward. The sayings of the Desert Fathers, 9.)
Edited text: + Εὐθύμιος· εὔθυ στήτε δακρύ(ειν), χαίρετε δὲ ἐ(ν) κ(υρί)ῳ ἡ ἐλπὶς αὐτοῦ.

Translation: Euthymius: Stop crying immediately, but be happy instead, as his hope lies in the Lord (TsV).

In the story of St Euthymius’s life, compiled by hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes, St Euthymius gathered his disciples and followers when he was about to die; he prophesied the day of his own death, consoled them and appointed a new abbot. At his funeral “the suffering because of the loss of Euthymius was the cause of much lamentation23”. Thus, the inscription could be regarded as advice towards the lamenting crowd, and an allusion to the saint’s salvation – the ‘hope’ in the Lord.

It is tempting to assume that this particular inscription could allude to another saint’s salvation – namely, the most highly revered Bulgarian saint, St John of Rila, whose wonderworking relics were initially brought to the town of Sredets, and may have been placed in the church of St George for some time during the reign of Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1067–1071). This, of course, is only a speculation based on the fact that, to our best knowledge, the text on St Euthymius’ scroll has not ever been recorded in any other church either in this period or at any time later, as well as on the influential content of the message, which may have been directed toward the Christian crowds that sought consolation, guidance, healing and help from St John of Rila24.

If the above assumptions are not true, the admonition on St Euthymius’ scroll could be regarded as a source of inspiration for the faithful in their hope of salvation, conveying a universal message resonating strongly even today. The fourth monk to the north holds a scroll with the following text (Fig. 8):

---

23 Πάσι μὲν οὖν τὸ πάθος τῆς Εὐθυμίου στερήσεως, πολλῶν δακρύων αἴτιον ἦν. PG 114, col. 692 A.

24 The author of one of the oldest stories of St John’s life is Γεώργιος ὁ Σκυλίτζης, an official and governor of Sredetz in the late 12th century during the reign of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180); according to his own account, he was miraculously cured with the help of the saint’s relics. By his account the Emperor himself was cured of a disease by St John’s relics with help from the local bishop. For further reading, see Zlatarski, Vasil. Георги Скилица и написаното от него житие на св. Иван Рилски [Georgi Skilitsa i napisanoto ot nego zhitiie na sv. Ivan Rilski]. – Buletin de la société historique à Sofia, 1933, Vol. XIII, 49-80.
Fig. 8. The scroll of the fourth monk (scroll Nr. 4)

Diplomatic transcription:

\[ \text{derabad} \text{ tás } \text{ παγίδας } \text{ τοῦ } \text{ διαβόλου } \text{ ἡπλωμένας } \text{ καὶ στενάξας } \text{ τίς } \text{ ἄρα } \delta(\varepsilon)? \]

Edited text: 

Εἶδον τὰς παγίδας τοῦ διαβόλου ἡπλωμένας καὶ στενάξας· Τίς ἄρα δ(ε?)

Translation: I saw the snares that the devil spreads out and (I said) groaning: “Who...?” (TsV).

The source of the text is a saying attributed to St Anthony the Great in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, which safely confirms the identification of the saintly figure 25, especially because this text is more ‘stable’ and standardized, as well as being commonly attested in other churches on the scroll of the same saint 26. This allows us to concur with the conclusion already been made by other researchers that

---

25 The words that appear in the inscription are underlined: Εἶπεν ὁ ἀββᾶς Ἀντώνιος· Εἶδον πάσας τὰς παγίδας τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἡπλωμένας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ στενάξας εἶπον· Τίς ἄρα παρέρχεται ταύτας· Καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς λεγούσης μοι· Ἡ ταπεινοφροσύνη (PG 65, 77B). Translation: ‘I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, “What can get through from such snares?” Then I heard a voice saying to me, “Humility.” ’ (Ward. The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, 2). The text, slightly changed, is mentioned in the *Painter’s Manual of Dionysius of Fourna* and is attributed to St Anthony the Great, cf. DF, 162.

26 For instance, the same text rendered in Old Church Slavonic is written on St Anthony’s scroll in Bulgarian churches dating from the seventeenth century, which goes a long way towards confirming this attribution. The churches are: St Theodore Tyron and St Theodore Stratelates Church, Dobarsko, cf. Kuneva, Tsveta. „Св. Теодор Тирон и Теодор Стратилат”, Добърско [“Sv. Teodor Tiron i Teodor Stratilat”, Dobarsko]. In: Corpus of Seventeenth Century Wall Paintings in Bulgaria. Sofia, 2012, 35; Seslavtsi Monastery St Nicholas, cf. Gergova, Ivanka. Сеславски манастир „Св. Никола” [Seslavski manastir “Sv. Nikola”]. In: Corpus of Seventeenth Century Wall Paintings in Bulgaria, 51.
the monk is indeed St Anthony the Great; moreover, this leads us to propose the identity of the remaining two saints from this group as St Arsenius and St Euthymius.

St Anthony is regarded as the father of monastic life and the first monk to go to live in the desert; he was the leader of the so-called Desert Fathers, the most prominent ascetic figure of fourth-century monasticism in Egypt.

St Arsenius the Great was also an Egyptian monk from the same period, another of the Desert Fathers.

St Euthymius is regarded as the father of Palestinian monasticism, so it is no surprise that the three monks are usually depicted together. The fact that St Hyperechius is also one of the Desert Fathers from the fourth century probably justifies his inclusion within this group.

Returning to the inscription, the source-text is rendered with omissions, which prove extremely helpful in recreating the process of transferring the source-text to the inscription, or in other words – in discovering the ‘transfer’ of the literary text to the church wall, where it assumes the role of an inscription with a completely different expressive function. Despite the syntactic simplification – the omission of the adjective πάσας, the verb εἶπον, and the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – the content and the main idea of the original text are entirely alive and discernible for the reading recipient.

The level of the Greek language in the four inscriptions discussed here contributes to an easier comprehension by the audience. An oral pronunciation is detected on the basis of certain language characteristics such as:

1. Itacism
   \(<\text{H}> = <\text{I}> \text{ in } \delta ηαβόλου, \ ελπίς; scriptio inversa in } \iota;\)
   \(<\text{Υ}> = <\text{I}> \text{ in } \piυήν; scriptio inversa in } \ησίχαζα[\iota];\)

2. Isochronism
   \(<\text{Ο}> = <\text{Ω}> \text{ in } σόζου, σιόπα;\)

3. Monophthongisation

27 Regarding the problem of readability and visibility of the medieval inscriptions, see: Eastmond, Antony (ed.). Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World. Cambridge, 2015.
Lastly, the content of the texts written on the scrolls of the four monks reveals their powerful message and their intransient Christian value: the true meaning of fasting and the power of words (scroll Nr. 1)\(^{28}\), of earnest prayer uttered in silence (scroll Nr. 2), of the future salvation (scroll Nr. 3), and of the first and foremost virtue: humility (scroll Nr. 4).

The frescoes of the second layer in the Church of St George represent the most typical features of wall painting between the twelfth and the thirteenth century with regard to both their iconography, as well as their style, and all authors are unanimous about their dating. The linear-rhythmic structure of the compositions and the psychological expression of the images – which, according to researchers, express the tragic pathos and the dramatic tension of the times, – link these wall paintings with the greatest monuments from the Late Komnenian period. This trend is visible in monuments from the second half of the twelfth century, namely on the wall paintings of churches such as St Panteleimon at Nerezi, commissioned by one of the Komnenos family, the church of the Virgin Mary at Lagoudera in Cyprus, and elsewhere.

The best-preserved wall paintings in the church can be found in the third layer of the murals. It includes the images of prophets with scrolls and the image of Christ Pantokrator, dating from the 1380s, prior to the Ottoman conquest of Serdica.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that the wall paintings in the Church of St George from the period between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries are in line with the leading trends of their time and possess high artistic qualities. Together with the influential message of the inscribed texts, discussed in this article, they contribute significantly to the status of the Rotunda of St George as a monument of culture of national significance.

\(^{28}\) Cf. Jesus Christ’s words in the Gospel of Matthew: *It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles* (Matt. 15:11 NRSV).
Abbreviations

DF Διονυσίου τού ἐκ Φουρνά ἐρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης, ἐκδιδομένη ὑπὸ Α. Παπαδοπούλου-Κεραμέως, ἐν Πετρούπολει, 1909.


Bibliography


Kirin, Asen. The Rotunda of St George and Late Antique Serdica: From Imperial Palace to Episcopal Complex, Ph.D. Dissertation directed by Prof. Slobodan Curcic. Princeton University, 2000.


Ротондата „Св. Георги“, една от най-старите постройки в България с центричен план, и до днес запазва положението си на важна културна средишна точка в модерна София и е автентично свидетелство за значимостта на града като епископски център през Средновековието. По някои въпроси, свързани с паметника, все още няма достатъчна яснота, като например: кога сградата започва да функционира като християнски храм, каква е точната датировка на трите запазени стенописни слоя и др.

В настоящата статия въз основа на иконографски и стилов анализ предлагаме нашата гледна точка за датиране на стенописите, представяме прочит и интерпретация на епиграфския материал в свитците на четири монашески фигури от втория живописен слой, изобразени на западната стена на наоса, а също и нови идеи за идентификация на някои от монашеските изображения, доколкото наличните данни на средновековен език позволяват това.

Със своите езикови особености представените гръцки надписи предоставят ценна информация за нивото на образованост на пищещите и посетителите на храма в рамките на конкретния хронологичен период на изписване на втория стенописен слой. Анализът на литературните източници на надписите показва връзката им със средновековни византийски аскетични съчинения, което разкрива литературните предпочитания и вкусове както на средновековните зографи, така и на поръчителите на стенописната декорация.
List of Contributors

Andreas Rhoby, Ph.D, Associate Professor, University of Vienna (Austria)
andreas.rhoby@oeaw.ac.at

Andromachi Katselaki, Ph.D, Ministry of Culture and Sports (Greece)
archanes1315@yahoo.gr

Angeliki Katsioti, Ph.D, Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese, Head of the Department of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Sites, Monuments, Research and Museums (Greece)
gelikatsioti@gmail.com

Antonio Enrico Felle, Ph.D, Professor, University “Aldo Moro”, Bari (Italy)
ae.felle@gmail.com

Aleksandra Kučeković, Ph.D, Associate Professor, University of Arts, Belgrade (Serbia)
akucekovic@gmail.com

Anna Adashinskaya, Ph.D Student, Department of Medieval Studies of Central European University in Budapest (Hungary)
adashik@gmail.com

Antonis Tsakalos, Ph.D, Curator, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (Greece)
antonistsakalos@gmail.com

Constantin I. Ciobanu, Dsc., Institute of Art History “G. Oprescu”, Bucharest (Romania)
constantini_ciobanu@yahoo.com

Dimitrios Liakos, Ph.D, Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidiki and Mt. Athos, Ministry of Culture and Sports (Greece)
liakos712003@yahoo.gr

Dragoș Gh. Năstăsoiu, Ph.D Student, Medieval Studies at the Central European University in Budapest (Hungary)
dragos_nastasoiu@yahoo.com
Elka Bakalova, Corresponding Member of the BAS, Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria) elkabakalova@gmail.com

Elissaveta Moussakova, Ph.D, Professor, Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria) emoussakova@gmail.com

Emmanuel Moutafov, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria) moutafov1@gmail.com

Ida Toth, Ph.D, Senior Lecturer, Oxford University (United Kingdom) ida.toth@history.ox.ac.uk

Jelena Erdeljan, Ph.D, Associate Professor, University of Belgrade (Serbia) jerdelja@f.bg.ac.rs

Maria Kolousheva, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, Institute of Art Studies, Sofia (Bulgaria) m.kolusheva@gmail.com

Melina Paissidou, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), mpaisidou@hist.auth.gr

Tsvetan Vasilev, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, Sofia University (Bulgaria) cvetanv@gmail.com

Valentina Cantone, Ph.D, Adjunct Professor, University of Padua, Department of Cultural Heritage (Italy) valentina.cantone@unipd.it

Vladimir Dimitrov, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, New Bulgarian University, Sofia (Bulgaria) vladimirdim@gmail.com

Vincent Debiais, Ph.D, full researcher, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (France), Centre d’études supérieures de civilisation médiévale, University of Poitiers (France) vincent.debiais@univ-poitiers.fr
BYZANTINE AND POST-BYZANTINE ART: CROSSING BORDERS

Institute of Art Studies, BAS

Art Readings 2017

Emmanuel Moutafov
Ida Toth (United Kingdom)