ВИЗАНТИЙСКО И ПОСТВИЗАНТИЙСКО ИЗКУСТВО: ПРЕСИЧАНЕ НА ГРАНИЦИ

BYZANTINE AND POST-BYZANTINE ART: CROSSING BORDERS

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Content

Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art: Crossing Borders, Exploring Boundaries

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Abstract: The authors reflect on methodological and terminological problems related to the critical fields of Byzantine and so-called *Post-Byzantine* Art in the Balkans. Departing from the traditional, frequently controversial, issues of continuity and identity, this chapter proposes a more effective conceptual framework, which favours the ideas of multiculturality, hybridity, and horizontal exchange. The present essay also addresses the questions of cultural history, and, especially, of Western influences in Orthodox painting after the 15th century, and it urges that art of any period should be measured against the standards of its own time. More generally, it suggests that the reception of Orthodox Christian art in the Balkans ought also to be considered to fall within the purview of scholars of the Western Renaissance, as well as of Ottoman Studies, so as to ensure fruitful academic dialogue across disciplines.

Key words: classical, Byzantine, Post-Byzantine, Orthodox, Christian, Ottoman, Western, Renaissance, Medieval, Balkans, Pre-modern, methodology, terminology, style.

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The keen contemporary interest in the Eastern Roman Empire that prompted the German historian Hieronymus Wolf in 1557 to coin the term 'Byzantine' came as a reflection of the intellectual curiosity and existential anxiety of Wolf's own times[3]. His was by no means the first Western encounter with Byzantine literary heritage, whose impact had been felt for over a century in Humanist and Renaissance Italy, from where it spread across other European cultural centres, including Augsburg – a free imperial city in Southern Germany, in which Wolf found patronage for his work on Byzantine historiography. The inadvertent upshot of his – otherwise tormented – forays into Medieval Greek literature was Wolf's inspired nomenclature, which would prove as resilient as the realm it purported to designate – and, arguably, just as controversial[4]. Notably, the scholarly appraisal of 'Byzantium' changed over time with fluctuations in cultural and historical perceptions: in the Age of Enlightenment, when Western intellectuals such as Montesquieu and Voltaire, as well Edward Gibbon, although fascinated with Byzantine political and court culture, raised doubts over the overall merits of the theocratic Byzantine Empire, declaring the Medieval Orthodox state feeble, corrupt, and decadent[5]; and, conspicuously, in the nineteenth century, when the development of European Byzantine Studies coincided with the birth of independent Balkan states, whose ideologies 'nationalised' Byzantium as a way of detaching themselves from their Ottoman past. These attitudes go a long way towards explaining the reputation of Byzantium as a fraught, but infinitely alluring, academic subject, no less captivating today, but perhaps no longer as divisive[6].

The undeniable appeal of the subject has elevated Byzantine Studies to a fully-fledged, and ever growing, scholarly field with its own distinct place alongside Classical, Medieval and Early Modern Studies. Regrettably, this advancement has not yet been extended to

3 *Dekker*, Rudolf. Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical writing in its social context since the Middle Ages. Verloren Publishing, 2002, 29; *Reinsch*, Diether Roderich. Hieronymus Wolf as Editor and Translator of Byzantine Texts. In: Przemyslaw Marciniak and Dion C. Smythe (eds.). The Reception of Byzantium in European Culture Since 1500. Farnham, 2016, 43-53.

4 *Marciniak*, Przemysław. Ikona dekadencji. Wybrane problemy europejskiej recepcji Bizancjum od XVII do XX wieku. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Katowice, 2009.

5 *Christophilopoulou*, Aikaterini. Βυζαντινή ιστορία Α΄ 324–610. Θεσσαλονίκη, 1992, 5.

6 *Nilsson*, Ingela and Paul Stephenson (eds.). Wanted, Byzantium: The Desire for a Lost Empire. Uppsala, 2014.

include the reception of (Post-)Byzantine traditions[7], which still lie open to prejudice and misconstruction. A revealing case in point is the notion of the uniformity of Post-Byzantine style, and, more generally, art, which rests on the equally problematic understanding that there existed a single Byzantine style prevailing in the entire Medieval Orthodox οἰκουμένη[8]. In fact, Byzantium as a complex amalgam of Roman identity, Christian ideology, and European heritage, with the Greek language providing a further identity marker[9], requires that a similar concept of dynamic plurality be applied to its visual and material culture. Still, the reception of Byzantine art, from its very beginnings, did little to acknowledge this diversity. The interpretation of Byzantine art as a fixed 'Greek' style had carried discernibly unfavourable connotations from early on, in the context of the Italian *Cinquecento*. It first appeared in Giorgio Vasari's description of the art of Cimabue, as a negative *exemplum* against which to measure the artistic accomplishments of fourteenth-century Florentine painting[10]. Viewed through the prism of such appraisal, the title of the 2002 exhibition and its catalogue, *Post-Byzantium: the Greek Renaissance*[11], presents an incongruous contradiction in terms, going against the grain of the implicit claims that any renaissance of the *Byzantine* Greek style was both absurd and impossible. But, Vasari's programmatic statement – evidently ill-informed on Byzantine art – cannot be taken as conclusive in discussions of what constitutes a 'renaissance' movement in art. Setting aside the treacherous question of terminology, the core issue, that of the revival of interest in Classical Antiquity, was demonstrably more intricate and far more widely considered in the world of fifteenth-century Europe than

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7 The field of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine reception studies is still in its infancy, but it is growing ever stronger: *Auzépy*, Marie-France (ed.). Byzance en Europe. Saint-Denis, 2003; *Kolovou*, Foteini (ed.). Byzanzrezeption in Europa. Spurensuche über das Mittelalter und die Renaissance bis in die Gegenwart. Berlin/Boston, 2012; *Betancourt*, Roland and Maria Taroutina (eds.). Byzantium/Modernism: The Byzantine as Method in Modernity. Leiden and Boston, 2015; *Marciniak*, Przemysław and Dion C. Smythe (eds.). The Reception of Byzantium.

8 *Spratt*, Emily. Toward a Definition of "Post-Byzantine" Art: The Angleton Collection at the Princeton University Art Museum. In: Record of the Princeton University Art Museum, 71 (June 2014), double issue 2013–2014, 2-19.

9 *Koder*, Johannes. Byzanz – römische Identität, christliche Ideologie und europäische Ausstrahlung. In: Dmitry Bumazhnov, Emmanuela Grypeou, Timothy B. Sailors and Alexander Toepel (eds.). Das golden Byzanz und der Orient. Schallaburg, 2012, 27-42.

10 *Vasari*, Giorgio. Lives of the Artists. Trans. George Bull. Vol. 1. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965, 50-51.

11 *Kakavas*, George (ed.). Post-Byzantium: The Greek Renaissance. 15th – 18th Century Treasures from the Byzantine & Christian Museum, Athens. Athens, 2002.

has been sustained in the traditional tenets of Western art history[12]. One aspect of this broad phenomenon, the contribution of Byzantium to the rediscovery of classical scholarship in the West, is nowadays better understood[13]. Points of contact and mutual influence between Byzantine and Renaissance Art have also been evaluated[14]. Somewhat less familiar to modern scholarly publics is the taste and the rhetorical vocabulary for viewing and describing ancient monuments that Byzantine scholars introduced to Italian Humanists[15]. As well as cultivating the aesthetic appreciation of ancient architecture and decoration of buildings, this influence set the vogue for fostering the Hellenic and Roman past in the process of renegotiating one's own identity – a development that can be as clearly identified in the West as in early Ottoman culture, whose own appropriation of classical (and Byzantine) antiquities represented an attempt to claim the succession and the legacy of the Roman/Byzantine Empire[16]. Classical culture and classical art therefore remained a backdrop against which medieval and early modern societies constructed their pasts and measured the achievement of their presents. However, this process of creative reimagining did not exclude Byzantium. In the West, for example, Byzantine religious art became part of the incipient culture of art collecting[17]: although much of this is still unknown, some artefacts that survive, provide vivid testimonies to the reception and transmission of works of art well beyond any fixed geographical and historical boundaries. One such example, Bessarion's Reliquary, a lavish Palaiologan *staurotheke* bequeathed to the Florentine Scuola della Carita by the famous Byzantine expatriate,

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12 *Burke*, Peter. Hybrid Renaissance. Culture, Language, Architecture. Budapest and New York, 2016.

13 *Wilson*, Nigel. From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance. Baltimore, 1993; *Harris*, Jonathan. Greek Emigres in the West 1400–1520. Camberly, 1995.

14 Recently by: *Lymberopoulou*, Angeliki and Rembrandt Duits (eds.). Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe. London, 2013.

15 On the impact of Byzantine scholarship on Quattrocento humanists and their attitudes toward architecture, see: *Smith*, Christine. Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics and Eloquence, 1400–1470. Oxford, 1992.

16 *Ousterhout*, Robert. The East, the West, and the Appropriation of the Past in Early Ottoman Architecture. – Gesta, 2004, No. 43/2, 165-176; *Fowden*, Elizabeth. The Parthenon Mosque, King Solomon and the Greek Sages. In: Ottoman Athens: Archeology, topography, history. Athens, forthcoming.

17 *Duits*, Rembrandt. Byzantine Icons in the Medici Collection. In: Angeliki Lymberopoulou and Rembrandt Duits (eds.). Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe. London, 2013, 157-188.

Cardinal Bessarion[18] (**Fig. 1**), offers abundant scope for examining the creative processes of cultural memory and social agency in art. More generally, a focus on these processes stands to greatly enrich our understanding of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art production, and of its impact on wider European culture[19].

Such fluidity has been fully acknowledged by modern Byzantine scholarship, which regards Byzantium as much more than a uniform polity, making up one empire, one religion, one artistic style and one *ethnos*[20]. Rather, it views the Byzantine Empire as a political, cultural, and religious – Orthodox Christian – *force field*, complex in itself, but also creating polycentric spheres of influence, of which one was the *Byzantine Commonwealth* – the only one, in fact, whose spiritual centre was Constantinople, and which outlived Byzantium's territorial empire[21]. Misconstruction of this

Fig. 1. Gentile Bellini. Cardinal Bessarion and Two Members of the Scuola della Carita in prayer with the Bessarion Reliquary. Photo credit: The National Gallery, London

18 *Klein*, Holger, Valeria Poletto and Peter Schreiner (eds.). La Strauroteca di Bessarione fra Constantinopoli e Venezia. Venice, 2017.

19 On cultural memory, see: *Assman*, Jan. Communicative and Cultural memory. In: Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook. Berlin and New York, 2008, 109-118; on art and agency, see: *Gell*, Alfred. Art and Agency. Oxford, 1998.

20 For an inspired discussion of the nature of Byzantium and its society, see: *Cameron*, Averil. Byzantine Matters. Princeton and Oxford, 2014.

21 Dimitri Obolensky's concept of the *Byzantine Commonwealth*, revised by: *Shepard*, Jonathan. Byzantium's Overlapping Circles. In: Elizabeth Jef-

influence as emanating one-directionally, from the centre to the peripheries, is the reason why still, even right up until today, the finest medieval monuments and mural paintings in Serbia, Bulgaria or Macedonia (FYROM) tend to be attributed to metropolitan, i.e. Byzantine painters. By the same token, works of 'inferior' quality or some rather less impressive examples of icon painting are commonly classified as products of local, i.e. non-Byzantine, painters. Thus, scholars feel free to label unsigned works of non-Greek, i.e. Bulgarian, Serbian, Armenian workshops as belonging to a sub-culture within a high culture emanating from a Byzantine, often Constantinopolitan, epicentre. The Boyana Church offers a vivid case in point. The vast array of secondary literature on this monument[22] marks a triumph of Byzantine Studies over nationalism, achieved through debunking the myth of the Boyana painter (**Fig. 2**) as being of Bulgarian extraction, as well as over the compensatory assumption that this monument signified the advent of the European Renaissance. And yet, in a similar vein, stylistic analyses of the iconographic programme of Boyana have created yet another, equally problematic, myth about a highly accomplished, but otherwise unknown Constantinopolitan icon painter. Clearly, a more concerted discussion needs to be had regarding the nature of Byzantine style in art, and whether some aspects of this art, particularly those that are understood in terms of 'translation' and 'crossover', should be nonetheless defined as exclusively Byzantine; and, moreover, whether artistic quality should be thought of as a privilege of the (Greek-speaking) centre alone.

Throughout the fourteenth century, the Balkans was in the grip of an economic, political, military, and religious crisis. At the end of the century, the entire region was divided among numerous smaller polities, whose weakness made them easy prey for the Ottomans[23].

freys (ed.). Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21 – 16 August 2006. In: Plenary Papers. London, 2006, 15-55; *Shepard*, Jonathan. The Byzantine Commonwealth 1000–1550. In: Michael Angold (ed.). The Cambridge History of Christianity. Cambridge, 2006, 1-52.

22 *Penkova*, Bisserka (ed.). Боянската църква – между Изтока и Запада в изкуството на християнска Европа [Boyanskata tsarkva – Mezdu Iztoka i Zapada v izkustvoto na hristianska Evropa]. Sofia, 2011 (with the bibliography of the monument).

23 *Dimitrov*, Strashimir, *Manchev*, Krastju. История на балканските народи [Istoria na balkanskite narodi]. Vol. 1. Sofia, 1999, 17; *Laiou*, Angeliki. 'Byzantium and the Neighbouring Powers: Small State Policies and Complexities. In: Sarah T. Brooks (ed.). Faith and Power (1261–1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture. New York, 2006, 42-53.

The Ottoman conquest had major consequences for the political, judicial and cultural life of the Christian populations. While the Greeks of Constantinople retained some religious autonomy and the right to more substantial representation at the Sublime Porte, the arrival of the new political power changed the fate of the Balkan peoples in a more conspicuous way: although some continuity can be discerned in their demographic, administrative and economic development, in the political and to some extent religious sphere, Ottoman rule entailed a break with the Byzantine past. A strong sense of discontinuity can be inferred from the determination with which the Romanian princes in the Wallachian lands claimed the legacy of the Byzantine imperial traditions. Their cultural and ideological self-fashioning was especially visible in their continuous military campaigns against the Ottomans, their sponsorship of efforts to recover Byzantine literary heritage, and the rich iconographic programme that they left behind of themselves as founders and benefactors of major Orthodox churches and monasteries[24].

24 *Pippidi*, Andrei. Tradiția politică bizantină în Țările Române în secolele XVI–XVIII. 2nd edi-

Elsewhere in the Balkans, however, Christians could not hold governing or even administrative positions (except for vassals in the fifteenth century), and that, in turn, diminished opportunities for the patronage, and, consequently, for the production, of monumental – and secular – art. In cities, Muslims already accounted for about forty percent of the population[25]. The Patriarchate of Tarnovo was downgraded to a Bishopric, and it came under the jurisdiction of Constantinople either in 1438[26] or immediately after 1453. This in effect amounted to the obliteration the Medieval Bulgarian religious traditions through their merger with a general Orthodox and specifically with Greek culture. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that a considerable level of religious tolerance still existed in the Balkans, arguably more so than in many other parts of contemporary Europe[27]. In some respects, the *Pax Ottomana* brought prosperity: the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557 inspired and funded a revival of religious art harking back to the traditions of Medieval Serbian manuscript illumination, painting and architecture[28]. On the other hand, the crisis of the seventeenth century created new conditions for artistic production in the Balkans. Painter workshops gradually retreated to the countryside and remote mountainous regions, where they benefitted from communal patronage and from a new class of merchant-donors (**Fig. 3**) commissioning their services as icon painters and wood carvers. These itinerant craftsmen introduced new styles – simpler, quicker to execute, adoptive of diverse, also Islamic, influences – into seventeenth-century Orthodox art[29].

The significance of the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 as a definitive turning point in the history of the Balkans has been overstated in

tion. Bucharest, 2001.

25 *Todorov*, Nikolay. По някои въпроси на балканския град през XV–XVII в. [Po niakoi vaprosi na balkanskia grad prez XV–XVII vek]. – Historical Review 2, Sofia, 1965, 134.

26 The *terminus* is provided by the signature of Ignatius of Tarnovo at the Council of Florence "ὁ ταπεινός μητροπολίτης Τυρνόβου". See *Snegarov*, Ivan. Кратка история на българската църква [Kratka istoria na balgarskata tsarkva]. Vol. 2. Sofia, 1946, 211.

27 *Bergstässer*, Georg. Grundzüge des islamischen Rechts. Berlin–Leipzig, 1935, 43.

28 See, contributions by Zoran Rakić, Svetlana Pejić, Miljana Matić, Mila Gajić, Irena Špadijer, Branislav Todić and Ljiljana Ševo in Section VI: Christian Theocratic Realm within an Islamic Empire: A Great Post-Byzantine Renewal. In: Danica Popović and Dragan Vojvodić (eds.). Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art. Vol. II. Belgrade, 2016, 497-579.

29 *Tsampouras*, Theocharis. The contribution of the Mount Grammos painters to the formation of a common artistic language in the seventeenth-century Balkans. Maximilian Hartmuth (ed.) with assistance of Ayşe Dilsiz and Alyson Wharton. Christian art under Muslim rule: proceedings of a workshop held in Istanbul on May 11/12. 2012. Leiden, 2016, 1-17.

Fig. 3. Donor composition, d. 1645: the merchant Panos Arseniou and the former treasurer of the Archbishopric of Pogoniani, Panos Papademetriou. Painted by Demetrius from Grammosta and Ioannes Skoutares. Church of the Holy Apostles, Molyvdoskepastos, Epirus, Greece. Photo credit: Theocharis Tsampouras

scholarly literature. This momentous event does not seem to have been universally felt across the entire region, and the emphasis on the date itself runs the danger of misrepresenting a true historical process. The Bulgarian state had disappeared from the political map of Europe sixty years earlier; Serbia capitulated in 1459; Morea in 1460; and Bosnia in 1464. The mountainous regions of modern-day Montenegro and Albania held out much longer, until the beginning of the 16th century. The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans took almost a century to complete, while the decline of the weak states that were subsequently conquered had made itself felt a whole century earlier. The loss of the political centre of Orthodoxy was definitely important, but it was not perceived as quite so momentous by contemporaries – at least not to the extent that the nineteenth- and twentieth-century national historiographies represent. More recently, scholars of the early modern Balkans have started to explore other aspects of this process, such as, for example, a conspicuous lack of hostility in attitudes towards the Turks in the works of Christian authors in the aftermath of the conquest[30]. The notion that these texts ought to have resonated with a nationalist anti-Ottoman ideology is by now outdated and anachronistic. On the contrary, it is being accepted that these sources provide evidence of a positive stance towards the reigning sultans[31]. In the early centuries of Ottoman rule, the sultans were viewed as the natural successors of Byzantine emperors. Even the Orthodox Church found a way of commemorating and praying for the non-Christian, but nonetheless legitimate, Ottoman *emperors*. A sense of adjustment to the new regime emerges in many genres of Slavonic literature, including brief chronicles, histories and hagiographies[32]. Chronographers, for example, most naturally placed the succession lines of Ottoman lords after the emperors of Constantinople, and would more often than not call them 'emperors' rather than 'sultans'[33]. The attitude towards the Ottomans in the Serbian genealogies is at the very least com-

30 *Rakova*, Snezhana. България, Сърбия, Византия – исторически записи за XV в. на Балканите [Bulgaria, Serbia, Vizantia – istoricheski zapisi na Balkanite]. In: Vassil Gyuzelev, Anisava Miltenova and Radoslava Stankova (eds.). Bulgaria and Serbia in the Context of Byzantine Civilization. Sofia, 2003, 145-163.

31 *Danchev*, Georgi. Страници из историята на Търновската книжовна школа [Stranici ot istoriata na Tarnovskata knizhovna shkola]. Sofia, 1983, 251.

32 *Rakova*. България, Сърбия, Византия, 158.

33 *Stojanović*, Ljubomir. Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi. Novi Sad, 1927, No. 858.

pliant[34]: when describing riots in the Balkans, these sources speak about disasters caused by squabbling among the Christians, rather than about their grievances against the conquerors. Thus "… the description of Ottoman history, of the events that shook the Balkans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is done in a way that allows the Ottomans to be woven into the fabric of the earlier history of the peninsula and to act as the successive rulers of these lands"[35].

Much as with 'Byzantine', the concept of 'Post-Byzantine' in art presents problems for modern publics and scholars alike, not least because of the difficulties posed by the vexed questions of identity and continuity[36]. The term itself we owe to the historian and statesman Nicolae Iorga and those who followed in his footsteps[37]. His paradigmatic account of the permanence and survival of Byzantine forms is still loosely employed in art history to describe a period – the centuries of art production that followed the fall of the Byzantine capital—and to define the style of Orthodox art produced after 1453. Iorga's seminal work has undoubtedly contributed to the progress of 'Post-Byzantine' scholarship by reinvigorating existing fields of research, including those of religious iconography and painting, but it has done little by way of proposing any more precise chronology or underscoring shifts in political situations and orientations of its historical actors[38]. In the current state of research, many questions remain open with perhaps the following two desiderata being the most pressing: a reassessment of the interpretations of Post-Byzantine art as inherently *derivative* and *unoriginal*, and a study of parallel, diverse, and mutually influential artistic trends that developed in different environments across the Orthodox communities in the Balkans and beyond. Religion is a central issue – a high proportion of surviving Post-Byzantine art happens to be religious. This has to do with how religion was practiced, with Ortho-

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34   *Stojanović*. Stari srpski, No 858.

35   *Stojanović*. Stari srpski, No 858.

36   *Eastmond*, Anthony. The Limits of Byzantine Art. In: Liz James (ed.). A Companion to Byzantium. Chichester, 2010, 313-22.

37   *Iorga*, Nikolae. Byzance après Byzance. Bucharest: Institut d'études byzantines, 1981. Also see *Lowell*, Clucas (ed.). The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe. Boulder: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1988; *Kitromilides*, Paschalis. The Byzantine Legacy in Early Modern Political Thought. In: Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniossoglou (eds.). The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium. Cambridge, 2017, 653-68.

38   *Spratt*. Toward a Definition, 17.

Fig. 4. Enthroned Virgin with Child and Donors, 13th century, Tuscan-Byzantine workshop, Museum of the Basilica of St Nicholas, Bari, Italy.
Photo credit: Emmanuel Moutafov

doxy, being the badge of identity within the Ottoman Empire, spilling over into the patronage and commissioning of art. The term that provides some precision in defining the artistic production that catered for the religious needs of the Christians under the Sultans between the fifteenth and the nineteenth century is *Orthodox Christian Art of the Ottoman period*[39]. The designation 'Post-Byzantine' will certainly continue to have substantial traction, but, rather than being understood literally, it can be used to indicate processes of change taking place in the Ottoman world, the polyvalent nature of culture and art, and the hybridity that we see as built into the very fabric of the Post-Byzantine world.

Conditions for making Orthodox art after the end of the fifteenth century differed from region to region within the Ottoman Empire. To take the example of Constantinopolitan artisans: some of them probably emigrated to Crete long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, where they found suitable conditions for perpetuating Byzantine Orthodox traditions in religious painting. Their influence spread over the Ionian islands, and further afield, reaching Venice and Venetian workshops, with which these artists maintained regular contact. They painted icons *à la Greca* on gold background, elongating the proportions of the figures, depicting garments and architectural landscapes that abounded in fine detail. Such icons were in demand in Western European markets until well into the late sixteenth century (**Fig. 4**). For the rest of the Balkans,

39 *Moutafov*, Emmanuel. Къде е Византия в края на 18 в.? Пъзел за изкуствоведи. [Kade e Vizantia v kraya na 18 vek?] – Art Studies Quarterly, 2005, No. 4, 3-8.

however, opportunities to communicate directly with Crete, and thereby, indirectly, with Renaissance and Post-Renaissance Italy, were sparse. In other words, most Balkan lands were neither consumers nor producers of the kind of Byzantine-style art that was favoured in the West after the fifteenth century.

On the other hand, some Pre-Modern Orthodox icon painting reveals the artists' attention to perspective drawing techniques, rendering their artwork much more like a window opening onto a realistic world. Indeed, icons from Crete (**Fig. 5**) and the Ionian islands often resemble Western images, with their space organised according to the principles of geometric foreshortening. Not until the eighteenth century, however, was this practise methodically applied. When it eventually prevailed, the general appearance changed to the extent that they lost the features that allowed them to be easily recognisable as products of Byzantine or Post-Byzantine art[40].

The most common element in Medieval/Byzantine and Orthodox/Post-Byzantine art in the Ottoman period is its shared iconographic tradition. This tradition adhered to the conventions of painting, not from life, but integrating distinct notions of space and time into a single plane, with no intention of creating any sense of depth. Looking through the lenses of the Western Post-Renaissance aesthetics, this style can be defined as formulaic, flat, and lacking perspective[41]. Along similar lines, it is usually assumed that Western artistic influence was slow to reach the Greek-speaking territories under Venetian control. Such a notion leads to judging Post-Byzantine art as retrograde, as well as to confusing the general patterns of influence, which were by no means one-directional or fixed. The complex socio-political circumstances of the Greek-speaking lands that were successively under Byzantine, (Venetian), and Ottoman rule make it impossible to characterise Post-Byzantine art produced in these territories according to a single style. Even more complicated is the picture within those parts of the Ottoman Empire where the dominant Slavic-speaking population maintained contacts with the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia. A more critical examination of the question of foreign influences and of their reception in Post-Byzan-

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40 *Spratt*. Toward a Definition, 14.

41 These features are typical of most Orthodox painting made outside Crete and Corfu: *Gratziou*. Μεταβυζαντινή Τέχνη, 191.

Fig. 5. Martyrdom of Sts Kyrikos and Julitta, 17th century, Cretan provenance, the Icon Collection of the Bachkovo Monastery, Bulgaria. Photo credit: Ivan Vanev

tine art is acutely needed[42]. Moreover, any such discussions need to acknowledge the bi-lateral and reciprocal nature of cross-cultural contacts, and also to consider how networks, connections, and the interacting systems of trade and diplomacy effected artistic changes. Rare are instances that may point to any concerted efforts on the part of one culture to influence another, such as, perhaps, in the case of the presumed impact of Western art. It is well known that translations of Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting* were undertaken by Greek Orthodox painters in the eighteenth century and also, a century later, by their disciples of Slavic origin. Still, the technique of oil painting and the principles of perspective, which had been developed during the Italian Renaissance, began to be applied in the Balkans under the influence of the first professional schools of art in the nineteenth century. Up until then, only sporadic Western-style elements can be identified in Orthodox painting (**Fig. 6**)**,** none of which have been sufficiently studied and understood by modern scholars of Post-Byzantine art.

Elsewhere in the Balkans, until well into the late eighteenth century, some artists, like Constantine from Byzantium/Istanbul (**Fig. 7**), deemed themselves direct heirs of Byzantine traditions without being aware that they were establishing a post-tradition of any kind. In the same vein, theoreticians of Orthodox art like Dionysios of Phourna believed that 'the end of true painting' came with the end of the Palaiologan period or the death of the legendary Manuel Panselinos[43], and accordingly, urged that these authorities should be followed as models of exemplary style in Orthodox painting. Relying on the religious term *Christian Orthodox* when discussing a type of art that is not secular, instead of using the problematic political and ideological designation such as *Post-Byzantine*, would have the additional benefit of preventing generalising assertions and possible misunderstandings in dialogues with experts from other fields.

To date, the term 'Post-Byzantine' and its ramifications for the history of art have been most comprehensively discussed by Olga

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42 *Spratt*. Toward a Definition, 15. On the problematic nature of assessing 'influence' in the history of art, see *Baxandall*, Michael. Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures. New Haven, 1985, 58-62.

43 *Moutafov*, Emmanuel. Мануил Панселинос и краят на „истинската живопис" [Manuel Panselinos i krayat na "istinskata zhivopis"]. In: Snezha Rakova and Liliyana Symeonova (eds.). Medieval Balkans: Politics, Religion, Culture. Sofia, 1999, 211-216.
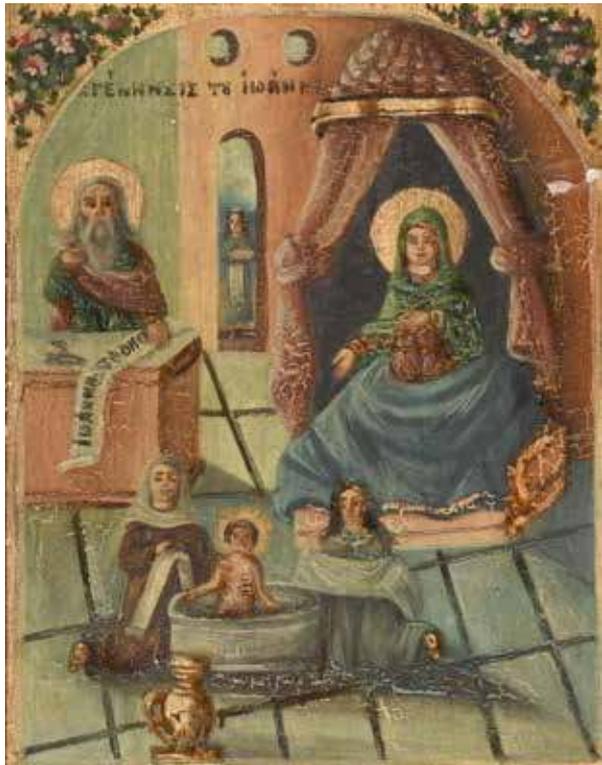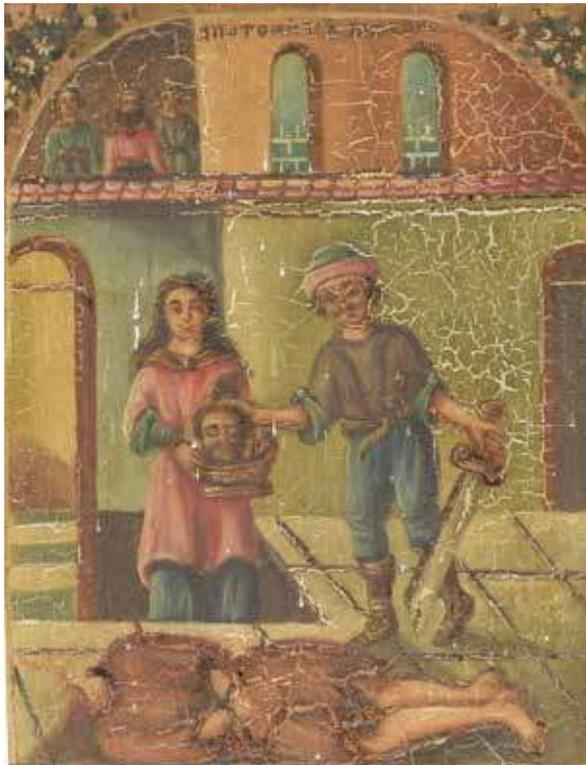
Fig. 6. Two scenes from the life of St John the Baptist (Altar screen: The Cycle of Feast), 1869, the Church of Sts Theodore Teron and Theodore Stratelates, Kouklen village, Bulgaria. Photo credit: Ivan Vanev

Gratziou, who notes that this definition has been used principally by Greek art historians, but does not acknowledge that it was also en vogue in other Balkan countries until well into the 1990s[44]. Emily Spratt has also made important contributions to this discussion[45]. Gratziou has rightly pointed out a conceptual problem that

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44   On the problematic usage of the term, see *Gratziou*, Olga. Μεταβυζαντινή Τέχνη: Χρονολογικός προσδιορισμός ή εννοιολογική κατηγορία. [Post-Byzantine Art: Chronological Designation or Conceptual Category?]. In: Tonia Kiousopoulou (ed.). 1453: Η άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και η μετάβαση από τους μεσαιωνικούς στους νεώτερους χρόνους [The Fall of Constantinople and the Transition from the Medieval to the Modern Period]. Heraklion, 2005, 183-96; *Ćurčić*, Slobodan. The 'Absence of Byzantium' – The Role of a Name. In: Nea Estia 82, 2008, No. 164; and *Safran*, Linda. 'Byzantine' Art in Post-Byzantine South Italy. In: Common Knowledge 18, 2012, No. 3, 485-504.

45   *Spratt*. Toward a Definition, and *eadem*. The Allegory of the Holy Communion: An Investigation of a Post-Byzantine Icon Type that Developed on the Ionian Islands during the Period of the Venetian Hegemony. (MSt thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, Fall 2007). Spratt presented further discussions of the concept in two conference papers in Michigan (2010) and

occurs as a result of confining Post-Byzantine art to a strictly limited period[46]. It therefore seems useful to identify the chronological framework for which this term is most relevant, as well as stressing that twentieth-century and contemporary Balkan historians, literary scholars, and linguists have not dealt with the issue of chronology in any conclusive way. In historic terms, the birth of the Balkan national states and their ideologies in the 19th century was a period when Orthodox Christian communities in the region were renegotiating their relationships with the Byzantine legacy, very much based on the perceived importance of Byzantium for their respective national narratives[47]. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the final establishment of the modern Balkan states also coincided with the development of European Byzantine Studies, and the upsurge of academic focus on the historical reality of Byzantium. But, that also brought up certain stigmatising and discriminatory rhetoric: until recently, Byzantine legacy in the Balkans continued to be viewed as a modern construct, which only served contemporary political and ideological agendas[48]. However, history written from within the Orthodox tradition has seen a change: the modern Balkan countries and their academias have gradually repositioned both Byzantium and their own past in their proper historical contexts, and the success of these processes bodes well for the future of Post-Byzantine scholarship[49].

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Budapest (2013).

46 *Gratziou*. Μεταβυζαντινή Τέχνη, 196.

47 *Moutafov*, Emmanuel. Of History in Art and of Picturesque in History. King Samuel, his Troops and Balkan Nationalism. In: Emmanuel Moutafov (ed.). The Age of King Samuel as Treated by Bulgarian Artists. Sofia, 2014, 5-25.

48 *Angelov*, Dimiter. Byzantinism: The Real and the Imaginary Influence of a Medieval Civilization on the Modern Balkans. In: Dimitris Keridis, Elias Bursac, and Nicholas Yatromanolakis (eds.). New Approaches to Balkan Studies. Dulles, VA, 2003, 3-21; *Ricks*, David and Paul Magdalino (eds.). Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity. Aldershot and Brookfield, 1998.

49 *Gyuzelev*, Vassil and Kiril Petkov (eds.). State and Church: Studies in Medieval Bulgaria and Byzantium. Sofia, 2011; *Popović*, Danica and Dragan Vojvodić (eds.). Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art. Vol. I–III. Belgrade 2016; *Bakalova*, Elka, Margaret Dimitrova et al. (eds.). Medieval Bulgarian Art and Letters in a Byzantine Context. Sofia, 2017; Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges (1800–1955) 16 – 18 November 2017, Pera Museum: http://en.iae.org.tr//Images/pdf/etkinlikler/sempozyum/istanbuldabizansikesfetmek.pdf (the Symposium booklet accessed 6 December 2017).

Serbia gained independence in 1815 with the establishment of the autonomous Paşalık of Belgrade. According to the majority of Greek researchers, the so-called Post-Byzantine period in art ends with the Greek Wars for Independence in 1830[50], but it is perhaps easy to intuit why the art of post-secession Greece is not referred to as Post-Ottoman but Modern Greek. The main part of Bulgaria gained independence much later, in 1878. Other large and important regions in the Balkans, like Thrace and Macedonia, remained under Ottoman rule at least until 1912. The local traditions of Orthodox art during the centuries of Ottoman domination continued to be promulgated by the icon workshops of Edirne, Athos, Melnik, Sozopol, Debar, Kepesovo and Galatista. Icons and frescoes, which conformed to the aesthetics of the previous centuries continued to be painted in small villages of the newly independent territories of the Balkan countries. Popular tastes remained the same, despite the political and economic changes. Therefore, in this particular regard, the alignment of political history with the history of religious art is neither methodologically nor factually justified. That is why we have to allow for a more flexible periodization acknowledging that the history of Christian Orthodox art in the Ottoman period continues until the beginning of the twentieth century, or, provisionally, until the 1920's. This chronology covers the hiatus of 1830–1920 that has remained neglected by art historians; after all, the majority of surviving Christian artefacts in the Balkan Peninsula date back precisely to this era. Questionable quality, vast output, multidirectional influences, and innovations that do not conform to a single tradition, should not be considered as an obstacle to scholarship. Such phenomena hold the key to understanding earlier iconography and, most importantly, the multiple identities of the Balkan nations, their mentalities, and their Oriental-style, two-dimensionalised, visual culture, formed during the complicated but in many ways seminal nineteenth century.

Postscript

This essay has been written in two stages: the fully-drafted ideas of one author were in response read, largely against the grain, by the other. This

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50 *Chadzidakis*, Manolis. Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Άλωση (1450–1830). Τόμος Α΄. Αθήνα, 1987, 8.

Fig. 7. Constantine from Byzantium (Istanbul), All Saints, 1777, the National Archaeological Institute and Museum, Sofia. Photo credit: Ivan Vanev

approach has proved challenging and stimulating in equal measure: it has provided both contributors abundant scope for crossing borders and exploring boundaries in their respective research fields while inviting a vigorous reassessment of the current state of scholarship as a whole. The preparation of the present volume posed similar demands with still more gratifying results. It has highlighted many intersections and communalities across a wide range of scholarly contributions, and has, auspiciously, showed that interdisciplinary collaborations hold a great promise for the future of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine scholarship.

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Византийско и поствизантийско изкуство: пресичане на граници, навлизане в различното

Емануел Мутафов

Ида Тот

В това уводно есе авторите разсъждават над терминологични и методологични проблеми, свързани с изследването и разбирането на византийското изкуство и т.нар. поствизантийско изкуство на Балканите. Според тях не може да се говори за съществуването на единен византийски стил през Средновековието, особено в съседните на Източната римска империя православни държави. Оттам и се поставя под съмнение адекватността на условния термин поствизантийско изкуство за периода XV–XIX в. например в териториите на Османската империя, населявани от българи, сърби, румънци и др. Оспорва се и универсалността на датата 1453 г. като условен край на византийското изкуство с неговите национални варианти на Балканите; коментира се и условната дата за край на периода, която е различна за Гърция, България и Сърбия. В текста се засягат и въпросите за западните и ислямските влияния в православната живопис след XV в. Разглежда се и досегашната дискусия по тези спорни тези, като се предлага терминът Christian Orthodox Art of the Ottoman period, а относно влиянията се предлага феномените на заемки на Изток да се изследват и от експерти по Западен ренесанс, както и от османисти. Прави се и опит да се опише сложната картина на т.нар. „различия" между византийското и наследилото го църковно изкуство, както и между западната и източната художествена традиция, набелязва се и сложността в определянето на едно произведение като национално по съвременните критерии за национална принадлежност.

Този текст е писан на два етапа. Представените от Е. Мутафов идеи са прочетени от И. Тот и доразвити от нея в качеството ѝ на редактор. Този подход се оказа едновременно предизвикателство и стимул за съавторство, доказвайки, че двамата – изкуствовед и филолог – могат да осъществят заложеното в заглавието на сборника „пресичане на граници", като „съборят" преградите в различните професионални полета на своята експертиза чрез предлагането на взаимодопълващи се доказателства на едни и същи научни тези.

Процесът на съставителство и редакция на този том представи подобни нагласи и у останалите автори, а резултатите са още по-вдъхновяващи. Статиите в сборника открояват много взаимодействия и сходства на изводите в широкия спектър от научни приноси на авторите, доказвайки категорично,

че интердисциплинарните колаборации са перспективни за развитието на по-обективната византологична наука и изследванията на православното християнско изкуство през османския период.

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