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**ВИЗАНТИЙСКО
И ПОСТВИЗАНТИЙСКО ИЗКУСТВО:
ПРЕСИЧАНЕ НА ГРАНИЦИ**



**BYZANTINE
AND POST-BYZANTINE ART:
CROSSING BORDERS**

ART READINGS

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The Balkans and the Renaissance World

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Abstract. This text discusses relations between the Balkans and the Renaissance world and argues the case the question: Did the Balkans have a Renaissance? Answering yes, this paper calls for a new, changed optic, and an updated methodological approach in viewing the known facts. It presents just a few of many examples from the Balkans, mostly surviving in elements of visual culture, and examines them in the context of the cross-cultural and trans-cultural interactions, connectivity, migrations and social networks, and (self)fashioning of identities in the early modern world.

Key words: Renaissance, Balkans, methodology, Katarina Kotromanić Kosača, Andronika Kastrioti, Angelina Branković, Sandalj Hranić Kosača.

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears...

O judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason. Bear with me”

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

Speech of Marc Anthony at Caesar’s funeral

The words of Shakespeare are here to solicit the reader’s patience as I attempt to present the issue of relations between the Balkans and

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the Renaissance world. Opening a discussion on a subject seemingly contradictory by the standards of the traditional, positivistic art historical method (or, for that matter, of the method of humanistic sciences in general) is, *ipso facto* and *per se*, a crossing of borders, this time of traditional concepts and discipline rules. This, as we all know, is as much a question of history as of historiography.

From the viewpoint of that traditional, although now increasingly obsolete but in places still steadfast, historiographic approach, paradoxically most persistent in the historiography produced in the Balkans, the Renaissance, as defined in the Romanticism-infused lines of Jacob Burckhardt², is a pivotal period in European history. It is perceived as the birth of a typically European (read Western European) individualism, secularism, rationalism, and ethics. As such, it has implicitly paved the way for (Western) European economic prosperity and military might from that point on, into the modern period. In the visual sphere, accordingly, it is viewed as not only a set of formal features based on direct emulation of the Golden Age of Classical Antiquity, but as the visual proof and testimony, the warrant for a value system, the presence of which would indicate civilization itself while its absence would disclose a shameful savageness and lack of culture. This inherently colonial and orientaling approach is even more augmented once applied to the Balkans perceived as the necessary “other” of Western Europe³.

However, in contemporary Western historiography, the questioning of such views of the Renaissance began with William Bouwsma’s 1978 address to the American Historical Association⁴. Twenty years ago, Caroline Walker Bynum talked about the last Eurocentric generation of historians⁵, while Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann published his study on the art and culture of Central Europe from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment, presenting to the English

2 *Burckhardt*, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. London 1990. On issues related to the historiography of art history in Yugoslavia and countries of ex-Yugoslav territory cf. *Stevović*, Ivan. *Yugoslavia and art history – A battlefield of medieval architecture*, *Papers of BAS Humanities and Social Sciences* 2018 (in print).

3 On Eastern Europe as the necessary “other” of the West see *Wolf*, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford, 1994; *Todorova*, Maria. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York, 1997 (Updated Edition, New York, 2009).

4 *Bouwsma*, William. *The Renaissance and the Drama of Western History*. – *American Historical Review*, 1979, No. 84-1, 1-15.

5 *Walker Bynum*, Caroline. *The Last Eurocentric generation*. – *Perspectives on History*. *The Newsmagazine of American Historical Association*, 1996, No. 2.

reading public and Western audience its works of art and visual culture that had long been forgotten and/or misinterpreted⁶. A recently published volume, *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, discusses the cultural and artistic interaction between the Byzantine east and Western Europe, from 1204 to the flourishing of Post-Byzantine artistic workshops in Venetian Crete during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the formation of icon collections in Renaissance Italy, and presents the art of Post-Byzantine icons as an integral part of the European Renaissance⁷.

A distinguished Renaissance scholar, one of the foremost authorities in the field, Peter Burke has recently introduced the term and concept of hybridization⁸. In his opinion, thanks in part to its flexibility, the concept of hybridization offers scholars the opportunity of a fresh approach to one of the central problems in the study of history, and that of the Renaissance in particular, the problem of the relation between change and continuity⁹, and, I should add, visibility and identity. Burke points out that, although the Renaissance is most often perceived as a Western European phenomenon, the process of hybridization is often most clearly visible in Moscow or Lviv, for instance, or outside Europe altogether in Mexico or Arequipa, while its traces may also be found in India, China and Japan in the age of early globalization. As for periodization, Burke envisages a Renaissance that begins in the fourteenth century and did not so much as end but rather disintegrated in the first half of the seventeenth¹⁰. This chronological framework and Burke's proposed approach to observing the Renaissance could be beneficial to our reassessment of relations of the Balkans and the Renaissance world.

Thus, the question "Did the Balkans have a Renaissance?" or the issue of the Balkans and the Renaissance world is more that of re-

6 *DaCosta Kaufmann*, Thomas. *Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450–1800*. Chicago, 1995. This work focuses on works of art from Germany, Poland, Hungary, and other Central European states.

7 The contributors examined the routes by which artistic interaction may have taken place, and explore the reception of Byzantine art in western Europe, analyzing why artists and patrons were interested in ideas from the other side of the cultural and religious divide; *Lymberopoulou*, Angeliki and Rembrandt Duits (eds.). *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*. London and New York, 2013.

8 *Burke*, Peter. *Hybrid Renaissance. Culture, Language, Architecture*. Budapest – New York, 2016.

9 *Burke*. *Hybrid Renaissance*, 8.

10 *Burke*. *Hybrid Renaissance*, 8.

covering the Renaissance in the Balkans not so much by physically seeking the new evidence but by seeing the old evidence in a new light, observing the Balkans not as mere provider of exotic data, but within the framework and horizon of broader issues and phenomena of the early modern world¹¹. In this paper, I shall present and propose for further investigation within such a methodological framework just a few of many cases from the Balkans, mostly surviving in elements of visual culture, and examine them in the context of the cross-cultural and trans-cultural interactions, connectivity, migrations, social networks, and (self)fashioning of identities in the early modern world.

Connectivity through exile. Networks of noble women

With the progress of the Ottoman conquests and the gradual disintegration of the Byzantine world, and especially after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and of the Morea and Trebizond in 1461, Italian cities such as Rome, Florence, Padua, Bologna, Milan, and, above all, Venice became destinations for Greek nobles and intellectuals from the Byzantine Commonwealth and the Balkans who hoped to find security in the West¹².

Notwithstanding the Greek exiles, including members of the imperial Palaiologos family¹³, on this occasion I shall concentrate on the fate of noble women from the Balkan princedoms, who themselves forged links between the Balkans and the Renaissance world, not simply by the chance of forced migration, but rather through connectivity and networks within their own sphere, through their *habitus*, both official and personal; through their dynastic ties and diplomatic alliances.

Let us start with Katarina Kosača Kotromanić (1424/25 – October 1478), the penultimate Queen of Bosnia, married to the Bosnian King Stjepan Tomaš. She was the daughter of Stefan Vukčić Kosača and Jelena Stracimirović Balšić who in turn was the daughter of

11 Mirkovic, Alexander. Did the Balkans Have a Renaissance. – World History Bulletin, 2010, vol. XXVI, No. 2, 24-28, especially 27; Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N. Eurocentrism and Its Discontents. – Perspectives on History. The Newsmagazine of American Historical Association, 2001.

12 On migrations of Greek nobility after the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Ottomans see Harris, Jonathan. Greek Emigres in the West 1400–1520. Camberly, 1995.

13 Miller, William. Balkan Exiles in Rome. Essays on the Latin Orient. Amsterdam, 1964.

Balša III Stracimirović. Thus, on her mother's side, Katarina was the great granddaughter of Jelena Lazarević Balšić who in turn was the daughter of prince Lazar Hrebeljanović. Once Bosnia was conquered by Mehmet the Conqueror, the dowager queen found refuge, first in Dubrovnik and finally in Rome. She died there as a Franciscan tertiary in 1478, and was buried in the Church of St Maria in Aracoeli. Her children, Sigismund and Katarina, with whom she desperately tried to reunite, were taken to Istanbul and converted to Islam. Both her Serbian Orthodox roots and her adopted Catholic identity are best revealed in the bilingual inscription on her original funerary monument, written both in Old Church Slavonic and in Latin. In 1590, her remains were transferred from the original tomb in the presbytery to the space in front of the altar, by the north pillar, on which her funerary slab now stands in a vertical position (**Fig. 1**)¹⁴. Dressed in her royal garb, she is portrayed as a queen with the coat of arms of her father and her husband on either side of her head, in the fashion of contemporary funerary representation of rulers from Western Europe.



Fig. 1. Funerary slab of queen Katarina Kosača Kotromanić, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome

¹⁴ The original 15th century inscription was solely in Cyrillic letters. On queen Katarina see *Tošić Djuro*. *Bosanskakraljica Katarina (1425–1478)*. – *Zbornik za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine*, 1997, No. 2, 93–112; *Kurtović, Esad*. *Prilog bibliografiji radova o bosanskoj kraljici Katarini (1425–1478) (U povodu 525 obljetnicesmrti)*. – *Bosna franciscana*, 2005, No. XIII/22, 201–211.



Fig. 2. Donika Kastrioti's icon of the Virgin, Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Valencia

Andronika Donika Kastrioti (1428–1505/6) was a descendent of the Arianiti and Muzaka families, and the wife of Djuradj Kastrioti Skenderbeg, who from 1443 to 1468 led the Christian resistance to the Ottoman conquest in the Balkans, later becoming commander-in-chief of the crusading forces of pope Pius II. Donika was born in 1428. Her father was Gjergj Arianiti Komnenos, whose domain reached to the

east of today's Bitola. Her mother was Maria Muzaka, of the Muzaka family, whose domain lay in the southwestern part of central Albania. Skanderbeg married Donika at the Orthodox monastery of Ardenica in Lushnje in Albania, after the Treaty of Gaeta with Alfonso V and the Kingdom of Naples, in 1451. After the Ottoman conquest of Albania, the Kastrioti were given lordships/patents of nobility(?) in the Kingdom of Naples, where they obtained a feudal domain, the Duchy of San Pietro in Galatina and the County of Soleto in the province of Lecce. Donika's and Skanderbeg's only child, Gjon Kastrioti II, married Irene Branković Palaiologina, the daughter of Lazar Branković, Despot of Serbia¹⁵. In Naples, she resided at Castel Nuovo and spent the rest of her days between the south of Italy, Sicily and Spain, becoming a close, personal friend of Juana, wife of Ferdinand I of Aragon. Upon her death in 1505, her body was transferred to the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Valencia, and laid to rest in a tomb near the holy icon of the Virgin Refuge of Sinners, which she is said to have brought to Spain (Fig. 2)¹⁶.

Her sister, Angelina (1440–1520), was married to the Serbian Despot Stefan Branković, and is venerated as holy mother Angelina in the Serbian Orthodox Church. Following their Balkan exile, Stefan and Angelina soon moved to their own castle in Belgrado in Friuli, near Udine, where the blind despot passed away in 1476. Ten years later, having accepted the invitation extended by King Matthias Corvinus, the widowed Angelina, carrying with her the relics of Despot Stefan Branković, together with her children, Đorđe and Jovan (the future bishop Maksim), moved first to Hungary, to Srem. From there, she went on to Wallachia in 1504, only to return to Srem several years later¹⁷.

Amongst the most significant contributions of Angelina Branković was her foundation of a number of churches and monasteries in Srem, which include the Church of St Luke in Kupinovo, the first of her residences in Hungary, where she deposited the relics of Despot Stefan Branković; the monastery at Obed, and her endowments on

15 Babinger, Franz. *Das Ende der Arianiten*. München, 1960, especially 25.

16 For a thorough study of the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Valencia and the tomb and the icon of the Virgin which belonged to Donika Kastrioti see Goerlich, Daniel Benito. *El Real Monasterio de la Santísima Trinidad de Valencia*. Historia y Arte. Valencia, 2008.

17 Tomin, Svetlana. *Vladika Maksim Branković (Bishop Maxim Branković)*. Novi Sad, 2007, 11; *Eadem*. *Despotica i monahinja Angelina Branković (Despoina and nun Angelina Branković)*. Novi Sad, 2009.



Fig. 3. Monastery of Krušedol

the Holy Mountain of Fruška Gora. Foremost among these is the monastery of Krušedol (**Fig. 3**), founded between 1509 and 1514; the new Studenica i.e. Ravanica of the Branković family in exile, the center of cult, state-ideology and dynasty, and the ultimate repository of the relics of several members of the holy Branković family, Despot Stefan the Blind, Despoina Angelina and Bishop Maksim, all of which remained there until the Ottomans besieged and burned down of the monastery in 1716¹⁸.

It is important to note that both Angelina's sons were born and

18 *Erdeljan, Jelena*. A note on the ktetorship and contribution of women from the Branković dynasty to cross-cultural connections in late medieval and early modern Balkans. – *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske*, 2016, No. 44, 61-72, with bibliography.

raised in exile, in the Veneto in Italy. Later on, in Hungary and Wallachia, they were regarded by the majority of the Serbian population of Srem as direct descendants of ancient Serbian rulers. They combined enjoying all the privileges of the Hungarian nobility of the day with the life of Renaissance court culture, having received the title of Despot by Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, whilst being well aware of the ecclesiastical and state traditions of their own patrimony. Together with their mother, Angelina Branković, they continued the stewardship of the Branković family over the Athonite monasteries Chilandar, St Paul, and Esphigmenou, and established and developed the cult of the blind Despot Stefan Branković in the tradition of the Serbian Orthodox Church¹⁹.

Angelina, a devout Orthodox, was also a patron of several shrines of universal Christian saints in the Catholic West. She donated a now lost luxuriously embroidered *phelonion* or shroud studded with pearls and precious stones for the relics of St John the Merciful in Bratislava and a shroud for the relics of St Symeon the God-bearer in Zadar²⁰.

Medieval feudal lords and/or Renaissance noblemen? The (self) fashioning of the Balkan elite in the Early Modern Period

In many aspects the lifestyle, networks of power, business and banking transactions, as well as the (self)fashioning of the Grand Duke of Bosnia, Sandalj Hranić (1370–1435) appear to be very similar to the lifestyles and manners of conduct of contemporary potentates from Italy or anywhere else in the Renaissance world. Sandalj Hranić inherited the lands and title of his celebrated uncle, the Serbian Vlatko Vuković, and thus ruled over a vast land, rich in natural resources and strategically significant, stretching across the upper course and valley of the Drina as well as the Lim River valley, parts of Zeta i.e. the south east Adriatic coast and hinterlands, including the city of Novi, the future Herceg Novi, and parts of Konavle in the envi-

¹⁹ *Tomin*, Svetlana. Archbishop Maxim Branković. Supplement to understanding of Serbian-Romanian relationships at the beginning of the 16th century. – *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, 2009, vol. I. No. 1-4, 107-119, especially 108-109, with bibliography.

²⁰ *Timotijević*, Miroslav. Sremski despoti Brankovići i osnivanje manastira Krušedola (Branković despots from Srem and the founding of Krušedol monastery). – *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske*, 1991–1992, No. 27-28, 127-150, especially 142.

rons of Dubrovnik. He later extended his domain to include parts of Hum, all the way to the Neretva River, as well as the city of Budva and its hinterland, while the city of Kotor was also a part of his circle of influence²¹. Recognizing him as *Budue et Zentedominus*, the Venetians granted him the citizenship of the Serenissima, which was later, in 1411, enhanced to the status of Venetian nobility. In 1429, Venetian documents mention him as owner of a *palazzo* in the city²².

Honors and privileges were granted to Sandalj in many cities on the Adriatic coast, as well, in 1406 he held a palace in Zadar and in 1423 a house in Kotor, but no other city bestowed on him more gifts and honors than the city of Dubrovnik. By the end of his life, he had four houses and a cellar in Dubrovnik and land holdings within the territory of the Republic of Dubrovnik, including the island of Šipan²³. Documents from the Archive of Dubrovnik dating from 1407–1409 mention the existence of Sandalj's residence or *domus*. As of 1419, and throughout the 1420's and 1430's, until Sandalj's death in 1435, this house, located in the very heart of the city, by the Prince's palace and across the square from the Cathedral of Dubrovnik, was enlarged and adapted into a new and visually striking architectural structure which marked the cityscape²⁴. Like most of Dubrovnik, it was devastated by the earthquake of 1667. In addition to some written and visual testimonies; detailed archival documents; drawings and *vedutas* of Dubrovnik from the centuries predating the earthquake in the seventeenth century²⁵, a carved basin of the cistern in the courtyard of Sandalj's residence, dating from the 1420's also survives as a material relic of the once lavish original refurbishing of the *domus*. The basin is decorated with the heraldic crest of the Kosača family, and is today in the lapidarium of Društvo prijatelja

21 In his third marriage, Sandalj was married to the widowed Jelena Balšić, daughter of Serbian prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, sister of despot Stefan Lazarević who was a vassal and an ally of King Sigismund. For a monograph study on Sandalj Hranić see Kurtović, Esad. *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*. Sarajevo, 2009, with sources and extensive bibliography. Cf. also *Kalić, Jovanka* (ed.). *Istorija srpskog naroda. Druga knjiga. Doba borbi za očuvanje i obnovu države (1371–1537)*. Beograd, 1982, 231–239.

22 Grujić, Nada and Danko Zelić. *Palača vojvode Sandalja Hranića u Dubrovniku*. – *Anali Dubrovnika*, 2010, No. 48, 47–132, especially 52, with bibliography and sources.

23 Kurtović, Esad. *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 335–406, a chapter entitled “Ekonomski profil, kultura, vjera” focusing on the financial position, culture, and religious issues related to Sandalj Hranić.

24 Grujić. *Palača vojvode Sandalja Hranića u Dubrovniku*, passim, with excerpts from relevant sources in Latin kept at the Archive of Dubrovnik.

25 Grujić. *Palača vojvode Sandalja*, 67, 69.



Fig. 4. Basin of the cistern from the residence of Sandalj Hranić in Dubrovnik

dubrovačke starine in the city (Fig. 4)²⁶.

All the features of this sculptural piece are unmistakably Renaissance in form, motif and styling, even in the most formalistic sense of the word.

The process of the refurbishing of Sandalj's Dubrovnik residence, especially after the sale of his part of the region of Konavle to the Republic in 1419, was fully financed and managed by the authorities of the Republic, as a sign of honoring the Grand Duke and upholding him as the most trusted, strategic ally of the city²⁷. This

²⁶ Grujić. *Palača vojvode Sandalja*, 49-50, 71, 74-75.

²⁷ Sandalj Hranić was recognized as the foremost strategic ally of Dubrovnik, granting it safety and safekeeping its interests in clashes with the powers wrangling over control of the east Adriatic, the Hungarians, the Venetians, and feudal lords from Bosnia. On the Konavle transaction see Kurtović, Esad. *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, 376. Cf. also id., *Motivi Sandaljeve*

complex and meticulously documented process included the uniting into one three separate buildings given as a gift to the Duke by the city authorities and standing at the most prominent location in the city. The gold and the azure for its embellishment was imported from Venice, some used also for the well-documented making of luxurious furnishings for this residence in Dubrovnik²⁸.

The open pavilion which graced the top floor of the building, called a *balatorio* or *liago*, as it was referred to in a 1425 document from Dubrovnik²⁹, was a unique, exceptional and innovative example in the urban architecture of the city in its day. In Italy and the Renaissance world, especially in the Mediterranean, such covered yet open pavilion structures were both warrants of a more comfortable living conditions in towns packed with houses lining the narrow streets and status symbols of larger houses and palaces. Its construction was certainly a demanding task. At the close of 1422, the municipality officials in charge of construction were ordered by the highest-ranking authorities of the Republic to charge the *magister* Bonino da Milano with the commission³⁰. Bonino, from Lombardy where he was also schooled, was a sculptor and architect and is, perhaps, best known for the making of Orlando's pillar in Dubrovnik and of the sculptures of the façades of the cathedral of Šibenik. The Annunciation, a free-standing sculpture group atop the roof of the south transept of that church, is created in early Renaissance fashion³¹.

According to a contract kept in the Archive of Dubrovnik, in 1422 Bonino da Milano was also commissioned to produce a large *cimerium*, i.e. a great gilded heraldic coat of arms, complete with shield, helmet, crest and cloak³². It was placed on the east façade of Sandalj's residence, facing the sea and visible to all ships approaching Dubrovnik. Sandalj's coat of arms, painted in expensive colors and gold, and hung between the supports of the pavilion atop his resi-

prodaje Konavala Dubrovčaima. – Anali Dubrovnika, 2000, No. 38, 103-120.

28 Grujić. Palača vojvode Sandalja, 74-77.

29 The term *liago* comes from the Greek word *heliacon*, a place exposed to the sun, see Grujić. Palača vojvode Sandalja, 66-68, with sources.

30 Grujić. Palača vojvode Sandalja, 66, 68.

31 On the 15th century sculptor and architect Bonino di Jacopo da Milano, born in Italy, in Lombardy, and active on the east coast of the Adriatic cf. Marković, Predrag. Bonino da Milano – *Primus magister ecclesiae nove sancti Jacobi*. – Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji, 2002, No. 39, 207-225, with bibliography.

32 Grujić. Palača vojvode Sandalja, 89.

dence, as a clear symbol of power, social impact and his noble identity. Similar coats of arms could be seen in the city's *loggia*, marking the presence of visiting nobility, often on their way to the Holy Land³³.

At the beginning of February 1426, a special ceremony was dedicated to Duke Sandalj and Duchess Jelena in Dubrovnik, when they attended the feast of St Blaise, the city's patron saint. Their desire to build a church in Dubrovnik themselves was, unfortunately, never realized³⁴. To a considerable degree, the self-awareness, individuality, and independence displayed by Sandalj Hranić, which was meticulously documented by his own professional chancellery, were sustained and nurtured by the rewards that the Grand Duke gained from the privileges granted to him by the city of Dubrovnik following the Konavle transaction of 1419. He was allowed to invest money in its financial market for an annual interest rate of five percent³⁵. Even the ink used by the chancellery at Sandalj's court(s) was of the same quality and equal to that of the highest offices of the Republic of Dubrovnik itself³⁶.

The citation from Shakespeare at the beginning of this paper was there not only as a general reference to the period discussed above, but also as a reminder that all of us who study and write about the past are, in fact, countrymen, for, in the words of L. P. Hartely, "the past is a foreign country, they do things differently there" (The Go-Between). This contribution to an assessment of one segment of the past of the Balkans is not, nor can it be at this stage, exhaustive or definitive. It is meant mostly as a reminder that we should be ready to investigate it with a methodological readiness to perceive its cultural dynamics, manner of (self-)fashioning and elements of visual culture with an unclouded optic and against the backdrop of the premodern world in a broader sense, not just limited to its geographic surroundings and the often negatively intoned connotations ascribed to it in historiography.

33 *Grujić*. Palača vojvode Sandalja, 83, 89.

34 On Sandalj's official (and last) visit to Dubrovnik upon invitation of the Republic's authorities see *Grujić*. Palača vojvode Sandalja, 84, 101, with sources. On his (unrealized) plans to build a church in the city see *Kalić*. Istorija srpskog naroda, 536.

35 *Kurtović*, Esad. Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača, 376.

36 On the functioning of Sandalj's chancellery, the issuing and safekeeping of his documents in Dubrovnik, and the official seals see *Kurtović*, Esad. Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača, 378-379.

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Балканите и ренесансовият свят

Йелена Ерделян



Текстът представя и подновява дискусията за връзките между Балканите и ренесансовия свят, поставяйки отново въпроса: Имало ли е Ренесанс на нашия полуостров? В спор със сменената, нова гледна точка, както и с подновения методологичен арсенал по отношение на добре известните факти, статията представя само няколко от многото балкански казуси, които често са възприемани като прикрити елементи на визуалната култура, но са плод на транскултурни и кръстопътни взаимодействия, на взаимосвързаност, миграции и социални мрежи, както и на самоопределяне на идентичността в зората на модерната епоха. В този методологически контекст авторът представя живота и ктиторската дейност на Катарина Косача Котроманич, кралица на Босна, на Андроника Доника Кастриоти, съпруга на Джурадж Кастриоти Скендербег, и на неговата сестра Ангелина Бранкович, омъжена за сръбския деспот Стефан Бранкович, почитана като „светата майка Ангелина“ от сръбската православна църква, както и на Саңдали Хранич Косача, могъщ благородник от Босна в края на XV в. В много аспекти неговият живот, връзки, работа и банкови операции, а също и самочувствието му са доста близки на маниера на съвременните му благородници от Италия и по целия ренесансов свят.

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