

*Eclecticism in Late Medieval Visual Culture
at the Crossroads of the Latin, Greek, and Slavic Traditions*

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Chapter 1

Cross-Cultural and Transcultural Entanglement and Visual Culture in Eastern Europe, ca. 1300–1550

Jelena Erdeljan

Abstract

Acknowledging the framework of the global turn in art history and medieval studies, this essay presents one possible way of considering networks of various kinds, woven by families, scholars, church prelates, artists, and craftsmen, that initiated cultural transfer in Eastern Europe in the early modern period. The case of the Serbian Branković royal family is examined in this vein as it presents an indicative example of cross-cultural and transcultural entanglement via familial or dynastic networks, in which women often played the central roles. While the study of cross-cultural entanglement focuses on common characteristics and tropes shared by various cultures and cultural areas, the study of transcultural entanglement strives to supersede the notion of culturally isolated spheres by developing an appropriate methodology that facilitates the microhistorical analysis of intercultural contact and transcultural entanglements. The lives and ktetorial activities of the last representatives of the noble house of Branković—Angelina, Đorđe (Maksim), and Jovan, and his daughter, Milica Despina—are particularly indicative examples. Visual culture produced under their patronage in southern Hungary and Wallachia combines features of traditional Byzantine and Serbian medieval iconography and visual identity with elements of the early modern art of Central Europe as well as of Italo-Cretan artistic production.

Chapter 2

Serbian Royal Mausolea: A Quest for Cultural Identity

Ida Sinkević

Abstract

This essay discusses four royal mausolea built by the members of the Nemanjić dynasty in medieval Serbia. It maintains that the earliest of the four structures, the famous Church of the Theotokos at Studenica Monastery, begun in the late twelfth century, provided a model for the later fourteenth-century foundations: the Church of St. Stefan in Banjska, the Church of Christ Pantokrator at Dečani, and the Church of the Holy Archangels near Prizren. Located at the intersection of the Latin, Byzantine, and Slavic worlds, all four monuments exhibit eclectic features that reflect both the complexity of local cultural and religious crosscurrents, as well as the ideological and political aspirations of their founders.

Chapter 3

Byzantine Forms and Catholic Patrons in Late Medieval Transylvania

Dragoș Gh. Năstăsoiu

Abstract

During the late medieval period, several ethnic and confessional groups coexisted in the southern area of the Voivodate of Transylvania, each of them bringing into play their own cultural and religious traditions. Under Latin rule, Orthodox Romanians lived together with Catholic Hungarians, Szeklers, and Saxons, their long-lasting *conviventia* generating frequent encounters with the culture of the Other, which left deep traces in the religious art of both confessional groups. Fully connected to the main cultural trends of Latin Europe, the dominant Catholics commissioned and produced religious art throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth century that was deeply rooted in the spirituality of the West. This essay deals with the question of medieval painters trained in Byzantium, who decorated murals in Latin-rite churches and who received commissions from Catholic patrons. It focuses on two case studies: the mural decoration of the nave of the Calvinist (formerly Catholic) church in Sântămăria-Orlea (1311) and the paintings of the sanctuary of the Lutheran (formerly Catholic) church in Dârlos (late fourteenth to early fifteenth century). Both churches were located in the Voivodate of Transylvania, a region where Orthodox Romanians lived alongside Catholics but under the Latin rule of the latter. This context contributed to the emergence of frequent phenomena of eclecticism in the sphere of religious art, which defy the usual categories of medieval art and challenge traditional art-historical classifications.

Chapter 4

Buttressing Orthodoxy: Imagining Hagia Sophia and Celebrating Constantinople in Sixteenth-Century Russia

Elena Boeck

Abstract

A spectacular, large sixteenth-century Russian icon of The Elevation of the Cross exemplifies a post-Byzantine, Russian construction of Orthodoxy. It also creates a vision of Orthodox Constantinople that is impervious to the city's Ottoman realities. The unusual icon includes specific, deliberate architectural referents to the city's Byzantine past. A representation of the sculpture of Justinian's horseman, which was destroyed shortly after 1453, anchors the innovative icon in the timeless *longue durée* of Orthodoxy. The highly visible buttress of Hagia Sophia revives memories of Russian generosity to the most important church of the Orthodox world. This icon instrumentalizes Constantinople as a link in the chain of Orthodox history.

Chapter 5

Eclecticism and Originality in the Early Post-Byzantine Art of the Ottoman Balkans

Theocharis Tsampouras

Abstract

Cross-cultural contacts in post-Byzantine painting can be traced back to the fifteenth century. However, it was the severe economic crisis in the Ottoman Empire during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that radically changed the visual culture of southeastern Europe by triggering a significant increase in the mobility of Ottoman subjects throughout the Balkans. Merchants and craftsmen, as well as traveling artists and intellectuals, started wandering in the borderless microcosm of the prenational Balkans in pursuit of new markets and patrons. New ideas and artistic styles traveled along with them, drastically changing the aesthetic expectations of the Orthodox communities and progressively establishing a new transnational pictorial language created by the amalgamation of various and often contrasting cultural elements. The work of itinerant artists of the Ottoman Balkans challenges preconceived notions on interconnectivity between Western and non-Western art, and it vividly demonstrates how easily images and ideas were transferred, integrated, and reinterpreted in different cultural environments. The interconnectedness through trade, the new reproduction technologies, and the expansion of the traveling artists' activities increased the demand for eclecticism, which ultimately became the sine qua non of an artist's success. The circulation and copy of decontextualized prototypes among Balkan artists began in the sixteenth century as pictorial exercises in style, but by the mid-seventeenth century, a whole new, eclectic, and highly decorative style was created and disseminated.

Chapter 6

Pro or Contra Filioque? Trinitarian *Synthronoi* Images at the Crossroads of the Catholic West and the Orthodox East (ca. 1300–1500)

Ágnes Kriza

Abstract

This essay outlines and classifies the earliest occurrences of the Trinitarian *Synthronoi* iconography in the Byzantine cultural sphere: the image of the human figures of the Father and the Son, seated on a shared throne and accompanied by the dove of the Holy Spirit. The *Synthronoi* became a popular image in Western art after the twelfth century to vividly convey the Latin teaching about the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son, the so-called *filioque*. However, the Eastern appearance of this iconography in the fourteenth century, is much less self-evident. Given that the Orthodox questioned the *filioque* formula in the Western Creed, since according to their position, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only. By exploring the underlying motives of appropriating a Western Trinitarian iconography in

Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, this study reconsiders the question of the transmission of Trinitarian iconography between the Christian West and the East in light of their disagreement about the Holy Trinity.

Chapter 7

The Dormition of the Virgin Between East and West: Artistic Exchange and Innovation in Medieval Wall Paintings from Slovakia

Krisztina Ilko

Abstract

This study explores the artistic plurality evident in the iconography of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century wall paintings of the Dormition of the Virgin in Slovakia. This Slavic-speaking country is situated on the northern edges of the Carpathian basin and constituted the northern highlands of the Kingdom of Hungary during the Middle Ages. The Dormition iconography became popular in monumental art in the Christian East but achieved only modest success in Western Europe. Numerous surviving examples, including those in Čečejevce, Gánovce, Rimavské Brezovo, and Levoča, suggest that the Dormition became a particularly popular theme in Slovakia and was approached with notable artistic creativity. Special attention is devoted to the placement of the images within the sacred space and the development of local iconographical variants. Instead of a backwater, this chapter considers Slovakia as an innovative region where recently developed iconographies were adopted early on in monumental art. A characteristic example is the newly discovered fresco in the cathedral of Nitra, which represents a special variation of the Dormition, namely the Last Prayer of the Virgin. This study posits that these murals refine our knowledge of cross-cultural exchange between Eastern and Western Christianity and prompt us to reevaluate artistic peripheries within the Carpathian basin.

Chapter 8

The “Hybrid” Iconography of the Agnus Dei in Moldavian Wall Paintings

Vlad Bedros

Abstract

This study addresses a Western theme encountered in the post-Byzantine wall paintings from Moldavia in various iconographic contexts throughout the late fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries. Despite its scarcity in the extant Byzantine medieval iconographies, the depiction of the Lamb was not prohibited by the Orthodox Church, and on the borders of the empire’s “commonwealth,” its Western iconographic version could have been introduced into the traditional imagery, if it fitted within an accepted visual discourse. The Moldavian milieu appropriated on its own the ancient allegory of the

Lamb through the mediation of the neighboring Catholic area, and the image gained currency in the apse, displacing the traditional representation of the Christ Child in the paten. The other iconographic contexts of the Lamb suggest its assimilation into the corpus of symbolic images that allude to divine presence and its revelation. Given that the Moldavian images display the details of the apocalyptic Lamb, the grounds for this visual appropriation may reside in late Byzantine Eucharistic theology. As a matter of fact, authors from the Hesychast milieu assimilated the mystical experience of God's presence in the consecrated gifts to the contemplation of Taboric light, as they both offer a foretaste of the renewal of the Second Parousia. The Lamb's inclusion might be indicative of workshop practices that facilitated cross-cultural transfers conducive to the making of an eclectic visual vocabulary, generating a "hybrid" expression of Orthodox identity.

Chapter 9

The Akathistos on the Move and the Geography of Post-Byzantine Art

Nazar Kozak

Abstract

The assumption that the Byzantine artistic milieu split into distinct national traditions after the fall of Constantinople has fractured the "big picture" of the geography of post-Byzantine art. Using the mobility turn as a theoretical framework, this essay asks how our understanding of this geography might change if, leaving aside the notion of national tradition, the focus were placed instead on tracking iconographic mobility, that is, the ability of images to "move" from one place to another. The study applies this lens to one of the most important late and post-Byzantine iconographic themes—the cycle illustrating the Akathistos hymn for the Virgin. Combining an iconographic classification method and mapping technology, I track how the three best-identifiable types of the Akathistos Cycle moved around the sixteenth-century world. The data collected from the analysis of the forty-three mural cycles dated between 1500 and 1600 opens up the possibility of arguing that, seen through the optics of iconographic mobility, the sixteenth-century geography of post-Byzantine art emerges as a multidimensional and interconnected whole rather than a flat, segmented "patchwork" of discrete territorial domains. I offer four reasons to support this claim: the cross-border movement of the Akathistos Cycle's types, the overlapping of their mobility zones, the coexistence of distinct types on a microgeographic level, and the large spread of "eclectic" cycles. Finally, this essay discusses the further research directions on artistic connectivity and ideological consolidations of the post-Byzantine world.

Chapter 10

The Crucified Monk at the Edge of Traditions

Mateusz J. Ferens

Abstract

This article tracks patterns of dissemination and reception for the image of the Crucified Monk in the Balkan Peninsula in the post-Byzantine period. This image type arrived in the formerly Byzantine territories by way of Orthodox communities on the peripheries of the Ottoman Empire, stemming from Central Europe where it had undergone considerable development under Western monasticism. Despite initial ideological differences, this image type was later received favorably and became fully integrated into Orthodox monastic culture. Three stages contributed to the image's transcultural journey. First, I consider the way the Crucified Monk was employed in the realm of Western monasticism where the changing iconography developed in a direction that increasingly appealed to universal monastic ideologies. Second, I turn to the various modes of intercultural communication that affected the image's dispersal. Pivotal in this regard were the Greek diaspora communities that transmitted cultural imagery to their fellow coreligionists under Ottoman rule. Third, I look at internal factors and strategic modifications by which Orthodox monks tailored this image type to their own ideological needs. By tracking this journey, this essay showcases the rich web of cross-cultural interactions in early modern Europe and the currents that brought distant centers such as Cologne, Venice, and Mount Athos into cultural dialogue. The findings of this study interrogate the notion of cultural influence that is often employed in discourse about post-Byzantine art.

Chapter 11

“Sic enim Constantinus . . .” The Equestrian Portrait of King Ladislaus Jagiello in the Holy Trinity Chapel at the Castle of Lublin (1418)

Marek Walczak

Abstract

After the marriage of the Polish queen Hedwig of Anjou to the Lithuanian duke Jogaila (Ladislaus Jagiello), the forms of Gothic and Ruthenian art intermingled with one another on the lands that came under their joint rule. The most illustrious examples of this phenomenon are wall paintings executed in Catholic churches and Gothic-style palatial buildings by artists originating from countries adhering to Orthodox Christianity. The most prominent feature in the iconographic program of wall paintings in the Holy Trinity Chapel at the royal castle in Lublin (1418) is the founder-related theme, consisting of two images of the king. In one of them, he is depicted as a humble servant of the Virgin Mary, kneeling before her. In another, he is shown as a rider on horseback, with an angel hovering overhead, placing a crown on

his temples and handing him a cross mounted on a long pole. The key role is played by the cross that the angel gives to Jagiełło, which may be understood as a reference to the king's military victories by analogy with the legend of Constantine the Great. This cross derives from the *crux hastata* tradition, and its source can be found in the story about Constantine's dream before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. In texts originating in the University of Cracow's intellectual milieu, Jagiełło is juxtaposed with various figures from the past, and Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg, in an oration delivered at the Council of Constance, equated him with Constantine the Great who expanded the realm of Christianity without spilling blood. Jagiełło's equestrian portrait in Lublin is rooted in a long tradition in which the representation of power was achieved through reference to ancient exemplars of kingship, that had been in existence both in the Christian East and the West.

Chapter 12

Donors, Patrons, and Benefactors in Medieval Epirus Between the Great Empires: A Society in Change or Continuity?

Christos Stavrakos

Abstract

The region of medieval Epirus (modern Epirus and southern Albania) is home to hundreds of Byzantine and post-Byzantine Christian monuments, the majority of which remain wholly unpublished. The Ionian and Adriatic Seas offered easier access to this area from the West, while the large mountain ranges to the East inhibited connections with Macedonia and Thrace. In the post-Byzantine period, the urban centers (Ioannina, Arta, etc.) along with clusters of alpine villages (such as Zagori) experienced financial growth thanks to trade relations with the West (namely, with the city-states of Italy, the Netherlands, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Danubian principalities). Legends regarding the founding of monasteries in Epirus began to circulate from the early sixteenth century. These legends connected the monasteries with emperors, princes, or aristocrats of the Byzantine period, who had influenced the art production of the region. The most successful of these foundation tales were widely circulated and adopted by other church foundations. They were later documented as patriographical writings, one of the oldest surviving in Bucharest. This essay focuses on how such founders, donors, and donations have been transmitted to us via donor inscriptions and portraits. Based on this material, I draw some conclusions about donor activities in Epirus around the time of the Ottoman conquest of the region.

Chapter 13

Albanian Votive Images as Media of Transcultural Interaction Between Tradition and Innovation

Gianvito Campobasso

Abstract

This essay reflects on the relation between *pro remedio anima* imagery and sites recognized as particularly worthy of worship in international or local contexts. This imagery enhanced the potential for supernatural contact. Priming spaces for the agency of miraculous objects, at the same time the images conveyed visual instructions for ritual performances engaging the holy and shaping (or reshaping) new shrines. Many of them were part of a new network of holy sites at the end of the Middle Ages, working as a privileged channel for transcultural interactions because of the international nature of their visitors. These sites worked to disperse old and new iconographies and compositional solutions, in keeping with the sensibilities and needs of a new dynamic and cosmopolitan society. This essay lays out a cultural panorama by discussing several emblematic case studies from a larger osmotic area that participated in the dynamics of transmission between Italy and Byzantium in the late Middle Ages, namely the southern Adriatic and the Albanian coastline, viewed as part of the long Balkan waterfront.

Chapter 14

Toward a New Era: Patronage and Luxury Endowments to Mount Athos (Fourteenth to Mid-Sixteenth Centuries)

Dimitrios Liakos

Abstract

Throughout the Palaiologan period and in the century that followed the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the relationship between Mount Athos and the Orthodox regions of the Balkan Peninsula and the Carpathian Mountains was intense and complicated. The Serbian presence on Athos dates to the late twelfth century (Vatopedi, Hilandar) and continued until the mid-fifteenth century (Vatopedi, St. Paul, etc.). Wallachian patronage appeared on Athos just before the middle of the fourteenth century, yet Moldavia started making donations after declaring its independence in 1359. The rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia provided substantial economic support and played significant roles in the renewal of some monastic complexes, such as Zographou, Vatopedi, and Iviron. The aim of this essay is to shed light on this phenomenon by reconsidering the patterns of patronage and endowments of luxury objects from rulers, dignitaries, and upper-class persons of these regions from the fourteenth until the mid-sixteenth centuries, before the major economic crisis that hit the Ottoman empire and affected the economic situation of the Athonite monasteries. By cross-checking archival sources with archaeological

data, this study discusses the degree of the presence of these patrons on Athos; the media by which they achieved their purpose and the ideological context—in other words, the messages they conveyed.

Chapter 15

A Murderer Among the Seraphim: Lăpușneanu's Transfiguration Embroideries

Ovidiu Olar

Abstract

This chapter focuses on two embroideries commissioned by the Moldavian prince Alexander Lăpușneanu (r. 1552–61 and 1564–68) for Slatina Monastery and now held by the National Museum of Art of Romania, in Bucharest. The two lavish textiles—one dating to 1561 and one undated—have never been the object of a thorough analysis. Both embroideries display the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor, but they include highly unusual details. Why are the donors, the prince and his wife, Ruxanda, depicted as crowned by angels and (seemingly) by seraphim on the two textiles? What was the rationale behind the choice of such unprecedented iconography? Favoring an approach that sits at the crossroads of theology, iconography, and history, this study places the Slatina embroideries in a more dynamic historical setting than previously imagined. It looks closely at Byzantine, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Wallachian examples and tries to identify possible textual and visual sources for the imagery of coronation. However, it also scrutinizes the metamorphoses of these sources in the Moldavian milieu and shows how events such as Prince Iliăș Rareș's conversion to Islam (1551) and the rise to power of the intriguing adventurer, "Despot" Jacob Vasilikos (r. 1561–63), led Lăpușneanu and his proxies to favor new strategies for self-representation. While we currently know little about the impact of these refashioned narratives of legitimacy, their main pillars can be identified: promotion of Hesychasm, defense of Orthodoxy, and divine election of the "true" ruler.