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VICKY FOSKOLOU – SOPHIA KALOPISSI-VERTI (eds), Intercultural Encounters in Medieval Greece after 1204. The Evidence of Art and Material Culture (Byzantioς. Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 19). Turnhout: Brepols Publishers 2022. 572 pp. – ISBN 978-2-503-59850-5 (€ 95.00 excl. VAT)

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This review is not of an expert medievalist and art historian, albeit not of someone unrelated, or indifferent to its essential precept stated as its title, "Intercultural Encounters", especially in terms of its crucial, intricate, provocative, challenging, imaginative and *indispensable* approach and methodology; a precept which permeates all fields of studies and must permeate Byzantine studies and *Religionswissenschaft* in particular. With their Introduction (pp. 7–18) the volume Editors have provided a concise and informative presentation of its content for those who might want to gain a bird's eye view of its construction. Its three-Part structure (I "Tracing the Latin Identities and the role of the Mendicants; II "Social Transformations and Mutual Approaches. *The Evidence of Archaeology and Material Culture*; III "Cultural Interactions and Byzantine Responses. *The Evidence of Architecture, Murals, and Icon Painting*) unveils the underlying characteristics of each one of these Parts, not necessarily in absolute sense, these being: Latin and mendicant dynamics; archaeology and material culture; architecture, murals and iconography. Through these elements emerge the mentality, tradition, ethos, spirituality, culture, ecclesiastical identity, social and political powers permeating and interacting with the Eastern, or Byzantine factor. Collective volumes of studies, even on a very specific topic, are by nature fragmented. Thence, rather than commenting on matters of methodology, historical dimensions, events, circumstances, or persons, which are of a more expert pen to evaluate, this reviewer will comment on features which appear to him as highlighting the *kind* of "Intercultural Encounter".

Thus, MICHALIS OLYMPIOS' introductory study, "Architecture, Use of Space, and Ornament in the Mendicant Churches of Latin Greece. *An Overview*" (pp. 45–75), sheds an intriguing and unexpected light on the central theme of the volume. The discussion here is about worship *sites*

or *buildings* in compounds of Latin monastic Orders and friars; not so much Church communities, the "mendicant orders" (i.e. the friars of "beggars") behind the sites and buildings which are the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians (Augustinian Hermits), and the Carmelites, as well as of the Trinitarians, Mercedarians, Servites, Minims, Hospitallers of St. John of God, and the Teutonic Order, recognized by the Second Latin Council of Lyon (1274). In this study the author concentrates on the Dominican and the Franciscan sites. I found the discussion on the relations between especially the Dominican and Franciscan tradition and prescriptions on the one hand and the building size and decoration of their churches in Greek lands on the other (the latter responding to the demands for the burial and commemoration of prominent lay persons in the friar's grounds) very interesting and of great value for its historical, spiritual and cultural-artistic insights. On this point and in terms of "Intercultural Encounters", one should be parenthetically reminded of an even deeper connection between Christian asceticism and ascetics exercising in *askesis* and Islamic mysticism (*sufism*), the Muslims practicing poverty (in Arabic, *fuqara*) by being dressed in a plain cloth (*suf*, one explanation for the name *sufism*) and the later Latin "beggars". OLYMPIOS' study examines the relationship between the Dominican and Franciscan theoretical-theological-ideological modest disposition towards excesses in architectural typology of their churches and their interior decoration on the one hand, and the pressure and demands of local lay people using these friar grounds and churches as burial and commemorative places, on the other, i.e. the effect of an encounter between ideology and pragmatism in Medieval Greece!

The Dominican and Franciscan act of preaching (a predominant missionary activity for these Orders) to urban masses and in open spaces, squares, streets and other venues, developed into an infiltration of, or invitation to, their quarters and chapels making for them certain constitutional changes regarding restrictions, regulations and alterations necessary (cf. pp. 56–61). This section provides a very detailed description of such changes in the church building for their use by friars and lay people. The use of the church floor, or thick walls, or even part of the altar space, or space in a given chapel for burial purposes, came later; in 1227 for the Dominican and in 1250 for the Franciscan order. Lay people and their relatives buried in these places were previously their benefactors; pointing to, not only an artistic relationship between West and East in architecture and painting, but also an intricate social fabric, of interwoven historical circumstances, intriguing edifices and cases "at the juncture between West and East" in

the context of "conspicuous poverty and moderate splendor", to use the author's concluding words! (p. 67).

Mendicant presence and its influence and in more specific terms are further discussed by VICKY FOSKOLOU in her, "Reflections of Mendicant Spirituality in the Monumental Painting of Crete in the Late Medieval Period (13th–15th Centuries)" (pp. 77–112), a study focusing on three iconographic subjects: the giant figure of "St Christopher" carrying the infant Christ on his shoulders, the flayed "St. Bartholomew", and the "Throne of Grace". In many instances the word "influence" is discernible and makes more sense to art historians than to local people, as certain figures (like St. Francis, or the Virgin of Mercy, or Mary Magdalene), previously unknown, became highly reputable to them – spirituality prevailing over differing ecclesiastical tradition and culture! The three subjects discussed here in detail (in terms of historical evolution of the cult, relationship with the Orders, expansion of their images, artistic features etc.) are further indicative to the point. Among the three, the flayed St. Bartholomew is a more "attractive" subject due, certainly, to the dramatic description of the Latin version of his martyrdom. Iconography, then, has described his martyrdom even more …"eloquently" (p. 84ff)! Of special interest is the influence and the transformation of the theme of the Throne of Grace to, among others, that of the Holy Trinity; a transition to theological and dogmatic expressions.

Throughout its pages the reader is exposed not only to issues about themes and styles of art, but also to not so secondary historical, ecclesiastical (Western-Eastern) and theological issues and subjects, interwoven among themselves within the stated era and the broader geographical space of the Volume. NICKIPHOROS I. TSOUGARAKIS' intriguing and articulate article, "Art, Identity, and the Franciscans in Crete" (pp. 113–129) is a case in point, as it is also IOANNA BITHA's and ANNA-MARIA KASDAGLI's joint study of "Saint George 'of the English'. *Byzantine and Western Encounters in a Chapel of the Fortificearingations of Rhodes*" (pp. 131–175), the one with evidence from Crete and the other from Rhodes; bearing mutual influences and emphases, from-to and to-from East and West in terms of architecture, iconography and even spirituality. The various forms and expressions of intercultural influences are seen in and attested to by architecture, iconography, ecclesiological particularities, theological presuppositions, spiritual characteristics and various other sources. An oversight that occurs in this latter study, that "the book of Revelation was not considered canonical in the Eastern Orthodox Church until the fourteenth century" (p. 146) needs revision, as the book of Revelation although rejected in the

fourth century by all Eastern writers outside Alexandria and West Syrians did not accept it until the fifth century, or even in the ninth century many Greek-speaking Christians had doubts about it, the book had been included in a confirmed Canon of the New Testament by the Councils of Ippon in 383 and Carthage in 397!

In any case and as these studies clearly demonstrate, whereas art (and more often arguments among art historians) may appear as confusing and even futile to the uninitiated, yet a curious reader can discover that its mystique conceals its own ways of unveiling secrets of history (especially such ones of intention and of the heart) – if one triggers art to whisper them! After all, not everything in history (especially dealing with intercultural encounters – a field of "art" in itself!) is monolithic, let alone made of concrete. Even the troubadours have something to tell us about history, let alone "encounters", as confirmed by DIMITRIS KOUNDOURAS' most interesting and innovative study that follows, "Western Music and Poetry at the Kingdom of Thessalonica. *Music and Historiography of the Fourth Crusade*" (pp. 177–198). Their music and poetry is not only of high quality, but of rich historical reference as well! After all, as the author reminds us, the title "troubadours" comes from the Provençal verb *tobar*, "to invent" – obviously, something that exists, even as fiction, or impression! This brings us to the unfortunate symptom which we encounter with the *reality* of the "phenomenon" in almost every field of study (that is, Phenomenology) which is often misunderstood and underestimated, if not forgotten by scholarship, including History!

The exchange and interchange of forms, techniques, material, usages etc. provided an opportunity, as well as the need and the impetus for further developments and expressions of such elements and matters. OLGA GRATZIOU's study "Imported Projects, Local Skills, and the Emergence of a 'Cretan Gothic'" (pp. 201–46), the first in Part II on social transformations, offers multiple examples of this phenomenon of transformation and development of forms of art into a 'Cretan Gothic'! Her essay is replete of details for specialists, worth of exploring them further for their symbolism and the variety of themes, as the title of the essay indicates, i.e. projects, skills and Cretan adaptations. In reference to the figurative pieces of sculpture which the author discusses in the ending pages of her essay (p. 212ff), one could add to these Iconography in … stone!

What follows is ANASTASIA VASSILIOU's essay on "Glazed Pottery in Late Medieval Morea (13th–15th Centuries). *Cross-Cultural Tableware*

with Multiple Connotations" (pp. 247–284), a very detailed discussion of wares, ceramic material of everyday use (like bowls, pots, dishes, jugs etc., not necessarily for decorative use, although highly decorated and attractive), local and imported ones, from a plethora of places, mostly from the eastern and the southern Peloponnese – the "Moreas" for the Latins. What one can derive from this study, in broad lines, is that what ware items were imported from Italy (and even from Spain) to Peloponnese were also made and exported later from Peloponnese to Italy – something that speaks of such matters as social status, different indigenous populations (including differing Churches, Latin or Orthodox, and monasteries), internal and external political developments, changing needs and trade conditions, kind and size of city-ports, survival and resiliency, acumen and ability, flexibility and adaptability of the Peloponnesians themselves, all in the context of the Latin conquest!

Not only Crete, but also Rhodes comes to the forefront. Being at the crossroads of Constantinople to Egypt, Cyprus and Syria after the fall of the Byzantine capital to the Latins, the island reveals its material and cosmopolitan prosperity, thus becoming a center of artistic interest as well. The findings of products there in yet another form of material evidence, that of glazed, household and everyday wares, speak not only of an Eastern-Western (Italy and Spain) exchange from either side to the other and in between, but also of tangible artistic exchanges, including Islamic influences! All these bring Constantinople, Rhodes, Cyprus (esp. Paphos), Lemnos, Islamic Syria, their cosmopolitan profiles, their artistic tastes, qualities and eclecticism under a central special spotlight – a rich, complex, lengthy and multi-faceted subject unfolded by MARIA MICHAILIDOU's study, "Pottery Finds in the Medieval Town of Rhodes (1204–1522). Insights on a Multicultural, Cosmopolitan Society" (pp. 285–325) and its 37 illustrations.

Every single archaeological item, no matter how minute and "secondary" (even belts, buckles, loops, mounts and clasps), can provide to the acute investigator information on matters of origin, social status, dress code, garments, artistic preferences, mental disposition, sources or kinds of influence and, most importantly, historical hints. This is what ELENI BARMPARITSA's study, "Dress Accessories and Sartorial Trends in the Principality of Achaia (1205–1428). *Evidence from the Frankish Castles of Chlemlousi and Glarentza*" (pp. 327–357) clearly demonstrates. In the end, all such evidence speaks of people; those who influence and those who are influenced – and not to forget those who become, at the same time and without realizing it, source and objects of influence, "*ὡς μὴ γινώσκεσθαι*

ἔστι ὅστις Ῥωμαίων καὶ ὅστις τῶν ἄλλως ἐχόντων γενῶν", according to Gregoras' memorable dictum!

Notwithstanding the value of such "daily" "insignificant" items, dealt with in most studies of Part II, Architecture and Iconography do remain two most prominent sources of artistic expression and representation. They, literally, *stand* as living witnesses to *history*, *confession* and *culture* in a state of interaction, with all the voluminous ingredients and contents of this threefold experience of life and knowledge. This is the content of the five-study Part III, "Cultural Interactions and Byzantine Responses. *The Evidence of Architecture, Murals, and Icon Painting*". In this kind of prominent historical, confessional or artistic expressions the "*ὅστις Ῥωμαίων καὶ ὅστις τῶν ἄλλως ἐχόντων*" can become a matter of debate, but neither one of them can be concealed, nor ignored; let alone underestimated. MICHALIS KAPPAS' "Cultural Interactions Between East and West. *The Testimony of Three Orthodox Monasteries in Thirteenth-Century Frankish Messenia*" (pp. 361–393) is a most eloquent introductory briefing on such broad topics and realities. Even one of the three monasteries, the Komnenian Andromonastiro (name meaning, "monastery for men", since there is no equivalent word in Greek for "convent"), in central Messenia, provides evidence as to the subject-matter of this particular study, as it does to that of the entire Part III. The social, cultural and "ethnic" characteristics of Frankish Messenia and the interaction among them, makes this study a particularly interesting reading.

The two emblematic monastic structures, Pantanassa and Peribleptos at Mystras are at the center of an independent scholar's attention, ASPASIA LOUVI-KIZI, in her "Politics of Equilibrium. *Gothic Architectural Features at Mystras (1361–71), Cypriot Models, and the Role of Isabelle de Lusignan*" (pp. 395–426) – a study for specialists, regarding particularly the patronage of Pantanassa, attributed by LOUVI-KIZI to Isabelle de Lusignan herself, wife of Manuel Kantakouzenos, the Despot of Mystras. A traveler from Mystras to Methoni, to Cyprus, to Crete, to Jerusalem and, perhaps, to Constantinople as well, her connection with the papacy and the Catholic faith, makes unquestionable the role of Isabelle in the transformation of Mystras into a highly important center – the second in the Empire, inherited by the Palaiologan dynasty and made a center of refuge until the fall of the Byzantine Empire. The architectural and the iconographic evolutionary phases of these two monastic complexes, especially their *katholika*, provide intriguing theological and spiritual glimpses into the life and the preoccupations of their benefactors – not ignoring the significant histori-

cal evolutions (political *and* ecclesiastical ones) of their times. This is a most fascinating topic, discussed in an interesting manner, projecting also a fuller profile of Isabelle in a combination of factors, which points to the identity itself of the "Eastern" Byzantine Mediterranean world, its features and their kind!

A specific local workshop, that of Lindos, the second most important medieval Rhodian settlement, comes to light with the study of NIKOLAOS MASTROCHRISTOS and ANGELIKI KATSIOTI, "Reconstructing the Artistic Landscape of Rhodes in the Fifteenth Century. *The Evidence of Painting from Lindos*" (pp. 427–461). It is a study suggesting a lively interaction and synthesis of local and imported features (Western, Byzantine and Eclectic) from centers of a wider geographical area, viewed mainly on two icons, Christ the Benevolent One (*Eleēmon*) and a bilateral one of the Virgin/Crucifixion.

Another study, this time on a single theme, that of the Annunciation, and with two icons as its focus, the one in Italy and the other at the island of Kos – both products of the "Eclectic" trend that borrows from the Byzantine and the Western sides – is KONSTANTIA KAFALA's study, "Preable Boundaries of Artistic Identity. *The Origin of a Fifteenth-Century Annunciation*" (pp. 463–488). What a reader may draw from this study is that, the intricate and huge geographical broadness of the "eclectic" trend is more an ingredient of confusion contributing to a disagreement among art historians, and much less an artistic reality, characteristic of the times. Particularly attractive and highly commendable here is the incisive analysis of the theme of the Annunciation itself, its theological, historical, contextual and iconographic details!

A grandiose subject with an equivalent kind of treatment is the study of one of the two Editors with which the volume comes to its completion. It is SOPHIA KALOPISSI-VERTI's study, Professor Emerita at the University of Athens, under the comprehensive title, "Preaching the Role of the Apostles, and the Evidence of Iconography in East and West. *Byzantine Responses to the 'Challenges' from the Latin Church after 1204*" (pp. 489–530). In this study Apostolicity constitutes the central and most crucial ecclesiological-confessional issue in Orthodox-Catholic, Eastern (Byzantine)-Western (Latin), New-Old Rome relations, with iconography recruited here to paint its multifaceted turns and implications including their dramatic evolution to 1204 …! This is, indeed, a complex and fascinating iconographic intervention, which supplements the historical and theologi-

cal literature on the subject. It requires one's special attention and acumen to discern the tension and competition between Rome and Constantinople, in terms of location, kind, style, revival and frequency of the iconographic representation of the Apostles Andrew and Peter – claimed to be "founders" of the Church of Constantinople and Rome respectively! And these are not the only Apostles identified with either "East", or "West" on the issue of primacy.

The fourteen richly documented studies, with the profiles and credentials of its sixteen contributors (pp. 531–535), all Greek, provide a highly commendable picture of the standards of the Greek academia and the National Ephorates, the Culture Supervising Agencies of Greece, which these scholars serve and represent. What is beyond doubt is that there is very much of history (and not only medieval), geography, culture, theology, politics, ideology, social and ecclesiastical life etc. to be learned from this Volume in addition to art, architecture, iconography, history of art, trends, schools and methodologies. The 245 Figures and the 35 Plates (pp. 23–42, 557–572) enriching the Volume with visual evidence and color, make it a valuable addition to an academic and private library.

The particularity and the specialized approach and analyses of some topics might, unconsciously, deviate or even turn off the attention of a general reader. It should be remembered, however, that the detail is what unveils its bearer. Art is flourishing in the detail! The brush is made of hair; each single one competing for the lifeless shade and the thinnest, brightest and most expressive nature of the lively ray; while the brushstrokes, especially for a (Byzantine) iconographer, make for an exercise for a prayerful state in a persistent mood of humility, and penance! There is where the iconographer finds meaning…

Keywords

Byzantine art; cultural interaction; Greece; Late Byzantine period; material culture