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## Studies on Byzantine and post-Byzantine art in Central and Eastern Europe

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*Studies on Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art  
in Central and Eastern Europe*

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The initiative for conducting research on the artistic ties between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Moldavia originated in 1999. In the course of a discussion between colleagues from Poland, Ukraine and Romania, we decided to collect the results of our work and to publish them jointly. However, the genesis of this collection of articles on Orthodox Church art from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which we are presenting to the reader, requires a few words of explanation. The reasons behind this undertaking were manifold, but the most direct one was the 20th Byzantine Congress which took place in Paris in August of 2001. Some papers presented at the Congress have already appeared in electronic form, on the web site of the *Vostočnoevropejski Arheologičeskij Žurnal* (<http://www.archaeology.kiev.ua>), edited by Valery Bulhakov. (The *Žurnal*, which started appearing in 1999, is Eastern Europe's most popular Internet periodical, visited regularly by hundreds of readers from all over the world.)

The articles presented here add to the discussion of the Byzantine cultural periphery that took place at the Congress, while focusing attention on the valuable, but still not fully recognised and inadequately researched heritage of Post-Byzantine culture in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Synthetic studies giving an idea of the territorial expanse of Orthodox Church art have typically omitted the art of such regions as Wallachia, Moldavia, Transylvania (that is, modern Romania) and the Ruthenia of the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, meaning today's Belarus and Ukraine. Examples of Post-Byzantine art from present-day Hungary and Slovakia are practically forgotten. After all, it would seem that the culture of the region, according to the broad definition presented here, deserves systematic and discerning research. And indeed, studies have been ongoing for the past few decades in the countries of this region, but the results are

little known beyond its borders, chiefly because of poor knowledge of the local languages within the world scholarly community. This has constituted a fundamental obstacle to the mutual recognition of this art, not least among scholars themselves. Another key difficulty is the poor circulation of bibliographic data among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, the presentation of these studies in one collection of articles reflects our deep belief that the Orthodox Church culture of the region is substantively related and largely homogeneous, undergoing similar transformations and depending on a network of close ties, often resulting from the history and accomplishments of specific individuals. This has found expression in art of both the so-called high and popular sort. The reason for this is partly the geographical proximity of these countries, and partly the closely and intricately interwoven history of the region, which has often dramatically united or separated the nations living in this region and which has enforced migratory population movements on a scale difficult even to imagine today. Only after this aspect is taken into consideration can one hope to understand the iconographic and stylistic closeness between many examples of late medieval icon painting from the territories of Central Europe and the works of Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek art. Hence the present publication is intended as a means for effecting a link between scholars from the above-mentioned countries and for demonstrating to others the richness of the culture that has been preserved there. Assuming favourable circumstances, the publication could initiate a new series of studies presented in the major European tongues, devoted to late and Post-Byzantine Orthodox Church art in these countries, propagating knowledge of this art in terms of specific topics, as well as different art forms.

The growing number of specialist publications is also conducive to a project for collecting bibliographic data, which would be helpful in understanding the state of research and new study directions. In 2000 alone several new books have been published in Poland: *Icons and pictures* by Barbara Dąb-Kalinowska, a new monograph on wall paintings from the Chapel in the Castle in Lublin by Anna Różycka-Bryzek, a monograph on an illuminated codex (the *Lavryšev Gospel*) by Małgorzata Smoraǵ-Różycka, *Marian iconography in Ruthenian icon painting of the 15th and 16th centuries* by Mirosław Kruk, *Marian iconography in Russian painting from the mid-17th century* by Grażyna Kobrzeńska-Sikorska, a monograph on the Orthodox Church prints and painting from the territory of the Old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the context of iconographic transformations by Waldemar Deluga. Early 2001 saw the publication of a volume dedicated

to Prof. Anna Różycka-Bryzek, containing studies devoted to both *ars graeca* and *ars latina*. These books, which reflect the current state of research on post-Byzantine art, have helped to intensify studies, as richly demonstrated at the recent spate of scholarly conferences. Romanian and Ukrainian scholars are also making an effort to bring out small editions of proceedings of scholarly sessions and brief summaries, as well as monographic works. All these works are being published in local languages, and hence are basically inaccessible to the general body of Byzantinists. It should be noted that Romania is the only country where exceptionally interesting periodicals, unfortunately for the most part devoted to Romanian art alone, have been published for many years in major European languages; suffice it to mention *Ars Transilvaniae*, which next to *Revue romaine d'histoire de l'art*, contains the most articles on examples and topics of Orthodox Church art from Central Europe. One should also cite here the *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européenes*. In Poland there have been three volumes of *Studia Byzantina et Slavica Jagielloniensia* published by the Jagellonian University. One should also mention the initiative of Prof. M. Salamon, who organized discussions that preceded the Byzantine Congress in Copenhagen in 1996 and the Byzantine Congress in Paris. Both conferences were held in Cracow and were devoted to the ties between Byzantium and the Slavic countries. The papers read there mostly concerned historical issues.

By extending the invitation to scholars from the above mentioned countries to collaborate on future volumes, we hope to intensify the circulation of bibliographic data between our countries and to create a forum for mutual contacts, thanks to which the origins of this art as well as its outstanding accomplishments will become better known and recognised.

Among research postulates one should mention many themes already undertaken by researchers. In Russia itself, unknown works are continually being discovered, especially in the provinces. It should be emphasized that the first volumes of a catalogue of objects from Russia has been published only recently. A similar catalogue, albeit in a slightly different form, arranged chronologically, is being published in Romania. In Poland we have the Catalogue of Artworks. However, catalogues of museum collections continue to be lacking.

There are many topics that deserve study, such as, to name but a few, the transformation of Orthodox Church iconography, the artistic ties between Ruthenia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and also the export of Byzantine art. We would like to take up all of the themes here mentioned, while remaining open to our readers' suggestions. Apart from

the themes already covered, the next volumes will be devoted to a discussion of the literary sources in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art and *Proskynetaria* from Jerusalem – souvenirs of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land.