

ПРОБЛЕМИ НА ИЗКУСТВОТО

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ПРОБЛЕМИ НА ИЗКУСТВОТО

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I корица

Четириевангелие, НБКМ 1356, л. 6а

First cover

Four Gospels, cod. NBKM 1356, f. 6r

IV корица

Адриана Будевска в ролята на Алиса в „Мъртвешки танц“ от Стриндберг, режисьор Гео Милев, сценограф Александър Миленков, Народен театър, 1920

Adriana Budevskia (Alice) in „The Dance of Death“ by Strindberg, stage director Geo Milev, stage design Alexander Milenkov, National Theatre, 1920

MEDIEVAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE AS AN IDEOLOGICAL WEAPON: THE CASE OF YUGOSLAVIA

Ivan Stevović

This text presents an analytical recapitulation of the ways in which the history of medieval art in Yugoslavia agreed to the grounding of its identity on a basically incomplete ideology of a Yugoslav identity. By examining characteristic methodological and field examples, the text discusses Yugoslav studies of medieval art on a conceptual level, as well as its structure of exposition and manner of promotion. The conclusion is that there was a strong ideological influx which created strikingly separate attitudes towards medieval heritage, proclaiming it, simultaneously, as national according to the contemporary meaning of the term.

Key words: Yugoslavia, Medieval Historiography, Medieval Art and Architecture, Socialist Ideology, Titoism

Allow me first to make several notes which will make clearer the point from which the research and the resulting text were produced, the reasons behind the research and the writing and, thus, also, the contents thereof.

First and foremost, as much as deeds of a kind could be, this text is not grounded on any hidden ideological agendas, and especially not on any which could give anyone the impression of a call to (re)dig trenches on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, except, possibly those intended for archeological excavation. Therefore, any other reading of the text actually stands as its purposeful mis-reading. Admittedly, that, too, is a possible trajectory of moving through the lines which follow, however, not the one intended by their author.

Also, the names of certain prominent representatives of Yugoslav culture, are accompanied by indications of their national i.e. religious identities, all in a context which is highly significant for the subject of this text. In an era of globalization, and in particular in the case of Yugoslavia, that is not at all popular. Still, should they be taken as an expression of a nationalistic viewpoint, the equal subversive acting must be recognized against claims that Isaac Newton was an English physicist, Ludwig van Beethoven a German composer, or that Claude Monet was a French painter, and that Julia Kristeva is a Bulgarian philosopher. There is great freedom in the act of reading and interpreting any given text, especially ones on delicate subjects. It is also a truism that that freedom lies with the reader.

Finally, for very specific reasons, the contents of this text could have been completely different. Indeed, that would have happened had one of the governing bodies at Dumbarton Oaks accepted the proposal presented to it in 1943 by Wilhelm Koehler regarding the future research of Byzantine art on the territory of the entire Mediterranean basin, including the Balkans as an area of particular significance. The project was envisaged as “in a cooperative work... including in the study of the buildings all integral decorative accessories such as sculptures, mosaics, wall paintings and pavements”, and simultaneously with a “collateral study of the literary sources, as far as they have a bearing on the arts”¹. The designated head of that project was Ernst Kitzinger, who received, in March of the same year, a mission to compose a handbook on Yugoslavia. Given the fact that this publication was commissioned on the part of the American OSS, in his memoirs there is no mention of the handbook’s subsequent fate². But already



Ivan Meštrović, Monument to an Unknown Hero, Avala mountain near Belgrade (1934-1938) (photo in public domain)

Иван Мештрович, Паметник на Незнајнија војн, хълм Авала близо до Белград (1934-1938)

Koehler’s ideas, and especially the institution which commissioned Kitzinger’s work, indicate the measure in which the professionals of the day considered the history of medieval art an important, almost strategic discipline, far from any idealistic, dreamy fascination with antiquities: both Koehler and Kitzinger were, namely, members of the “Harvard group”, which was in charge of education the squad of volunteers known as “The Monuments Men”³.

Had any of the above mentioned activities come to fruition on the territory of Yugoslavia, the trajectories of subsequent art historical study, as well as the context in which its results were presented, would certainly have been different. At least partly, they would have stepped out of the frameworks and romanticist moulds of “national schools”, and turned towards more variegated possibilities of interpretation. That, however, simply did not happen. Thus, the lines which follow are no more than a brief analytic recapitulation of the ways in which the history of medieval art in Yugoslavia, through the activities of the great majority of its protagonists, agreed to the grounding of its identity on the sand of a basically incomplete ideology, i.e. on the above quoted pragmatic prejudices recorded by Robert William Seton-Watson even before that state was officially established. With all the consequences which were bound to issue from relation between such a configuration of the society in question and one branch of its historiography.



Studenica monastery, Church of the Virgin, Exterior looking North-West (c. 1186-1209) (photo: I. Stevović)

Манастир Студеница, Богородична църква, вид от северо-запад (ок. 1186-1209) (снимка авторът)

Despite the fact or, perhaps, exactly because of the fact that its creation, all transformations and final disappearance had as both cause and effect millions of victims, on the political-cultural market Yugoslavia still figures as a trading asset, especially as an anthropological-cultural currency of *the Other*, the value of which is kept steady by scholars of various historical narratives⁴. For a number of reasons I shall refrain from drawing into the musty labyrinths upon which its foundations lay: namely, the effects of the lobotomy undertaken by the Yugoslav secular priesthood are still in existence⁵. Also, more importantly, even today our knowledge of Yugoslavia is highly questionable taking into account the fact that its socialist leader has himself remained a semi-mythical figure of unknown origin and a biography of uncertain accounting for as much as fifty years of his life⁶. Still, it is important to point out the essential markers which always stood in the background of relations between Yugoslavia and art history, in any of its given periods or segments: long before and long after it had been constituted, Yugoslavia had its ideological-religious-cultural-artistic engineers, who carried out their work with success⁷. Another phenomenon is the degree of passion with which its elites exploited the category of the visual in self-representation oriented towards the rest of the world⁸. Finally, however, within its nucleoid space, all Yugoslav levers of power were oriented towards the elimination of the true *man of difference*, the man who was aware of the fact that the collective need for illusion should be accompanied by at least a minimal measure of the truth. In place of any theoretical pondering of this crucially significant viewpoint, most convincing proof is found in the predilections and fate of three greatest Yugoslav writers, Miloš Crnjanski, Nobel prize winner Ivo Andrić, and Mehmed Selimović. The first was a Serb, born and raised in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the second was a Croat by nationality, and the third a Muslim. In their lifetime, in case of the last one even by his official testament, by free will which resulted in social sanctions of Crnjanski and Selimović, all three bequeathed their literary work to the corpus of Serbian literature. As of 1954, Andrić even signed himself as Serb⁹.

The fate of those who lacked such talent and the extraction of their differences was poles apart. The publicly open and internet accessible “Book of shooting” contains 60,000 names of mainly Serbian citizens shot without any trial over the course of the first years following the constitution of socialist Yugoslavia¹⁰.

The mention of Croatia, Serbia, or any other constitutive part of the state which, in Tito’s view, was a political union of “two alphabets, three languages, four religions, five nations, six republics, seven neighboring countries and eight nationalities”, is a prologue to the survey of the *conceptual level* of Yugoslav medieval studies as expressed in the domain of study of medieval art, the first of three inseparable links in the chain of investigating this subject. Together with the *structure of exposition* and *manner of promotion*, the *conceptual level* was crucially significant as an accumulation of physical and interpretative spaces of a latent, decades long, art historical “war” among the medievalists on the territory of Yugoslavia, a showcase of shameless re-composing of history and acceptance of such feats. In order to survive in harmony with the confusing desires of its international patrons and local lackeys, even prior to the official founding of the state but with a more-less equal state of mind, the Yugoslav space had to pass through various bouts of indigenous nationalism, among which, as one of particular significance, stands the phase of “integral” Yugoslav identity, a political-ideological construct dating from around 1904, nurtured by the negation of the specific traits of ethnic/religious entities in the name of an imaginary historical cohesion among the South Slavs¹¹. If such an idea could exist prior to the Great War, in its aftermath and in the wake of its toll on the Serbs, the only way for it to survive was to keep it by artificial means and repressive actions. Under that crust, medieval history together with its monuments was gradually being turned into the arms through the employ of which the conflict persisted.

Quite intentionally, the first battlefield was the Balkan side of the Adriatic, a terrain on which Constantine Porphyrogenitus had, a thousand years earlier, placed and puzzlingly confused the Serbs and the Croats, while the ammunition for this battle was supplied by the intellectual baggage of Austrian educated scholars from both sides¹². With the appearance of the book “Starohrvatska umjetnost” (“Old Croatian art”), proclaimed in 1927 by Josef Strzygowski as an organic element of “northern European art”¹³, a long and still ongoing battle over early medieval archeological localities was set off, be they digs, devastated or significantly restructured churches, or truly opulent but still quite ordinary repertoire of stone sculpture, which were all to be identified, at all costs, as either “Old Croatian” or “the beginnings of art among the Serbs”. That bizarre clash marked by pasting lines written by the Byzantine emperor onto the present, or by an analysis of curved lines carved in stone, carried out by an “archeological method” which consciously overlooked the fact that similar or even identical motifs and carvings can also be found on the territory of present day Italy, Albania, Greece and Turkey, lead, for example, to an assertion that Porphyrogenitus had *lied on purpose* when he was writing about the Croats¹⁴. On the ground, one of the fiercest “battles” was fought over the last remains of a miniature church of St. Thomas near Kotor in Montenegro. One of the sides saw in its forms none other than a physically reduced copy of

the Constantinopolitan church of the Holy Apostles while the other claimed, apodictically, that this is in fact a case of copying Theodulph's oratorium at Germigny-des-Pres¹⁵. This was just an additional piece of "evidence" underpinning the assertion that "the decisive component in the formation of Early Medieval art was sought in the primitive creativity of the newly arrived Barbarian Germanic and Slavic ethnic peoples"¹⁶. Such claims, made by the highest authorities in the domain of history of art and architecture, found their way to the leading publications of both Croat and Serbian scholarly production.

If the battle of St. Thomas has been a reflection of the lasting state of fundamental incapacity of self-reflective thinking of both historiographies, negating any true possibility of dialogue among those who were forced to live in even the most formal of communions, the *structure of exposition*, that is the stance adopted towards the work of pioneers in the field of scientific research, the manner of communicating of existing and newly gained knowledge, and especially the opening towards new methodological approaches and thematic strands, reveal to the fullest the measure in which Yugoslav, and from this point on Serbian, historiography on medieval art and architecture acted as an obedient daughter of both ideologically drastically different entities, and all their social deviations among which features prominently an autistic self-fascination with the collection of formalistic fruits of their own labor, only by exception positioned within any broader historical context. Within this setting, the culprit could hardly be sought among the players engaged over the chess board which determined the fate of nations in the Balkans. It lies, rather, with a lack of an organized culture of memory, more precisely a lack of elemental professional and collective self-respect. The first wrong step, exemplified by at least six open rejections to publish the corpus of drawings of architecture and frescoes of Serbian medieval churches produced by two Karlsruhe Polytechnikum alumni, Mihailo Valtrović (1839-1915) and Dragutin Milutinović (1840-1900), and also the first synthetic and critically intoned text on the subject, actually had far reaching fatal consequences. Their documentation was denigrated to the level of a mere data bank on the monuments they had studied¹⁷. By 1919 the very same material was subjected to new organization, based on a significantly different methodological approach devised by Gabriel Millet. His evolutionary strata formed a "geography of styles" inadequate and hardly complementary with the exceptionally complex and differentiated nature of building practice in medieval Serbia. According to Millet, it was divided into three territorial-chronological "schools"¹⁸. That path lead inevitably in the direction of forming a rigidly positivistic, pre-reflexive view, the major achievement of which was to determine a similarity between the vaults constructed in Dečani monastery and those in Normandy. What is more important, through the contribution of the next generations of Serbian researchers before and long after WWII, the direct fruits of Millet's classification brought about the official verification of the *monograph study* as the sole model of written testimony about the monuments, by definition made up of strictly separated chapters on the history, architecture and wall paintings the object in question¹⁹. Thus, the inner structure of any given monument was at once being described in finest detail while also essentially

decomposed into virtual individual constituent elements which cannot exist on their own, which, in turn, resulted in an incapacity to produce any true contextualized assessment of the whole. Only recently, and very gradually, Serbian historiography has begun to move on from monographic studies of monuments in favor of more up-to-date methods of studying and interpreting medieval art.

Still, that was neither an idiosyncratic nor the greatest fault of this method which, in the Serbian milieu, also turned worse for wear. A far more serious fault appeared in the ambience of the new Titoistic mythology about nations and nationalities, at the time when Djurdje Bošković came up with an idea of "creative adaptation" within the framework of the established system: namely, the entire stratum of Millet's "Serbian-Byzantine school", at the center of which stood Byzantine and Serbian churches raised on the territory of *medieval* Macedonia, was transformed into the category of medieval architecture within the borders of the newly formed Federal Republic of Macedonia and published in a separate chapter, equal to other chapters on the architecture of Bulgaria, Russia, Armenia, and even Byzantium itself. This was the case in two books written by Bošković – one very small in scope but translated into several foreign languages and the other used as the first university textbook on the subject. As a result, quite logically, similar interventions had to be made also in the chapter on architecture in Serbia: Zeta was added and the whole was divided between Millet's "Raška" and "Moravska" school, while a new "Kosovo-Metohija – 'Serbian-Byzantine' school" appeared chronologically positioned between the two²⁰. In a word, post WWII FR Macedonia, and especially the Albanians in Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metochia, were granted with their own positions within *medieval* history, which was "borrowed" from Byzantium, medieval Bulgaria and Serbia – and by the Serbs²¹. There wasn't any reaction whatsoever to this malignant ideological whim and consequences were to be felt in the future.

As of 1965, a special window to the world and an opportunity to meet officially both the distinguished scholars themselves and the new methodological and scientific achievements was opened by the international symposium dedicated to Sopoćani and Byzantine art of the XIII century. From then on, not less than ten similar conferences were organized. Their names all bore the names of various Serbian monasteries and those of pertaining epochs of their construction. The Sopoćani symposium was a meeting of nine legendary personages of the history of Byzantine art while that on Chilandar, in fall of 1998, drew as many as sixty-six participants, more than thirty from abroad²². The contribution of these events has remained immeasurable in the development of history of medieval art and architecture in Serbia. Still, it seem that a somewhat different manner of their structuring could have yielded considerably more. Let us take as an example the Studenica symposium, with the participation of almost fifty scholars in the peaceful mid 1980's. Its official title was "Studenica i vizantijska umetnost oko 1200.godine" (Studenica and Byzantine art around the year 1200), and its sections had the following thematic frameworks: "Historical and cultural framework of the creation of Studenica", "The oldest artistic monuments of Studenica", "Art of the Byzantine world around the year 1200", "Byzantine influence in the



Professor Svetozar Radojčić with his Colleagues at Aula of the University of Belgrade (c. 1975) (photo: Archive of the Institute for Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade)

Проф. Светозар Радојичић с неговим колеги пред аулата на Белградскиј универзитет (ок. 1975) (снимка от Архива на Института за историја на изкуството към Философскиј факултет на Белградскиј универзитет)

Romanesque art of Dalmatia” and “Studenica through history”²³. Never questioning the merits of the symposium, it is, however, quite obvious that the articulation of the thematic sessions resulted in a striking demarcation between their contributions on Studenica proper and those of the art of the epoch. In other words, Studenica, as a premium creation stemming from Byzantine spiritual culture, was in this manner actually declared an indigenous sort, detached from any and all horizons of its time and place, disregarding the fact that its creation was to a far smaller measure influenced by what was going on in Dalmatia. To a far greater degree it is the sum of composite artistic-ideological elements which should have been observed in relation to those of Norman Sicily, of which there was not a word, or the multiform reflexes of the Byzantine capital and the archbishopric of Ohrid, the subject of direct discussion in one single text. *Grosso modo*, such “cubist” facets of interpretation of a given monument represent the liminal zone between *structure of exposition* and *manner of promotion*, an epistemological territory which Serbian medievalist historiography, marked crucially by the conditional reflex of searching for „yet another comparative example”, is still not able to conquer. In order to succeed, and for the sake of the nature of the territory and the monuments, it should give up its endless labyrinth of atomized, local, and seemingly ever identical topics, in favor of those truly important. In such a scenario, to mention just a few, questions would be posed regarding the ambivalent nature of architectural production of the thirteenth century, relations between Serbian archbishop Danilo II and Theodore Metochites, or the causes which brought about the unique mention of the Franciscan master builder in the royal inscription above the southern portal of Stefan Dečanski’s endowment.

Even more importantly, the posing of such questions inspired by and based on phenomena and contextualization and not just the local products of a strange sympathy

between an atheist regime and a false loyalty to the “national”, a secret bond recently uncovered by Chavdar Marinov and Alexander Vezenkov²⁴, would gradually lead to a synthetic approach, the writing of texts which by sacrificing the detail would collect and interpret the broader picture and whole, and thus conquer the domain of *manner of promotion*, making themselves recognizable within the scope of long since widely adopted methodological approaches in academia. Recognizing the full impact of radiation of the sanctity bestowed upon the titotistically conceived positivist “original data”, Svetozar Radojčić spoke on the subject already in the day of the Sopoćani symposium, forewarning that “by turning our back to our more recent or older history, even unwillingly we confirm a prejudice which is maliciously nurtured – against us – in the big world, the prejudice according to which we are all... children of nature – a people without a past who have only recently walked out of a folkloristic paradise of funerary monuments, embroidered socks, pipes, carts, objects of folklore tradition and other picturesque material of a primitive society. On the surface, we may actually appear that way – as a result of one-sidedness employed by our political propaganda”²⁵. Without any illusion, the great Serbian scholar did mark the true accumulators of toxic power in Yugoslavia. Having many reasons, Radojčić actually wrote about civilization. Why? Because even though it did not contribute to its origins, western republics of Yugoslavia claimed and began to promote works of the Renaissance as its own heritage, of a category seen as superior to any aspect of cultural heritage from Serbia as a territory forever imprisoned in the “dark Middle Ages”. On the measure of historical truth in this discourse, as opposed to the measure of ideological mapping of zones of progress and zones of eternal regression, is a question we can read only recently²⁶.

To conclude: hardly raising from ideological ruins of their “Paradise lost”, former republics of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Serbia especially, has yet to face a close and fair encounter with its own use of Middle Ages. Many masks will be torn down in the process, and that is the reason why there are no interested participants for any serious and non-ideologically marked dialogue about the subject. Speaking about art and architecture of medieval Serbia, between number of open questions, this, however, is prerequisite in the process of tearing down the fundamental paradox that, from a foreign perspective, “Byzantine Frescoes in Yugoslavia”, with all the problems that title bears²⁷, have for decades been regarded as an integral and, at times, most excellent achievements of Eastern Christian and even European art, while the walls which physically bear those frescoes have been observed as the product of an utterly local, sidetrack current of artistic creation, quite in keeping with the results logically arising from the structure and words exposed in Millet’s study²⁸. The French scholar, however, should be the last in line for finger pointing, for he is least responsible for the too *longue durée* of such a state of affairs. That is why it appears that something much more complex buried in its soil was, or was not, in proper function in the meeting of Yugoslavia with art history and architecture of the Middle Ages.

Translated by Jelena Erdeljan

Notes:

- 1 Cf. Koehler, W. The Dumbarton Oaks Program and the Principle of Collaborative Research. – *Speculum* 18-1, 1943, 118-123; Weitzmann, K. Byzantine Art and Scholarship in America. – *American Journal of Archaeology*, 51-4, 1947, 394-418, esp. 414; Wright, D. H. Wilhelm Koehler and the Original Plan for Research in Dumbarton Oaks. – In: J.W. Barker (ed.). *Pioneers of Byzantine Studies in America*. Byzantinsche Forschungen, XXVII, 2002, 135-176, esp. 163-167.
- 2 Kitzinger, E. Style and its Meaning in the Early Medieval Art. Interviewed by Richard Candida Smith. – In: *Art History Oral Documentation Project*. J. Paul Getty Trust. Los Angeles, 1997, 119-133.
- 3 For members of Harvard Group and “The Monuments Men” Foundation data available from: <https://www.monumentsmenfoundation.org/the-heroes/the-harvard-group> [Accessed 03-07-2018].
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търновската скулптура с тези два основни външни източника на художествени образци. Авторката предполага, че в края на XII-XIII в. търновската скулптура следва средновизантийските традиции, остава стриктно ограничена в релефа като техника и църковните постройки като приложение. Нов етап бележи началото на XIV в. с вноса на константинополска продукция и нейния възроден вкус към човешкия образ и пластичното моделиране за украсата на по-широк род паметници – църкви, дворци, анекси, гробници, входи, галерии и пр. В средата на XIV в. появата на саркофази с „портретна“ скулптура свидетелства за обновен вкус към новите елитарни западно-европейски художествени тенденции, най-вече от Италия, без да прекъсва изработката на саркофази и надгробни плочи по византийски модели. Очертаването на мястото на Търново в обмена и обнова на пластични идеи и декоративни концепции между Изтока и Запада е естествен финал, превращащ към поставените в началото на книгата проблеми. Особено ценни са обширните каталог и библиография, както и богатият илюстративен материал, който, за съжаление, не винаги е с добро качество и включва прекалено разнообразни паметници без пряка връзка с темата за скулпту-

рата в столично Търново. Промъкнали са се и някои фактологически грешки. Каменната икона на Богородица Оранта е неправилно атрибуирана географски и хронологически (с. 63, фиг. 8). Макар че се съхранява във Варненския музей, тя произхожда не от Варненско, а от Ивайловградско и отдавна е убедително отнесена не към XIV в., а към XI в.⁵ Мраморната плоча със светец-воин, датирана от XII в., също не произхожда от Боянска църква (фиг. 2).

С многобройните постижения и качеството на изследователските заключения, книгата се вписва достойно в синхронно развиващите се научни идеи, макар и методологически да не излиза от руслото на традиционните проблеми на идентификацията – архитектурна и/или декоративна функция, сюжет, датировка. Монографията ще заеме важно място сред все още малкото проучвания върху тематиката и нейната поява определено ще има дълготрайни последици в родната медиевистика.

Накрая, не мога да скрия задоволство си и да не поздравя публично авторите за усилията им да работят в една слабо проучена тематика. Ще си позволя и лека промяна в курса на нейното позициониране. Когато се говори или пише за този вид художествено-пластични изяви

в средновековна България, почти неизменно се повтаря, включително и в предговора на настоящата книга, че „в православното християнско изкуство скулптурата заема сравнително периферно място“. Така, ние несъзнателно подценяваме нейното изучаване. По-скромното ѝ количествено присъствие (при това не винаги) не я превръща в маргинално, а по-скоро в акцент в монументалната украса. Напълно споделям формулираното от К. Тотев в самото начало на увода схващане, че „без да се налага или доминира“ скулптурата в Търново „заема важно, но сравнително скромно, или по-скоро дискретно място“.

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- 3 Μαυροειδή, Μ. Γλυπτά του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών. Αθήνα, 1999, 174-212.
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SUMMARIES

СРЕДНОВЕКОВНОТО ИЗКУСТВО И АРХЕОЛОГИЯ КАТО ИДЕОЛОГИЧЕСКО ОРЪЖИЕ: СЛУЧАЯТ С ЮГОСЛАВИЯ

Иван Стевович

Текстът представлява аналитична рекапитулация на начина, по който изкуствоведският дискурс към средновековните паметници от територията на бившето Кралство Сърбия, а след това и на социалистическа Югославия, независимо от два напълно противоречиви модела на идеологическо-общест-

вено устройство, функционира по един и същи начин в съгласие с „наиделогическата“ матрица – учението за сръбската хегемония, и културната назадничавост, най-ясно изказан в заглавието на статията. Обобщавайки характерни методологически примери, както и начините на споделяне на знанията за отделните паметници, статията разглежда югославската медиевистична историография на нивата на *концептуалните изследвания, структурата на излагане и на начините за популяризиране*. На всяко от горните нива на на-

учно изследване ясно се установява влиянието на идеологията, чиято крайна цел бе да се намали, редуцира сръбското, но не в по-малка степен и българското средновековно наследство за сметка на отворената реорганизация и реструктуриране на схващането на средновековието като период, формиращ „националните държави“, и особено образуването за тази цел на абсолютно неавтентична колекция от „материални свидетелства“ във функцията на псевдоисторически досиета на държавите, формирали се след разпада

на СФР Югославия. Това, което не може да бъде пренебрегнато, е, че големият принос и заряд на този идеологическо-методологически концепт излизат изпод перата на най-изтъкнатите сръбски изследователи от периода между войните. Техните извънконтекстуални занимания с материята, за която става дума, на пръв поглед създаваше илюзията за защита на националното наследство, но, в същото време, в диапазона от университетските учебници до специализираните студии широко отваряше вратата на бъдещото, т.е. съвременното идентифициране на националното средновековно изкуство в общностите, които на практика са създадени след края на Втората световна война.

THE FOUR GOSPELS NBKM 1356 FROM THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

Elissaveta Moussakova

Even though not unknown, the Slavic Four Gospels from the National Library in Sofia represents a remarkable example of 14th-century manuscript illumination, which has not been discussed in details. In this paper a full description of the preserved fragment is given, with emphasis on the ornamental embellishment of the text. Besides the hypotheses about the manuscript's origin, offered in previous publications, the author attempts now to reveal the meaning, which the teratological headpiece on f. 6r and the architectural headpiece on f. 81v were invested with by the scribe (or the artist). In regard to the first one, the fantastic creature in the animal, so called heraldic, motif, is identified as a senmurv. For this image, rare in the Byzantine and South Slavic book illumination, a typological link is established through a 13th century Gospel manuscript of provincial Byzantine origin, in which Axiniya Dzhurova detected the possible source for the couples of monstrous creatures in the Slavic teratological ornament. A significant change of the composition is made by introducing in it the cross on top of the headpieces in the codices NBKM 1356 and Hilandar 12, a Serbian Four Gospels of the first half of the 14th century. As to the second

headpiece, representing the Tree of Life by an overall, stepped form, surmounted by vegetal motifs and accompanied by tetragrams, usually written around the Cross, a reading of the letters ABMK is offered. In view of the gathered evidence, both headpieces may be interpreted in the aspects of the Cross, the Life-Giving Tree in the Christian soteriological doctrine. The refined execution, the parallels to distinguished artistic examples in Byzantine manuscripts, make possible to ascertain that the anonymous commissioner of the manuscript belonged with the higher social ranks. Also, attention is given to the copy of the older pattern in the teratological headpiece in the 17th-century Strelcha Gospels from the collection of the Church-historical and Archival Institute in Sofia. Due to the insufficient or lacking data about the date and place of origin, or about the provenance of the two Gospel manuscripts, many questions remain unanswered but what could be confirmed is that the codex NBKM 1356 is a real witness to the processes of re-activating the old literary heritage in the 17th century, recognized long ago by the scholars.

ICONS BY NICEPHORUS FROM KARPENISSI IN BULGARIA, ATTRIBUTED TO HRISTO DIMITROV. PREFATORY REMARKS

Alexander Kuyumdjiev

The article brings together all known for the time being works by the Athonite icon-painter Nicephorus from Karpenissi, made in the Bulgarian lands. It is argued that his icons spread across this country through the agency of the monasteries of Zographou and Chilandari on Mt Athos rather than being commissioned to him. In this sense, the role is underscored not only of the institution of taxidiotes, but also of the monasteries as such for Bulgarian places that needed Athonite icons at the turn of the nineteenth century commissioned those directly to the monasteries rather than contacting the Athonite painters. The choice of a particular painter in each case was left to the discretion of the two monasteries, which acted as the go-between in the negotiations between

the church donors and the icon-painters.

Several examples are given of incorrect attributions of works made by Nicephorus, which were until now ascribed to the Samokovian painter Hristo Dimitrov. These are the icons at the Metropolitan Church, Samokov (1793); the Church of the Holy Trinity, Ruse (1807–1808) and some of those at the Church of the Assumption in Pazardjik (1815). Along with the new attributions, a critical evaluation is made of the information about Hristo Dimitrov's training on Mt Athos and some information about the painters of the School of Samokov, based rather on legends, though accepted as science facts in Bulgarian literature.

ICON-PAINTERS OF THE NATIONAL REVIVAL PERIOD IN THE REGIONS OF HASKOVO AND DIMITROVGRAD

Simeon Tonchev

Greek painters had an enduring presence in the art life of the nineteenth-century region of Haskovo. Moschos V. from Edirne painted at the Church of the Assumption in Haskovo the images of Christ and the Apostles in the nave, in 1836 and the icons on the iconostasis, in 1840/41. Thus, his work is placed chronologically between 1836 and 1858. His icons are to be found at the churches in the villages of Gorski Izvor, Stoikovo, Nikolovo. The icon of St John the Baptist from the village of Stoikovo revealed the painters family name, Veliuv, though in its version in Bulgarian language. Stephanos K. Nikitas painted the murals at the churches of the villages of Nikolovo, Stoikovo, Garvanovo. A stylistic analysis revealed other works by him: the representations of the prophets from the iconostasis at the Church of St George in Stoikovo, eliminating most of the icons of the feast tier at the Church of SS Cosmas and Damian in Garvanovo as belonging to another painter. There are no icons painted by him in 1974 in this church for he ceased his activity in the mid-1960s. The icons by Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis (1) at the church of the village of Bodrovo are unknown to science. Alexi Atanasov painted the Church of St George in

the village of Dinevo in 1851 and that of St Charalampus in the village of Chernogorovo in 1864, where the iconographic schemes differ from the typical of the age. The inscription about the painting of the church in the village of Dinevo shows that the painter, though coming from Naoussa in Northern Greece, was a Bulgarian. His works are found also at the churches in the villages of Gorski Izvor and Dobrich; his latest works are of 1879.

THE FIRST STAGE DIRECTOR'S GENERATION IN BULGARIAN THEATRE

Kamelia Nikolova

The study deals with the advent and the establishing of the figure of stage director and the critical role played by him or her in creating a performance in Bulgaria's national theatrical life in the interwar period. To this end, the work and experiments of several emblematic directors are analysed, who have been widely recognized or have made their first steps into the field of stage in the 1920s and 1930s, such as Nikolay Massalitinov (1880–1961) and Chrisan Tsankov (1890–1971). It was this group that had formed the first stage director's generation in Bulgarian theatre.

So that to give the broad strokes of the profile of this first stage director's generation, the study reconstructs the theatrical aesthetics and individual styles of Geo Milev, Isaac Daniel, Nikolay Massalitinov, Chrisan Tsankov, commenting on the stage experiments of Boyan Danovski, Alexander Ikonografov, Nikolay Fol, Stefan Surchadjiev and Krustio Mirsky, who came to theatre in the decade preceding the end of WW2, as well as of the overall cultural and theatrical context, in which they came to put on their productions.

In conclusion, an inference is drawn that in the 1920s and 1930s, Bulgarian

theatre witnessed the advent, shaping and establishing of the figure of stage director enjoying director's proper, i.e. modern status first of all at the National Theatre and partially, in some other companies. The end of WW2 found Bulgarian theatre as represented by well-developed and fully-fledged director's theatre, actor's theatre and experimental director's theatre.

BULGARIAN MODERNISM AND ESTABLISHING OF BULGARIAN CANON OF PLAYWRITING VIA NEGATIVA *Nikolay Yordanov*

The study deals with the establishing of the Bulgarian canon of playwriting in the first half of the twentieth century. Two situations are highlighted: the 1910s, dominated by the confrontation between the group around the *Misul* (Thought) journal and Ivan Vazov. At the time, Vasil Drumev was deemed to be already a 'tradition', bridging the twentieth century and the period of the National Revival, while Vazov became the emblem of contemporary drama, bringing to life onstage the recent or remote Bulgarian past. A keynote study by Pencho Slaveikov, *The National Theatre* was published by the end of the decade, directly and categorically rejecting all the existing by that time Bulgarian dramaturgy.

The term canon, pertaining to Bulgarian literary practice, came to be introduced in the wake of WW1 by M. Arnaudov in his critically acclaimed study, *The Canon of Bulgarian Literature* (1922), which was published in a time, when social conscience, radicalised by the post-war crisis, attempted to figure out its cultural identity and a heated debate about the intrinsic values of the national culture flared up. Post-war modernism, bringing in new views of life, had tried and launched

its own aesthetic projects, each of which had to establish canons of their own: Geo Milev strived to launch the expressionist project; Ivan Radoslavov, that of symbolism; the far left, the social-class one, etc. All these echoed radical (European in the first place) projects in arts and literature in a quest for new art realities. Playwriting, though to a lesser degree than the other forms of writing, had not escape certain studies, articles and reviews' notice. This article is an attempt to highlight the most important of those, underscoring the nonetheless recurring appreciation of their achievements in the otherwise negative critical views of Bulgarian playwriting.

БЪЛГАРСКА ИКОНА, ПОДНЕСЕНА НА ДЪРЖАВНИЯ ГЛАВА НА МАЛТА: СЪЗДАВАНЕ НА ИСТОРИЯ

Лино Бианко

Тази статия очертава художествения фон на малтийско-българските дипломатически отношения. Годината 2016, когато се отбелязва 45-та годишнина от установяването на тези отношения, беше свидетел на интересна концептуална реализация, която надмина всички събития, чествани извън българската национална територия, ако се има предвид честването на светите братя Кирил и Методий. То се проведе под покровителството на държавния глава на Малта в президентската резиденция. Нейно Превъзходителство Мари-Луиз Колейро Прека получи в дар икона на св. Богородица, поднесена по време на визитата на изтъкнатия гост Борислав Боянов, Почетен консул на Малта в България, от негово име и от името на неговото семейство. Иконата е произведение на Студио „Димчовски“, намиращо се в с. Гостилица, Габровско.