The figurative art of mediaeval Byzantium that has survived to the present day is predominantly religious in content. It illustrates the biblical narrative and the lives of saints and depicts the Byzantine vision of the Kingdom of God. The aim of Byzantine religious art was to instruct the beholder in the divine mysteries and the eternal truths of Orthodox Christianity and to edify him or her by portraying paradigms of Christian virtue worthy of imitation. More importantly, religious images were meant to serve as vehicles through which the faithful could communicate with the spiritual world, with Christ, the Virgin, and the saints.

It is commonly acknowledged that Byzantine religious art was indifferent to the representation of its contemporary reality. The Byzantine perception that a religious image should constitute an objective reflection of its sacred archetype in heaven promoted the standardization of artistic expression and favoured the repetition of established iconographic types, most of which can be traced back to the art of Late Antiquity. The faithful representation of the surrounding material world had to be avoided since it would have resulted in images too specific in terms of time and space. Such specificity would have compromised the timelessness and the universality of the message of a religious image. Yet, the trappings of the material world were a necessary component of religious iconography since they enabled its creators to dress the spiritual in visual form and thus make it accessible to the viewer. Whether as a result of purposeful or unreflective processes, contemporary artefacts (realia) were reflected in Byzantine religious art. Therefore, though it would be unwise to regard this art as illustrating everyday life in mediaeval Byzantium, it would be equally unwise to dismiss it off-handedly as a possible source of information on Byzantine material culture supplementing other archaeological and textual evidence.

My aim in what follows is to highlight the potential of using religious figurative art as an additional source of information on secular material culture during the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. This I hope to achieve through the discussion of a series of case-studies, which have been arranged according to the nature of the information they provide. This information concerns: firstly, the typology and usage of secular artefacts; secondly, foreign influences on Byzantine material culture; thirdly, regional diversification; fourthly, topical concerns of Byzantine society which may be detected behind the iconography of certain compositions, and, finally, Byzantine attitudes towards the material world and its representation. During the discussion I will try to draw attention to the limitations inherent in using Byzantine religious art as a source of information in an “archaeological” investigation. These limitations stem mainly from the conservative and formulaic character of religious iconography and it is important to keep them in mind if the conclusions drawn are to have any validity.

* I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Sharon Gerstel for her willing advice on various aspects of this study.
3 The following discussion is based largely on the findings of my doctoral dissertation. In it, I explore the potential of using the artistic evidence in the study of Byzantine material culture more fully, see M. PARANI, Reconstructing the Reality of Images. Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries) (The Medieval Mediterranean 41). Leiden 2003.
QUESTIONS OF METHODOLOGY

The first question to ask is how to identify a contemporary artefact in art amidst the multitude of conventional types constantly reproduced as an integral part of established iconographic formulae, especially when there are no extant Byzantine examples to facilitate identification by comparison. The first step is to search for innovations, that is, for iconographical types not encountered in artistic contexts earlier than the monument investigated. Such innovations could have been due to a mistake or a misunderstanding of an artistic model, to the imagination of the artist, or to the fact that he has actually reproduced a contemporary artefact. It is reasonable to assume that pictorial innovations encountered in a number of roughly contemporaneous monuments known to have been created independently from one another were not due to a mistake or the imagination of an individual artist, but had become current in the artistic vocabulary of the period in question. In order to decide whether they actually reflected a contemporary artefact it is necessary to consider the iconographic context, the quality and the amount of detail in the rendering of the artefact, and whether the represented object gives the impression that it could have been functional. These same controls can also be applied in the case of pictorial innovations that occur in artistic contexts only once. Comparisons with extant artefacts from areas beyond the frontiers of the empire but within its sphere of cultural influence, the careful use of ethnographic material in the case of functional objects that were slow to develop typologically, as, for example, agricultural implements, and a consideration of the written evidence can help decide the matter in each case.

To illustrate this methodological approach let us consider the miniature depicting the Birth of St John the Baptist in the gospel-book Vat. urb. gr. 2, fol. 167v (circa 1125) (pl. 6, fig. 1). It is generally assumed that Vat. urb. gr. 2 was intended for imperial usage as it contains a double portrait of emperor John II Komnenos and his son and heir Alexios. To the lower right of the Birth of Saint John the unknown artist has depicted an elaborate brazier with three feet terminating in lion’s paws and two handles shaped like lion-heads with rings suspended from the mouth. The brazier is surmounted by a tripod on which a vessel would have been balanced. The representation of the brazier is unique both in terms of the typology of the object itself and its inclusion in the iconographic context of a birth-of-a-saint scene. Water-heaters on a stand and cooking pots on tripods or braziers were a common enough feature of representations of banquets and picnics in Late

4 In devising the methodology for identifying representations of contemporary artefacts in pictorial contexts I was greatly aided by the work of M. O. H. Carver, Contemporary Artefacts Illustrated in Late Saxon Manuscripts. Archaeologia 108 (1986) 117–45. Methodological questions involved in using the artistic evidence in the study of Byzantine everyday life, arising mainly from the possible imitation and/or adaptation of earlier artistic models by Byzantine artists, have been addressed, among others, by I. Spatharakis, Observations on a Few Illuminations in Ps.-Oppians Cynegética Ms. at Venice. Thesaurismata 17 (1980) 22–35; A. Bryer, Byzantine Agricultural Implements: The Evidence of Medieval Illustrations of Hesiod’s Works and Days. ABSA 81 (1986) esp. 50–66.

5 Bryer, Implements, 48, 49.

6 I. Spatharakis, The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts. Leiden 1976, 79–83, fig. 46; The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261, eds. H. C. Evans – W. D. Wixom. New York 1997, no. 144; J. Lowden, Early Christian and Byzantine Art. London 1997, 361–3, fig. 221; Το Βαπτιστικό ιερά και Θείον, ed. M. Ευαγγελίτου – E. Papastavour – T.-P. Skotte. Athens 2001, no. 17. In addition to the imperial portrait, there are eight other miniatures in the manuscript arranged in four pairs at the beginning of each of the four Gospels: the Nativity and Saint Matthew; the Baptism and Saint Mark; the Birth of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Luke; and the Descent into Hell and Saint John, see C. Stornakolo, Miniature delle omilie di Giacomo Monaco (cod. Vatic. gr. 1162) e dell’ evangelio greco urbinato (cod. Vatic. gr. urb. 2). Rome 1910, pls. 84–91. The prominence attributed to Saint John the Baptist in the iconographic scheme of the codex (apart from the scene of his birth and the Baptism, he also appears in the Descent into Hell) provides further support to the suggested association of the manuscript with the person of the emperor John II, who could have been either its donor or its intended recipient.

7 References to braziers of various sizes are found in a number of eleventh- and twelfth-century texts. Interestingly enough, the braziers are mentioned as part of the equipment prescribed for hospitals or hospices and were to be used for cooking as well as for keeping the guests warm, see A. I. Papadopolous-Kerameus, Noctes Petroplitanae. Zbornik viziantskikh tekstov, XII–XIII vekov. St. Petersburg 1913, 74; P. Gautier, Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocratour. REB 32 (1974) 99; idem, Le typikon de la Θεοτόκου Εὐεργετής. REB 40 (1982) 87; idem, Le typikon du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos. REB 42 (1984) 113. References to cooking tripods can also be found in Middle Byzantine sources, see, for example, F. Miklosich – J. Müller, Acta et diploma ta graeca medii aevi sacra et profana, VI. Vienna 1890, 243. For a thirteenth-century iron cooking tripod recovered from the Frankish layers at Sparta see Καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο, (ed. D. Papafokakia-Mpapirtzes). Athens 2002, no. 402. Such tripods would have been used in association with the ceramic cooking vessels with the rounded bottom that were in use in the empire from the tenth down to the fourteenth centuries, see Ch. Mpapirtzes, Βαπτιστικά τσουκαλολάβηνα. Athens 1989, 39–40, 41.
Antique art and in Middle Byzantine dining scenes imitating Early Byzantine models. However, they did not constitute part of the iconography of the Late Antique mythological cycles illustrating the birth and childhood of gods and heroes that had served as sources of inspiration for Byzantine birth-of-a-saint scenes. Therefore, the introduction of the brazier into the twelfth-century miniature under investigation may be understood as a realistic touch on the part of the painter: it alludes to the heating of the water needed for the labour and the bathing of a newborn child. That the water for the newborn’s bath was indeed hot is indicated in this image also by the fact that the young woman pouring it is represented holding the jug with one hand covered by a towel. As for the typography of the brazier, furniture with animal-shaped supports, quite popular during Classical, Roman, and Late Antiquity, was also employed in mediaeval Byzantium as suggested by finds of zoomorphic metal fittings in the mediaeval contexts at Corinth. It is, thus, reasonable to assume that here we are faced with a representation of a contemporary artefact.

Equally interesting from our particular point of view is the representation of the cradle in the same miniature. In contrast to the brazier, the cradle constituted a common feature of birth-of-a-saint scenes from the eleventh century onward. Borrowed from the Late Antique biographical cycles mentioned above, it served as a picturesque detail conveying the atmosphere of activity that accompanied the birth of a child. It is tempting to think that this borrowing from Late Antique art was prompted by the Middle Byzantine festive ceremonies associated with the birth of a male child to the emperor. During these ceremonies the newborn was displayed to the members of the court in its cradle. It is worth noting in this respect that the presence of visiting women bearing gifts to the mother in birth-of-a-saint scenes has also been associated with these same court rituals. Notwithstanding the ultimate antique derivation of the cradle-theme, the outlook of the cradle in the twelfth-century miniature here under discussion was apparently updated to reflect current Middle Byzantine woodcarving styles. As attested by extant examples of mainly ecclesiastical furniture dated to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, minuscule arcades, balusters, and knobs were a popular feature of woodcarving in the Balkans during the Middle Ages. The twelfth-century representation could indicate that this woodcarving style was practiced already in the Middle Byzantine period, even though preserved examples...

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10 On the iconographic theme of the cradle and its origins see Lafontaine-Dosogne, Iconographie de l’enfance, 104; Mouriki, Περί Βυζαντινού κόσκινου, 131.


12 Babic, Sur l’iconographie, 174–5; Lafontaine-Dosogne, Iconographie de l’enfance, 97. It should be pointed out that the practice of bearing fortifying foodstuffs and gifts to a woman who had just given birth need not have been limited to the context of imperial ceremonial alone, but could have had a more widespread application, see Ph. Koukoulis, Βυζαντινοί Βίος και Πολίτευμα, IV. Athens 1951, 31–2, 34–5.


11 On the iconographic theme of the cradle and its origins see Lafontaine-Dosogne, Iconographie de l’enfance, 104; Mouriki, Περί Βυζαντινού κόσκινου, 131.


13 Babic, Sur l’iconographie, 174–5; Lafontaine-Dosogne, Iconographie de l’enfance, 97. It should be pointed out that the practice of bearing fortifying foodstuffs and gifts to a woman who had just given birth need not have been limited to the context of imperial ceremonial alone, but could have had a more widespread application, see Ph. Koukoulis, Βυζαντινοί Βίος και Πολίτευμα, IV. Athens 1951, 31–2, 34–5.
suggest that it was during the Late Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods that it achieved its greatest popularity. The practice of updating the appearance of artefact-types traditionally represented in religious iconography so that they reflected contemporary fashions and tastes was quite common throughout the history of Byzantine art and may be observed not only in the case of furniture and furnishings, but also in the case of dress, weapons, tableware, and writing implements.

The second question that arises when using the artistic evidence in order to trace developments in Byzantine material culture is that of chronology. It is not always possible to estimate with confidence the time that elapsed between the appearance of a new type of artefact in real life and its first reflection in art. Certain fashionable items appear to have been introduced into religious iconography roughly at the same time as their adoption in real life. This, for example, seems to be the case of the dresses with the trumpet-shaped sleeves, which are attested for the first time in imperial portraiture around the middle of the eleventh century and which also appear in roughly contemporaneous religious iconographic contexts. On the other hand, the representation of other categories of artefacts became fashionable only at a later stage in their development. It is interesting to note, for example, that despite the well-attested importance of archery in hunting and military tactics in the Middle Byzantine period representations of quivers and bows are encountered as part of the equipment of military saints only from the late thirteenth century onward. This departure from the earlier iconographic tradition that wanted military saints armed only with spear and sword was perhaps brought about by artistic considerations, namely the pronounced predilection of Late Byzantine art for narrative detail.

When using the artistic evidence to study aspects of material culture it is important to keep in mind that Byzantine art does not offer a complete inventory of the artefact-types in use in Byzantine lands at any given period. The choice of which artefacts were represented and which were not appears to have depended firstly, on the semiotic potential of the objects, secondly, on the availability of iconographic contexts suitable for their introduction, and, lastly, on the attitude of religious art towards the depiction of particular artefact-types, an attitude which could vary from one period to the next. The treatment of dining scenes in religious contexts provides an interesting case-study in this respect. In no way does the inventory of tableware represented in artistic contexts reflect the variety of such objects that were actually employed in Byzantium during

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15 The absence of finds of furniture with turned elements from Middle Byzantine archaeological contexts may be due to accidents of survival. Cf. finds of balusters employed for the decoration of wooden furniture from Early Byzantine sites in Egypt, where environmental conditions are favourable to the preservation of wood, M.-H. Rutenschwazy, Catalogue des bois de l’Egypte copte. Musée du Louvre. Paris 1986, 95–7 (nos. 318–35).


19 Elizabeth Zachariadou in her study of a Late Byzantine steatite icon of Saint Demetrios now at the Louvre considers the attribution of a bow and three arrows to the saint as a result of the influence of Turko-mongol traditions on Byzantine practices. According to these traditions, the bow and the arrow were symbols of sovereignty. The Turko-mongol mercenaries and the christianised Turks serving in the Late Byzantine army may have acted as the vehicle through which this conception of the bow and arrow infiltrated Byzantium. It is perhaps because of their symbolic significance that the bow and arrows were considered worthy to be included among the equipment of a military saint. E. Zachariadou, Les nouvelles armes de saint Démétrius, in: Εύπροψια. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler, I–II (Byzantina Sorbonensia 16). Paris 1998, II 689–93.
the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. Down to the eleventh century, a great bowl, accompanied sometimes by two goblets arranged symmetrically on the table, a small number of knives and, rarely, forks, as well as some pieces of bread on the table, were considered adequate to invoke the impression that a meal was taking place. By the end of the eleventh century, however, the repertoire of the represented tableware began to expand, with the representation of ceramic and glass bottles, glass beakers and goblets, and bowls with lids. The tendency to expand the inventory of tableware was intensified in the Late Byzantine period, accompanied by a parallel diversification of the types of foodstuffs represented on the table. In fact, in certain representations of dining scenes dated to the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the artists managed to convey the impression of veritable feasts with richly set tables, attendants carrying more food and drink, and guests eating, drinking, and conversing. Such a dramatic change in the artistic treatment of dining scenes, which, it should be pointed out, did not serve any obvious iconographic necessity, indicates that a change in attitude towards their representation had taken place. It is interesting to note that during the twelfth century, when the inventory of serving utensils in dining scenes began to expand, a notable increase in expressing an interest in the quality and variety of foodstuffs is observable in contemporary literary works like the writings of Eustathios of Thessalonica and the poems of Ptochoprodromos.

Once an artefact-type was introduced, for whatever reason, into the pictorial vocabulary of Byzantine art it would often continue to be represented long after it had become obsolete in real life. This is especially true of artefacts that had become an integral component of an established iconographic theme. The depiction of imperial dress in religious iconography is an interesting case in point. Byzantine imperial garments and insignia were consistently, if anachronistically, employed in Byzantine religious art as marks of sovereignty in the portrayal of rulers, both biblical and non-biblical. Already in the Early Byzantine period, the prophet-kings David and Solomon, to mention those most commonly portrayed, were represented in the purple imperial chlamys, the stately mantle that was, as a rule, fastened at the right shoulder. These are well-attested in the written and the archaeological records, see, for example, J. F. Haldon, Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions (CFHB 28). Vienna 1990, 106, 108, 112; Actes de Saint Pantélééomon, eds. P. Lemerle – G. Dagron – S. Čirčikov (Archives de l’Athos 12). Paris 1982, 75 (inventory of the Monastery of Xyloourgou, 1142); Actes de Xéropotamou, ed. J. Bompiaire (Archives de l’Athos 3). Paris 1964, 80 (will of Theodore Skaranos, 1270–1274); Actes de Vatopédi, I, eds. J. Bompiaire – J. Lefort – V. Kravari – C. Giros (Archives de l’Athos 21). Paris 2001, 357 (will of Theodore Sarantenos, 1325); Davidson, Corinth XII, nos. 540–1, 543–5, 556, 559, 685–749, 759–65, 769–84, 790–800, 803–15, 1405–9, 1411–3, pls. 50–2, 56–60, 85; C. S. Lightfoot et alii, The Amorium Project: The 1997 Study Season. DOP 53 (1997) 341–2, 343, figs. 1; C. H. Morgan, Corinth XI. The Byzantine Pottery. Cambridge, MA 1942; D. Papankola-Bakirtzis, Byzantine Glazed Ceramics. The Art of Sgraffito. Athens 1999; D. Papankola-Bakirtzis – F. Manvrikis – Ch. Bakirtzis, Byzantine Glazed Pottery in the Benaki Museum. Athens 1999; Καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο, nos. 355–79.


21 See, for example, A. Wharton-Epstein, Tokalı Kilise. Tenth-century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia. Washington, D.C. 1986, figs. 27, 34; N. Chatzidakis, Hosios Loukas. Athens 1997, fig. 79; M. Rüstle, Byzantine Wall-painting in Asia Minor. I–III. Recklinghausen 1967, II, fig. 235. For an alternative opinion, maintaining that these representations have a general historical accuracy see J. Vroom, Byzantine Garlic and Turkish Delight. Dining Habits and Cultural Change in Central Greece from Byzantine to Ottoman Times. Archaeological Dialogues 7/2 (2000) 206–7. Though it is quite probable that the dining habits of the Byzantines during the eleventh century involved eating from a large communal plate, I am sceptical as to whether representations of meals in eleventh-century artistic contexts may be used as corroborative evidence to prove it. As last as Far Supper representations are concerned, the theme of a single large plate in the middle of the table, often containing one or two fish, can be traced back to Late Antiquity, see, indicatively, F. W. Deichmann, Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna. Wiesbaden 1995, pls. 180–1. Here I take the opportunity to thank Dr. Joanna Vroom for kindly providing me with a copy of her article.


into Hell\textsuperscript{26}, and this, despite the fact that in Palaeologan times the \textit{chlamys} no longer constituted part of the imperial wardrobe\textsuperscript{27}.

**QUESTIONS OF ARTEFACT TYPOLOGY AND FUNCTION**

Despite the methodological problems and limitations just outlined, the typological study of various artefact-categories for which there is otherwise little physical evidence can benefit from the careful examination of pictorial contexts\textsuperscript{28}. The artistic evidence can be most useful in the study of dress, whether this is imperial, official, aristocratic, or pertaining to the common people\textsuperscript{29}. The marble inlay icon of Saint Eudokia from the Monastery of Lips in Constantinople (907), to mention one example, provides the earliest evidence we have for the change in the design of the female imperial \textit{loros}, the long bejeweled scarf which Byzantine empresses wore wound around their bodies on specific ceremonial occasions\textsuperscript{30}. To mention a second example, the depiction of a tunic with exceedingly long narrow sleeves worn by the attendant to the ruler in the miniature illustrating the Martyrdom of Saint Artemios in the eleventh-century Menologium Esphigmenou 14, fol. 90v, may be taken as an indication that, by that time, Byzantine courtiers had adopted this garment of ultimate oriental origin\textsuperscript{31}. As one last example one may refer to certain Middle Byzantine representations of the Martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, which provide interesting evidence on the design of Byzantine trousers at the time (pl. 36, fig. 2)\textsuperscript{32}.

Another artefact-category the study of which can equally benefit from a perusal of the artistic evidence is that of arms and armour\textsuperscript{33}. In the case of military dress, realistic elements can be found portrayed side-by-side with conventional and fanciful ones, thus creating a composite outfit that was never in use at any given period. Still, artistic representations may prove extremely informative in the study of individual components of military dress, such as garments worn over the cuirass, shields, swords, bows, and quivers\textsuperscript{34}. As far as body-armour is concerned, its depiction in religious contexts was, as a rule, conventional and, on occasion, highly


\textsuperscript{27}Parani, Reconstructing 13–7.


\textsuperscript{34}Parani, Reconstructing, 118–21, 125–36, 141–2.
decorative. There are, nevertheless, examples of realistic representations of cuirasses, which can be demonstrated to reflect ceremonial armour as well as armour worn in the field (pl. 36, fig. 3)\textsuperscript{35}.

The artistic evidence can also be very informative in the case of writing implements\textsuperscript{36}. Such implements were introduced into the portrayals of the evangelists and other saintly authors with the purpose of identifying them as such. A single pen and an ink-well would have been adequate for this purpose, but in many instances, especially in miniature painting, the artists chose to depict a veritable inventory of the equipment used in mediaeval scriptoria\textsuperscript{37}. Changes in the types of implements represented might reflect a concomitant change in the working practices of scribes or in the writing materials they used. The inclusion of scissors, for example, among the writing implements attributed to saintly authors from the eleventh century down to the Late Byzantine period could be a reflection of the increasing use of paper in the manufacturing of codices in Byzantium observed from the eleventh onward\textsuperscript{38}.

By contrast, the artistic evidence is less forthcoming from an archaeological point of view in the case of elements of setting such as furniture and furnishings. It is not clear, for example, whether the preference of Palaeologan art for the representation of box-like furniture, thrones with a curved back like niches, and textile furnishings of a relatively sober appearance reflected a development in the typology of the actual artefacts or should be better explained in the light of stylistic developments in the Late Byzantine period, which favoured volume and monumentality at the expense of decorative effect\textsuperscript{39}. Despite these reservations, there exist certain depictions of elements of setting which may be taken to reflect contemporary artefacts\textsuperscript{40}. One such representation is the elegant folding stool in Christ before Pilate in the fourteenth-century church of Saint Nikolaos Orphanos at Thessalonica (pl. 37, fig. 1).

Religious pictorial contexts should be tapped with caution for evidence concerning working practices in mediaeval Byzantium. It has been shown, for example, that certain agricultural implements suitable for the cultivation of cereals were mistakenly depicted employed in a vineyard\textsuperscript{41}. Such oversights were probably due

\textsuperscript{35} Parani, Reconstructing, 104–16. In a thought-provoking article by T. Dawson, Kremamata, Kabadion, Klibanion: Some Aspects of Middle Byzantine Military Equipment Reconsidered. BMGS 22 (1998) 38–50, the author attempts to reconstruct the method of assembly of Middle Byzantine lamellar cuirasses on the basis of representations of such armour in certain portrayals of military saints. Though I do not doubt that these representations indeed reflect lamellar cuirasses, I have certain reservations as to whether their rendering is exact to the point of reproducing the finer details of the lacing together of the lamellae. First of all, it seems unlikely that Byzantine artists had the specialized knowledge that would allow them to be so precise. Secondly, their treatment of these cuirasses appears to have been dictated to a large extent by the search for decorative effect and not by a wish to be accurate. The narrow bands spacing the rows of lamellae in some representations, which, according to Dawson, indicate that these rows were first attached on a band of leather and then assembled, could very well be an artistic invention or a schematized rendering of the bands of darker colour employed in some other representations to indicate that the rows of lamellae are overlapping upwards, as was indeed the case in generic lamellar construction, see, for example, Restle, Wall-painting in Asia Minor, II, figs. 230 [left], 232; C. Jolivet-Lévy, Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l’abside et ses abords. Paris 1991, pls. 55.2, 168.1.

\textsuperscript{36} The usefulness of the evidence provided by the portraits of the evangelists in the study of writing implements has been highlighted by H. Hunger, Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz. Munich 1989, 85–9. For a survey of representations of writing implements in mediaeval Serbian painting see I. Đorđević, Predstave pribora za pisanje i opremu knjige u srpskom srednjovekovnom slikarstvu, in: Zbornik Vladimir Mašina, eds. D. Bogdanović et alii. Belgrade 1977, 87–112. I owe the latter reference to Dr. Branislav Cvetković, whom I here thank. I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr. Dorotei Getov for translating this article for me.

\textsuperscript{37} Parani, Reconstructing, 205–10.


\textsuperscript{39} This clearly constitutes a departure from the highly decorative furniture and furnishings favoured by Komnenian art. Compare, for example, the valance of the bed in the Dormition at Kurbinovo (1191) with that of the bed in the same scene at the Protaton (circa 1300). C. Grozdanov – L. Hadermann-Misschuch, Kurbinovo. Skopje 1992, fig. 46; Kallinikos (monachos), Η τεχνη της αγοραφαγίας, fig. 27.

\textsuperscript{40} Parani, Reconstructing, 160–91. For a survey of representations of contemporary furniture in mediaeval Serbian painting see V. Han, Profani namještaj na našoj srednjovekovnoj fresci. Mucej Primjenjene Umetnosti, Zbornik 1 (1955) 7–52.

\textsuperscript{41} Breyer, Agricultural Implements, 50.
to the fact that the artists were not familiar with agricultural practices. On the other hand, painters, especially miniaturists, knew very well that the bifolios of a codex were bound only after the copying and the illumination of the pages had been completed. Yet, they often represented the evangelists writing directly on open codices, sacrificing, it would seem accuracy for the sake of iconographic necessity. Most probably, their intention was to identify these figures as the authors of the books they held in their hands, not as real scribes at work.

Realistic depictions of people at work do, of course, occur in religious pictorial contexts. One such instance is the unique portrayal of Saint Matthew at the Protaton on Mount Athos, dated to around 1300. The evangelist is portrayed trimming the pages of a book-block that has the wooden boards of the cover stitched on and is held tightly in a screw-press. This is in accordance to the Byzantine bookbinding practice to have the boards flush with the book-block. For the trimming the evangelist is using a broad-bladed instrument with wooden handles on either end. Other implements employed in the bookbinding process, namely the hammer, the awl, and the scissors, are shown lying on the desk next to him. The activity of bookbinding workshops on Mount Athos in the Late Byzantine period might have prompted this representation and could account for its accuracy.

THE QUESTION OF FOREIGN INFLUENCES

While surveying Byzantine religious pictorial contexts one often encounters representations of clearly non-Byzantine artefacts. Some were introduced into Byzantine religious contexts deliberately for the purpose of identifying a figure as belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group. Such depictions are very interesting as they indicate Byzantine familiarity with the material culture of neighbouring peoples. Saint James the Persian, for example, portrayed at Protaton around 1300, was given a distinctive Mongol hat with a fur brim that was meant to identify him as “Persian.” Iran had come under Mongol rule at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Consequently, whoever decided to attribute this head-dress to the particular saint made a well-informed choice.

Other non-Byzantine artefacts appear to have infiltrated into Byzantine religious contexts because they constituted an integral part of foreign artistic models imitated by Byzantine artists working in a particular region. This, for example, appears to be the case of the oriental-looking tunic, which is encountered in a small group of Cappadocian monuments dated to the ninth and tenth centuries. The occurrence of this tunic in this particular group of churches has been attributed to artistic influences from the Christian Orient, postulated for these ensembles on the basis of other iconographic, stylistic, and epigraphic considerations.

Lastly, there exist a number of oriental- and western-looking artefacts which were reflected in Byzantine religious contexts because they were actually in use in Byzantine lands. The artefacts belonging to this group may be distinguished from those in the previous two because, unlike the first, they do not serve as attributes 42 Kallinkos (monachos), Η τεχνική της αγιογραφίας, fig. 47.


44 Kallinkos (monachos), Η τεχνική της αγιογραφίας, fig. 86. Saint James the Persian wears a similar hat at Staro Nagoričino (1317/8) see Durić, Byzantinische Fresken, pl. XXXIV. Cf. J. M. Rogers, The Topkapı Saray Museum. The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts. London 1986, figs. 38, 49.


for foreigners and, unlike the second, their depiction became current in the pictorial vocabulary of a given period and was not confined geographically to a particular area. The fact that in some cases these artefacts are accurately represented argues in favour of the artists having first-hand knowledge of the actual objects. Such foreign influences are clearly reflected in the depiction of arms and armour in Late Byzantine monuments. The typology of the weapons attributed to military saints clearly attests to the influence of both Western and Eastern military traditions on Byzantine practices at the time. The portrayal of Saint Merkourios at the Peribleptos in Ohrid (1294/5) is a very interesting example in this respect. The saint’s outfit combines a western chapel-de-fer (type of helmet) with two items of oriental derivation, a sabre and a protective outer garment lined with mail (pl. 37, fig. 2).

QUESTIONS OF HOMOGENEITY AND REGIONAL DIVERSIFICATION

At different periods certain types of artefacts, like items of imperial, official, and military dress, thrones and upholstered footstools, wooden furniture with turned elements, richly patterned valances, even distaffs on a stand, came to constitute stock types in the pictorial vocabulary of religious art. The fact that they are encountered in monuments created all over the empire is more likely to be a function of the working practices of Byzantine artists and of the availability of common artistic models, rather than a reflection of a supposed homogeneity of material culture in Byzantine provinces. It is, of course, possible that some of these artefacts were indeed in use in different parts of the empire, but this cannot be claimed on the basis of the artistic evidence alone.

The evidence on regional diversification in Byzantine material culture provided by artistic representations of objects is admittedly scarce and concerns largely the dress of the common people. On the basis of their uniqueness, certain items of dress attributed to secondary figures in narrative scenes can be assumed to reflect local practices. This could very well be the case of the garment of young Salome at Kılıclar Kuşluk in Cappadocia, dated to the first half of the eleventh century, and of the elegant head-dress of the midwife at Panagia Arakiotissa in Cyprus, dated to 1192. Another instance of a possible reflection of local fashions is the attribution of earrings to boys and young men at Kurbinovo in Byzantine Macedonia, dated to 1191.

TOPICAL CONCERNS

The preceding sections explored the ways in which the study of realia in religious art may be employed to elucidate various aspects of the development of material culture in mediaeval Byzantium, aspects ranging from the typology and function of artefacts to questions of foreign influences and regional diversification. The artistic evidence was evaluated primarily from an archaeological point of view with the purpose of demonstrating that it may be used successfully to supplement the evidence provided by extant artefacts and the written sources. The examples discussed so far indicate that contemporary secular artefacts were introduced into Byzantine religious artistic contexts to a degree greater than what is usually assumed. These realia, however, were represented in the same iconographic contexts along with fanciful and conventional types, creating a whole that had never existed at any particular point in time, that was, one might say, ‘ageless’. Byzantine religious art does not illustrate daily life in mediaeval Byzantium nor was it ever meant to do so. Nevertheless, the occurrence of particular types of artefacts in particular iconographic contexts may serve on occasion as an ‘objective’ pointer to certain temporal concerns and popular beliefs of Byzantine society as well as to living conditions in the lands of the empire. A most illuminating example in this respect is the

49 See, for example, Tsiourdou, Ζωγραφικός διάκοσμος, pl. 90, for a representation of a sword with the characteristic disc pommel, a type which was particularly popular in the West during the Late Middle Ages. On the development of the disc pommel in the West see E. Oakeshott, The Archaeology of Weapons. Arms and Armour from Prehistory to the Age of Chivalry. London 1960, 225, fig. 106 (types H–K); A. B. Hoffmeier, From Medieval Sword to Renaissance Rapier. Gladius 2 (1963) 11–8.
50 Parani, Reconstructing, 120–1, 125, 134–6.
51 Parani, Reconstructing, 244–5, 247, 251, 267–8, 270–71.
53 Grozidanov – Hadermann-Misguich, Kurbinovo, figs. 39, 42, 44.
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE MATERIAL WORLD AND ITS REPRESENTATION

It has become clear that the acknowledged indifference of Byzantine religious art towards the representation of the material world was often tempered by a variety of considerations, be they artistic or other. Iconographic necessity, concessions to fashion and prevalent artistic tastes, the intellectual interests and temporal concerns of Byzantine society – to mention but a few – all played a part in the introduction of realia into religious pictorial contexts. Byzantine attitudes towards the material world in general or certain aspects of it in particular must have also affected its reflection in religious art, but these are infinitely more difficult to identify. Still, the monuments themselves provide us with a number of ‘indicators’ towards tracing such attitudes. The inventory of artefact-types represented, the amount of detail and care with which they are rendered, their semiotic function within iconographic contexts, as well as the geographic and chronological distribution of their representations are the most significant of these pointers. To discuss but one example, even a superficial survey of Byzantine art reveals that the majority of contemporary secular artefacts re-

representation of the damned in distinctive dress or with the instruments of their sins around their neck in the iconographic context of the Last Judgement. It has been demonstrated that the inspiration for the portrayal of the damned tormented by the instruments of their sin is to be sought in popular beliefs concerning the nature of the punishment awaiting transgressors in Hell54. At the same time, the portrayals of the damned provide an interesting inventory of the evils of mediaeval society like the abuse of power, alluded to by the inclusion of anonymous figures in imperial and official dress, usury, represented by the figure with a purse around the neck, and the falsification of weights, represented by the figure with the balance scales around the neck. In the case of the depiction of the Last Judgement in the small, thirteenth-century church of Saint George at Kalybia in Attica, the painter has given a graphic inventory of the problems faced by the inhabitants of this rural area55. To the right of the figure of the rich man from the parable of Poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19–25), is a row of nine heads of sinners. The first is the falsifier of weights. Then follows a royal couple, which is identified by inscriptions as Herod and Herodias; both were exemplars of human cruelty and lustfulness. Next comes the evil-minded archimandrite with a moneybag around his neck, an allusion, according to Mouriki, to the attachment of the clergy to material wealth. The next figure to the right is that of an official, if one is to judge by the head-dress he is wearing. Around his neck he has a kalamarin, a portable pen-case-and-ink-well. The presence of this figure stigmatizes the abuse of power by state officials, but it could also be referring to a particular problem like the forging of legal documents, the falsification of tax-registers, or the issuing of unjust verdicts in court56. The last four sinners are punished for offences associated with the life of agricultural communities. The first has a plough around his neck as punishment for plowing another man’s field. The second, judging by the sickle at his neck, has harvested someone else’s field. The third, with the axe at his neck, is probably being punished for cutting wood in someone else’s property. The pair of shears at the neck of the last one suggests that he is probably being punished for shearing another’s sheep57.

55 Mouriki, Representation, 149–50, 156–60.
56 The first two alternative interpretations of the figure with the kalamarin have been put forward by Mouriki, Representation, 149–50. The possibility of this figure being associated with the workings of Byzantine courts suggested itself to me because of the fact that depictions of writing implements constitute a regular feature of trial scenes in religious artistic contexts. Their introduction into these images was, in all probability, inspired by the stipulation of Roman law that, in order to be valid, all decisions of Roman judges should appear in written form; this stipulation was still in force in the Late Byzantine period, see Parani, Reconstructing, 211–2.
57 Mouriki identified the implement around the last sinner’s head as pruning shears, see Mouriki, Representation, 160. However, according to the written and the artistic evidence, it was a vine-dresser’s knife that was employed for pruning in Byzantium, not a pair of shears, see Bryer, Agricultural Implements, 78. Bryer, in fact, was the first to suggest that the implement at the church of Saint George looked more like a pair of sheep shears. I owe the suggestion that the last sinner is being punished for shearing someone else’s sheep to Dr. A. Dunn, whom I here thank. For a more detailed discussion of Last Judgement compositions in village churches as sources on daily life in Byzantine rural areas and its mundane and spiritual concerns see S. E. J. Gérestel, The Sins of the Farmer: Illustrating Village Life (and Death) in Medieval Byzantium, in: Word, Image, Number. Communication in the Middle Ages, eds. J. J. Contreni – S. Cacchione. Tavarnuzze 2002, 205–17; see also M. Gardès, Les punitions collectives et individuelles des damnés dans le jugement dernier (du XIIe au XIVe siècle). Zbornik za likovne umetnosti 18 (1982) 1–18.
flected in religious pictorial contexts at any given period in all parts of the empire was derived from the imperial milieu of Constantinople\textsuperscript{58}. Rulers and officials were identified as such by being attributed characteristic items of Byzantine ceremonial dress and stately seats and footstools, as well as by being flanked by attendants and bodyguards reminiscent of the imperial retinue\textsuperscript{59}. The martyrs were dressed in the \textit{chlamys}-costume of Byzantine officials\textsuperscript{60}. In certain Middle Byzantine artistic contexts, military saints appear wearing a type of body-armour that probably reflected the ceremonial armour of the emperor and his generals\textsuperscript{61}. Even elements of setting, like thrones and footstools, red and purple hangings, fans made of peacock feathers, and richly patterned valances, allude to the luxuriousness of the imperial ambience\textsuperscript{62}. The evidence adduced here clearly indicates that the avowed detachment of Byzantine religious art from its surrounding material reality did not apply to the representation of the trappings of imperial government and ceremonial. Why this was so appears to have been the result of a variety of reasons, both artistic and ideological. The splendour of the attire and the luxuriousness of the furniture and the furnishings of the imperial court were perhaps considered as conferring additional honour to the saintly archetypes of the images and as imbuing the compositions with a stateliness appropriate to their sacred content\textsuperscript{63}. Furthermore, the trappings of imperial ceremonial and administration, familiar to both the creators and the audience of the images through their day-to-day experience or through the medium of official art, must have presented themselves as the most appropriate and easily recognizable iconographic devices for expressing the concepts of sovereignty, authority, and rank\textsuperscript{64}. The Byzantine belief that the hierarchical structure of the earthly empire mirrored that of the heavenly kingdom\textsuperscript{65} could have justified, if not prompted, borrowings from imperial imagery for the visualization of the Kingdom of God. The conviction that the imperial rites reflected the universal order\textsuperscript{66} was enough to detach the imperial milieu from the sphere of transitional, everyday existence\textsuperscript{67}. The material trappings of imperial ceremonial, in their magnificence and conservatism, were probably considered as impersonal and as ageless as the

\textsuperscript{58} Parani, Reconstructing, passim.

\textsuperscript{59} Compare, for example, the representation of the Enrolment for Taxation at the Chora Monastery (1315–1321) with the miniature portraying John VI Kantakouzenos presiding over the Church Council of 1351 (Par. gr. 1242, fol. 5v; completed in 1375). The manner in which the bodyguard behind Kyrenios holds the sword high up with the hilt upwards in the Chora mosaic reflects the manner in which the dignitary to the right of John VI holds the imperial sword. Underwood, Kariye Djami, pls. 159, 160; Byzance, 419 (colour reproduction).

\textsuperscript{60} Compare, for example, the costume of the chorus of martyrs from the Last Judgement composition in the ossuary chapel at Bačkovo (mid-twelfth century) to the costume of the protospatharios Basil in Kutlumoussio 60, fol. Iv (terminus ante quem 1169). E. Bakalova, Bachkovskata kostnitsa. Sofia 1977, fig. 29; Plekanides et alii, The Treasures of Mount Athos, II, fig. 295.

\textsuperscript{61} This is best illustrated by the miniature portrait of the emperor Basil II in his famous Psalter (Marc. gr. Z.17, fol. IIIr; early eleventh century). The emperor, who is portrayed in ceremonial military dress triumphant over his enemies, is surrounded by the busts of six military saints, who wear exactly the same type of cuirass as he does. Spatahrakis, Portrait, 20–26, fig. 6; A. Cutler – J.-M. Speser, Byzance médiévale, 700–1204. Paris 1996, fig. 254 (colour reproduction).

\textsuperscript{62} Mouriki, Πέρι Βυζαντινού κύκλου, 130–1; Parani, Reconstructing, 160–7, 170–3, 179–84.

\textsuperscript{63} Cf. the comments of the emperor Leo VI (886–912) à propos the pictorial decoration of the church of the Monastery of Kauleas in Constantinople, translated by C. Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312–1453, Sources and Documents. Toronto 1986, 203: The craftsman has made abundant use of gold whose utility he perceived: for, by its admixture, he intended to endow the pictures with such beauty as appears in the apparel of the emperors’ entourage. Furthermore, he realized that the pallor of gold was an appropriate colour to express the virtue of [Christ’s] members.

\textsuperscript{64} Having recourse to the imperial environment and official art in search of the appropriate iconographic means for expressing the ideas of power and sovereignty was a practice established since the beginnings of Christian iconography, see A. Grabar, L’empereur dans l’art byzantin. Paris 1936, 189–261; idem, Les voies de la création en iconographie chrétienne. Antiquité et Moyen Age. Paris 1979, 41–50.

\textsuperscript{65} See, for example, H. Ashweiler, L’idéologie politique de l’Empire byzantin. Paris 1975, 137–8. For the origins of this belief, which date back to the time of Eusebius and Constantine the Great, see F. Dvornik, Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy, I–II. Washington, D.C. 1966, II 614–21.

\textsuperscript{66} The classical statement of this idea in the mediaeval period is found in the Book of Ceremonies compiled by Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the tenth century, see De ceremoniis, ed. I. Reiske, II. Bonn 1830, 5.6–8, 638.3–5.

\textsuperscript{67} Cf. the anecdotical story about Leo VI recounted by Liudprand of Cremona in his Antapodosis. According to the story, when the disguised Leo, who had ended up in a prison cell, asked the jailer whether he knew the emperor, the jailer replied How could I know him when I do not remember ever having seen him properly? Certainly I have gazed at a distance once or twice, when he has appeared in public, but I could not get close, and it seemed to me that I was looking at a wonder of nature rather than at a human being. The Works of Liudprand of Cremona, transl. F. A. Wright. London 1930, 39; see also R. Cormack, The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed, in: Byzance et les images, eds. A. Guilleau – J. Durand. Paris 1994, 248, 250.
establishment they epitomized. Consequently, their presence in religious pictorial contexts would not have compromised the transcendental character of Christian iconography and was, therefore, acceptable.

To conclude, it is surprising at how many different levels and in what variety of contexts one may detect the reflection of contemporary reality in Byzantine religious art, despite this art’s avowed indifference towards things material and transitional. The process of locating and understanding such reflections is a painstaking one and requires familiarity with the formation processes of religious iconography if one is to avoid the many pitfalls. Nevertheless, considering the rewards, I believe that it is well-worth making the attempt.