

André Grabar, Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du Moyen Age

Walter Christopher

Revue des études byzantines, Année 1976, Volume 34, Numéro 1
p. 349 - 351

[Voir l'article en ligne](#)

Avertissement

L'éditeur du site « PERSEE » – le Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche, Direction de l'enseignement supérieur, Sous-direction des bibliothèques et de la documentation – détient la propriété intellectuelle et les droits d'exploitation. A ce titre il est titulaire des droits d'auteur et du droit sui generis du producteur de bases de données sur ce site conformément à la loi n°98-536 du 1er juillet 1998 relative aux bases de données.

Les oeuvres reproduites sur le site « PERSEE » sont protégées par les dispositions générales du Code de la propriété intellectuelle.

Droits et devoirs des utilisateurs

Pour un usage strictement privé, la simple reproduction du contenu de ce site est libre.

Pour un usage scientifique ou pédagogique, à des fins de recherches, d'enseignement ou de communication excluant toute exploitation commerciale, la reproduction et la communication au public du contenu de ce site sont autorisées, sous réserve que celles-ci servent d'illustration, ne soient pas substantielles et ne soient pas expressément limitées (plans ou photographies). La mention Le Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche, Direction de l'enseignement supérieur, Sous-direction des bibliothèques et de la documentation sur chaque reproduction tirée du site est obligatoire ainsi que le nom de la revue et- lorsqu'ils sont indiqués - le nom de l'auteur et la référence du document reproduit.

Toute autre reproduction ou communication au public, intégrale ou substantielle du contenu de ce site, par quelque procédé que ce soit, de l'éditeur original de l'oeuvre, de l'auteur et de ses ayants droit.

La reproduction et l'exploitation des photographies et des plans, y compris à des fins commerciales, doivent être autorisés par l'éditeur du site, Le Ministère de la jeunesse, de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche, Direction de l'enseignement supérieur, Sous-direction des bibliothèques et de la documentation (voir <http://www.sup.adc.education.fr/bib/>). La source et les crédits devront toujours être mentionnés.

Elie J. PATSABOS, *Ἡ εἰσόδος εἰς τὸν κληρὸν κατὰ τοὺς πέντε πρώτους αἰῶνας*. — Athènes 1973. 24 × 17. 270 p.

L'auteur, qui est professeur de droit canonique à l'école grecque Sainte-Croix de Boston, a présenté ce sujet comme thèse de doctorat à la Faculté théologique de l'Université d'Athènes. L'exposé repose sur les sources traditionnelles de la révélation depuis le Nouveau Testament jusqu'au quatrième concile œcuménique de Chalcédoine.

La première partie donne l'analyse des sources concernant les conditions requises des candidats au sacerdoce (diacres, prêtres, évêques). L'enseignement des apôtres et des pères apostoliques (ch. 1) aboutit à une première codification reposant sur la Didachè et formulée dans les Constitutions apostoliques et les Canons d'Hippolyte (ch. 2). Les Pères des iv^e et v^e siècles, Athanase, Basile, Grégoire de Nazianze, Jean Chrysostome, Ambroise parlent fréquemment des qualités morales exigées du ministre sacré et du pasteur (ch. 3).

La deuxième partie examine la codification découlant des conciles locaux (Ancyre, Néocésarée, Sardique, Laodicée, Carthage), et œcuméniques (Nicée et Chalcédoine). Un chapitre spécial étudie le problème particulier du mariage des clercs et les canons relatifs à ce sujet. Le dernier chapitre résume les qualités physiques et morales qui conditionnent l'entrée dans le clergé.

L'ouvrage s'achève par un résumé en anglais, la bibliographie et une table des noms propres et des sujets.

Jean DARROUZÈS

Ramón TEJA, *Organización económica y social de Capadocia en el siglo IV, según los Padres Capadocios* (Acta Salmanticensia. Filosofía y Letras 78). — Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca 1974. 24 × 16,5. 222 p.

Selon le préfacier de l'ouvrage, peu de chercheurs en Espagne ont utilisé les Pères de l'Eglise — et je préciserai : les Pères grecs — en vue d'une étude économique et sociale. Le travail de R. Teja se distingue en effet de la production courante qui relève souvent de la compilation superficielle et de seconde main ; il a lu effectivement les sources, il a bien délimité l'objet de sa recherche et montré la valeur historique des œuvres cappado-ciennes (les deux Grégoire et Basile) pour la connaissance de la situation locale. Les ouvrages des Pères sont plus ou moins proches des réalités quotidiennes selon leur genre (lettres, homélies, traités), mais la qualité des auteurs et la prédominance des thèmes moraux et dogmatiques n'excluent pas des témoignages concrets sur la vie courante.

Le grand intérêt de l'ouvrage est de présenter de manière ordonnée les renseignements très dispersés et de les réunir méthodiquement sous des titres : la terre (produits et répartition des domaines), la vie agricole (pression fiscale, classes sociales, possesseurs), l'industrie, le prolétariat urbain, le commerce, l'argent, les villes, relations des sujets avec l'Etat. On remarque que ces titres ne sont pas exhaustifs, si on considère la composition théorique de la société provinciale : l'armée, par exemple, n'est pas représentée. C'est que l'auteur veut s'en tenir au témoignage des auteurs envisagés, sans négliger cependant pour leur interprétation les études classiques et les œuvres ou les sources parallèles. En certains domaines, il semble que l'investigation devrait aller plus avant, par exemple en archéologie et en épigraphie. Du moins un exposé, même très général, de géographie historique aurait permis de suivre plus facilement sur le terrain le sens des textes étudiés et d'en comprendre la portée de manière plus concrète.

Le caractère même de l'œuvre demandait qu'en plus des deux index de noms (personnes et lieux), un index de matières reprenne la plupart des termes concrets que l'auteur a relevés dans son exposé et interprétés ; c'est un instrument indispensable dans ce genre d'ouvrages destinés à la critique et à l'étude plus qu'à la lecture banale.

Jean DARROUZÈS

André GRABAR, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du Moyen Age* (Bibliothèque de l'Institut hellénique d'Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise 7). — Venice 1975. xxii+90 p., 4 plates in colour, 113 photographs in black and white.

Among the categories of Byzantine works of art which interested the late Gabriel Millet was that of metal covers for icons. He assembled a considerable number of photographs

of these works. His successor, André Grabar, added further documents. From 1964 to 1966 Grabar lectured in Paris upon these metal covers. Ten years later he has published a *catalogue raisonné* comprising forty-nine examples. To these are added, for purposes of comparison, analogous objects, for which the same techniques of filigree, repoussé and niello were used.

In his introduction, the author remarks upon the difficulty of classifying metal covers for icons. In fact, a number of problems arise. First of all, there is a problem of definition. Strictly, the *riza* of Russian icons covers virtually the whole painting except the hands and faces. Moreover, this seems to have been added normally to an icon which was already painted. However, as the examples collected by the author show, a varying amount of the actual surface of the icon may be covered. Moreover the halo, which is raised and not flat, may form a separate part of the metal cover. This could have been exemplified by Gabriel Millet's photograph of a separate metal halo in the Treasury of Vatopedi (Mount Athos), published by Louis BRÉHIER (*La sculpture et les arts mineurs byzantins*, Paris 1936, pl. XL.1). In other cases, only the outer edge of the frame has a metal cover. Although the same techniques may be used for these frames, strictly they cannot be considered to be a metal cover. This is not, of course, a reason for eliminating metal frames from the catalogue, but merely an added complication, which justifies the author's decision to present the objets « dans un ordre qui n'a rien de scientifique » (p. 6).

A second problem arises from the fact that, in so far as metal covers are datable, the majority seem to be most plausibly attributable to the Palaiologan period. The question may be asked: what do we know of the antecedents of the group of Palaiologan works? The author suggests that the two fine metal icons of the Archangel Michael in the Treasury of Saint Mark's are a *reprise* of an Antique technique (p. 9-11). However, although the same techniques are used for these icons as for metal covers, there is a precise distinction between them: there seems no question of the metal cover hiding a painted icon, for the entire object is conceived as a unity.

Next in the catalogue comes an icon of Saints Peter and Paul, formerly in the cathedral of Saint Sophia at Novgorod. He suggests that it formed part of the first iconostasis of the cathedral and that, consequently, it may be dated to about 1050. This hypothesis needs to be controlled by a comparison with analogous works of the xith century in other categories.

In order to illustrate the development of the metal cover between the xith and xiiith centuries, the author has resort to Georgian examples. It is wellknown that metal covers, as well as other objects in metal, exist in far greater numbers in Georgian than in Byzantine art (p. 29-33). Here too, however, a problem of classification arises. Is the icon of the Transfiguration at Zarzma (fig. 11-13), dated 886, strictly covered with metal? In its present state, it is not possible to know, at least from the photograph, in what technique the faces were executed. However, the hands are definitely in metal, whereas the *riza* normally leaves the hands free.

Given the fact that no Byzantine work closely resembling the Zarzma Transfiguration is known to us, is it possible to be sure that the Georgian artists followed Byzantine models? No doubt iconographically they followed Byzantine models; the same is plausible for the decorative motifs of the frames. However their method of rendering the draperies of the figures in metal, with narrow raised lines which tend not to converge, does not seem to exist on Byzantine metal covers. The nearest approach to such a technique occurs on an icon at Melnik (fig. 7), of which the author gives only a detail (the icon has been fully published by Suzy DUFRENNE, *Une icône byzantine à Melnik en Bulgarie*, *Byz.* 38, 1968, p. 18-26). Here, however, the style of the draperies, whose lines tend to converge, is clearly Byzantine. Nevertheless, it permits one to ask whether, in fact, the technique of covering the vestments of the personage represented in metal was not adapted by the Byzantines from Georgian models rather than *vice versa*. It also permits one to ask why, in studying Byzantine metal covers, comparison with Georgian examples should only be used restrictively (p. 26).

In the Palaiologan period, we are on surer ground. The number of metal covers from this period is greater, and, by reason of their inscriptions, they can often be dated objectively. Professor Ihor Ševčenko has established the texts, which figure in this volume,

and proposed a translation. Further, many of these later works are of high quality, notably the icons which were formerly part of the iconostasis in the Church of the Peribleptos (Ohrid). They are said here to be in the Archaeological Museum at Skoplje, although all other publications (the catalogues of the Athens exhibition [1964], of Macedonian icons in Paris [1965], and of Yugoslav art in Paris [1971], as well as the album *Ikone sa Balkana*, Belgrade/Sofia 1970), say that they are still in the church of the Peribleptos. The Holy Face in San Bartolomeo degli Armeni is remarkable, by reason of the scenes recounting the discovery of the Holy Face and its transportation to Constantinople.

One or two of the icons mentioned in the catalogues cited above do not figure in the book under review. I note the following examples: the metal frame of a mosaic icon of Saint Nicolas, belonging to the monastery of Saint John, Patmos (Athens catalogue 162 with illustration) and the large Virgin Psychosostria in the church of the Peribleptos at Ohrid (Yugoslav catalogue 292). This latter, of which the description and bibliography may be found in V. DJURIĆ's *Ikônes de Yougoslavie* (Belgrade 1961, p. 94-95), is particularly interesting, in spite of its deteriorated condition, because the frame has a portrait of the donor, Nicolas, archbishop of Justiniana Prima. If this is the Nicolas who figures in the list of xivth-century bishops of Ohrid, then the frame may be dated about 1347.

Some further items should not escape the future writer of a definitive study of metal covers of icons. Possibly the metal frame of the mosaic icon of Saint Demetrius at Sassoferrato is post-byzantine. However, given the unity of frame, icon and phial for the myron of Demetrius, it needs explaining why the frame is not contemporary with the rest, which can hardly be later than the conquest of Thessalonika by the Turks, after which the flow of precious myron ceased (Athens catalogue 171 and my article, St Demetrius: The Myroblytos of Thessalonika, *Eastern Churches Review* 5, 1973, p. 165 and plate 9). In this same article I cite an example of the kind of metal covers which André Grabar calls *revêtement bon marché* (p. 72). It has been nailed clumsily to the cover of a manuscript in the British Library: *Londin. Additional 28815*. Scenes from the biography of Saint Demetrius are repeated twice, in identical form, such as would have been the case if they were produced from the same mould. They provide, perhaps, the most authentic example of the kind of ex-voto metal cover for icons, which would have been sold to pilgrims at the shrine of Saint Demetrius (*art. cit.*, p. 171-172; I have published a photograph, with a false identification of the scenes represented, in the *Eastern Churches Review* 3, 1970, fig. 5).

The limitations of this monograph, to which the author himself draws attention (p. 3), are due principally to the fact that the text and documents correspond essentially to his lectures of ten years ago. Those who, like myself, had the occasion to attend the lectures of André Grabar, will relive again those hours when the author used to sit, himself facing the screen among his audience, commenting the photographs projected there and inviting those present to join in the discussion. It would have been a pity for these documents and the commentary to have remained unpublished. They are an invitation to a younger scholar to continue and develop the author's work. Perhaps one of the first tasks facing this hypothetical scholar will be to analyse more closely the literary documents concerning the metal covers of icons. The next would be a more detailed comparison of the metal covers with other genres of sumptuary art at Byzantium, for which the study by Jean EBERSOLT, *Les arts somptuaires de Byzance* (Paris 1923), has not, to my knowledge, been superseded.

Christopher WALTER

Lydie HADERMANN-MISGUICH, *Kurbinovo. Les fresques de Saint-Georges et la peinture byzantine du XII^e siècle* (Bibliothèque de Byzantion 6). — Brussels 1975. I, 606 p., 5 colour plates, 75 line drawings in text; II, 191 photographs in black and white.

The traveller from Bitola to Ohrid, who decides to turn off in a Southerly direction along the Eastern bank of Lake Prespa, arrives, after a dozen kilometres, at a turning, which will lead him up into the hills. On reaching the modern village of Kurbinovo, he has to proceed yet further on foot, accompanied by a guide, to a small, unpretentious building, nestling in the trees at the edge of a meadow. Having the appearance of a barn rather than that of a sanctuary, the church of Saint George may hardly seem to justify a monograph so long as that which Madame Hadermann-Misguich has prepared with such assiduity. It is