

of the Balkans was rural, and their virtues and vices shaped by the tribal tradition of warrior-type societies. Contradictory in itself, the Balkans eluded definition. A mysterious and dark history filled with irrational brutality was seen as “typically Balkan”.

Let us return to the essential questions: What is the feminine perspective in viewing the Balkan populations as significant Others? and What is the specific contribution of the women travellers to creating the image of the Balkan populations? Or: Are they friends or enemies, or simply exotic Orientals? The women travellers viewed the Balkans as “traditionally warrior societies”, as contradictory, both “civilized” and “uncivilized”, but the Balkan cultural text was read as predominantly masculine. For that rea-

son, Allcock quotes the attributes such as courage, roughness, strength and sturdiness. Balkan societies were seen as half-way between rational and irrational, real and unreal, civilized and savage, though not barbarian. In contact with a world previously unknown to them, the travellers became aware of different social patterns, and perhaps most importantly, they modified their own self-images through their reflection on Others. As the editors put it, most of these women were “black lambs and grey falcons” attempting to escape from the patterns of their own cultures.

This book is a rare contribution to understanding the feminine perspective of cultural displacement and the diverse significance of travel literature.

RĂZVAN THEODORESCU, *CONSTANTIN BRÂNCOVEANU ÎN TRE “CASA CĂRȚILOR” ȘI “IEVROPA”*. BUCHAREST: ENCICLOPEDIA RAO, 2006. PHOTO BY IOAN OPREA. PP. 130. ILLS. 76.

Reviewed by Ljiljana Stošić*

University professor and member of the Romanian Academy, Răzvan Theodorescu is an erudite intellectual and eminent scholar in ancient Romanian and European art and civilization with a bibliography containing hundreds of items. He is a laureate of the Herder Prize traditionally presented at Vienna University.

The originator of an art and life style known as the “Brancovenian style”, the Wallachian prince Constantine Brancoveanu (1688–1714), at once was a true humanist, a monarch ruling on the fringes of Europe and a contemporary of Louis XIV, Augustus II, Peter the Great and Clement XI. His being likened to equal-to-the-apostles Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor and founder of the city on Bosphorus – the Second Rome – in a fresco in the monastery of Hurez (1694) was a political manifesto conveying moralizing and artistic messages. The first contacts with the Uni-

versity of Padua and this city’s scholarly, philosophical, literary and artistic circles, the opening of the school of St Sabbas and the first printing house in Bucharest, took place under Constantine’s predecessor, the Ottoman vassal Șerban Cantacuzino (1678–88), rightfully called a “new Solomon” or “Ptolemy Philadelph” by his contemporaries. That the Brancovenian style and outlook in fact continued the Cantacuzian is shown by the plan of the monastery church of Hurez, which is a simplified version of the triconch of Curtea de Argeș (1512–17), and by the portrait gallery of his predecessors on the Wallachian throne (Neagoe Basarab, Radu Șerban, Matei Basarab, Constantin Șerban, Șerban Cantacuzino), which lays an ideological emphasis on the dynastic continuity of Constantine Brancoveanu as a direct seventh-generation descend-

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ant of Neagoe Basarab. The Hurez school of painting, headed by Constantine the Greek and by the disciples of the Cantacuzinian court painter Parvu Mutu (Andrei, Stan, Neagoe), will be remembered not only for the portraits of the ktetors and of ordinary masons, stonemasons and master builders, but also for the skilful panoramic compositions (Victory of Constantine the Great over Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312).

The European Enlightenment became a Romanian development as well, most patently expressed in the building of royal palaces and summer houses for pleasure, comfort and private parties set in woods, on lakes or in gardens. Designed on the model of medieval monastic complexes, the royal palaces of the Brancovenian age, beginning with Mogosaia near Bucharest (1702), have reception halls, vestibules, loggias and marble stairways in a combined Byzantine and Oriental style, with twisted Corinthian columns and Moorish arcades reminiscent as much of Neo-Gothic Venetian palaces as of Turkish mihrabs. Stucco works and balustrades abound in vegetal ornaments – flowers, fruits, cypresses – two-headed eagles and mascarons.

It is regrettable that this useful and comprehensive book is published only in Romanian. Its five chapters take the reader from the Cantacuzian prelude and the landmarks of Brancovenian religious and residential architecture and wall painting, to various later, folklore, urbane

and rural patterns in which this originally aristocratic and courtly style survived. The Brancovenian style, enormously popular in high society between 1690 and 1720, was succeeded by the “post-Brancovenian style”, prevailing until the beginning of the nineteenth century and spreading across the Carpathians into Transylvania, the Banat and Moldavia. The same as the preceding Brancovenian style, which “influenced Russian art and the art of the Balkan Orthodox peoples, its late offshoots also show marked decorativeness and chromatic vividness, and are therefore called ‘Oriental Baroque’ or ‘Aetonic Rococo’.”

With its excellent colour photographs, mostly showing the monastery of Hurez and the palace of Mogosaia, the book *Constantine Brancoveanu between “Academy” and “Europe”* is a precious source of latest insights indispensable to all historians, art and literature historians interested in expanding their knowledge about the age of Constantine Brancoveanu, marvelously combining Renaissance, Baroque, Oriental and Byzantine elements into a symbiosis of East and West. An appendix of seventy-three notes referring to the latest relevant literature and containing the author’s commentaries is an additional aid in understanding “Brancovenian historicism”. The masterful knowledge of the subject is also reflected in simple and easy narration, making this study a remarkable synthesis surpassing by far all earlier work on this subject in up-to-dateness, thoughtfulness and maturity.

CVETAN GROZDANOV, *FRESCO PAINTINGS OF THE OHRID ARCHBISHOPRIC: STUDIES.*

SKOPJE: MACEDONIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS, 2007. Pp. 468. ILLS. 252
(IN MACEDONIAN WITH FRENCH AND ENGLISH SUMMARIES).

Reviewed by Ljiljana Stošić*

On the occasion of its fortieth anniversary (1967–2007), the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) has published, with support from the Trifun Kos-

tovski Fund, a collection of studies by the eminent art historian Cvetan Grozdanov

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