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Silvia Pedone – Valentina Cantone

The aim of the paper is to analyze pseudo-kufic ornament in Byzantine art and the reception of the topic in Byzantine Studies. The pseudo-kufic ornamental motifs seem to occupy a middle position between the purely formal abstractness and freedom of arabesque and the purely symbolic form of a semantic and referential mean, borrowed from an alien language, moreover. This double nature (that is also a double negation) makes of pseudo-kufic decoration a very interesting liminal object, an object of "transition", as it were, at the crossroad of different domains. Starting from an assessment of the theoretical questions raised by the aesthetic peculiarities of this kind of ornament, we consider, from this specific point of view, the problem of the cross-cultural impact of Islamic and islamicizing formal repertory on Byzantine ornament, focusing in particular on a hitherto unpublished illuminated manuscript dated to the 10th century and held by the Marciana Library in Venice.

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Dealing with a much debated topic, not only in recent times, as that concerning the role and diffusion of ornament within Byzantine art, one has often the impression that virtually nothing new is possible to add so that you have to repeat positions, if only involuntarily, by now well established. This notwithstanding, such a topic incessantly gives rise to questions and problems fueling the discussion of historical and theoretical issues: a debate that has been going on for longer than two centuries. This situation is certainly due to a combination of reasons, but ones having a close connection with the history of the art-historical discipline itself. In the present paper our aim is to focus on a very specific kind of ornament, the so-called pseudo-kufic inscriptions that rise interesting pivotal questions – hitherto not so much explored – about the "interference" between a formalistic approach and a functionalistic stance, with its semantic and cultural underpinnings. Our strategy here will be to move from the general to the particular, from an overall sketch of the historical and critical reception of the topic to the analysis of a single case study, trying to underline and problematize from a specific point of view the different dimensions of cross-cultural connections between Byzantium and Islam, both the structural endogenous elements and the historically conditioned components, the causal and the casual features.[1]

1. The form and the ornament

Ornament could not but be an ideal object of study from the point of view of the scientific and methodological needs of the newborn art-historical discipline, at least in its theoretically strongest version, aiming at combining *Kunstgeschichte* and *Kunstwissenschaft*. The ornamental – both by definition and by tradition free from the mimetic constraints of classic visual arts – perfectly fit the demand for purely formal analysis of the purely optical dimension of artistic production that fostered the researches of Eu-

ropean scholars between the end of nineteenth and early of twentieth centuries. That demand, on the other hand, was widespread through the aesthetic attitudes of the period and it was shared by cultural trends and personalities otherwise very differently oriented. Furthermore, the nature of the ornamental feature, its direct, autonomous and abstract evidence – *sans intermédiaires*, as Valery wrote in *Eupalinos* – was in itself suitable for a double purpose: the one hand, to establish something like a historical grammar of visual arts, on the other hand, to undermine the gap, in terms of value judgment, between representational and non-representational arts, between high and low art forms, between advanced and decadent artistic ages and cultures. It is such a strategic project that guided the work of some of the pioneers of the art-historical discipline starting from the end of nineteenth century, in particular Alois Riegl, which was hailed as the Kant of the modern art history,[2] the maker of a new Copernican revolution whose effects are still detectable in the base lines of the discipline. Not fortuitously, the most recent researches have been discovering similar ideological and cultural interests in studying the ornament, even if in accordance to the updated lexicon and standards of visual studies, nor is it surprising that the scientific legacy of Riegl and the *Wiener Schule* have gained a new attractiveness in the last decades.[3]

But, as always in history, there is also the other side of the coin, and ornament too has a double face. For the price for its purity in terms of representational content is its dependence in terms of material self-sufficiency. Every piece of ornament is actually a piece of *applied* art, hence the need to distinguish and to give a double name to that double face. A need that is made already explicit in the foundational text of the modern aesthetic Copernican revolution, the Kantian *Critique of Judgment*. Though for Kant the arabesque on a wallpaper is a perfect example of *pulchritudo vaga*, of free beauty (§ 16), ornaments – *Zieraten* in Kant's words – are *parerga*, after all, only "an addendum" to the unity of the whole work of art, and then they always risk to be reduced to mere "decoration" or "finery" – *Schmuck* – that "detracts from genuine beauty" (§ 14).[4] Double name also means double judgment. Thus, if the work of Riegl marks a possible development of one of these parallel Kantian lines, on the other side, the opposite extremity is the famous work of Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*. Such an inner tension between a free play of forms and a redundant addition went through the theory and practice of art history during the twentieth century, and also the most recent scholarship devoted to the topic is somehow heir of that conflicting scene, so that often the most philosophically oriented studies are still conceived as a "defense" of the aes-

thetic rights of ornament.[5] Yet, the possibility to tell ornament and decoration apart – or ornament and ornamental[6] – proved to be a far cry from a really viable solution. Indeed, even the scientific formalization of formalistic approach to ornament, fostered by the progresses of mathematics and crystallography, could only provide a more rigorous analytic description of material, for "mathematics answers the question: 'which ornaments are derived', but not 'how they are derived' or why?".[7]

With these problems in mind, it is then not surprising that the historical and theoretical investigation of ornament had a no lesser role in the field of Byzantine studies, where the issues of realism and abstraction, mimesis and stylization were so relevant for the understanding of the relations between Western and Eastern aesthetic traditions. Ornamental motifs turned out to be not only a useful tool for "internal", philological knowledge – as far as chronology, provenance and stylistic taxonomy are concerned – but also a resource to evaluate the amount and the importance

1 – **Enamelled casket,** In: Adrien De Longpérier (note 26), 1846, pl, 45.

forms the characters so to have an actually meaningless or "false" writing. In this way, in the same form that should be purely ornamental we find together both the elimination of sense and the remains of sense. Even in the more decorative abstract patterns – and then more distant from the semantic dimension of a form of writing proper – the overall structure and disposition of pseudo-kufic ornament never completely rejects the appearing (or the fictional appearing) of a real script. The recursivity, modularity, and compositionality of "characters", together with their spatial distribution in linear frieze-like sequences, make pseudo-kufic ornament a highly adaptable decoration, for the most different settings, but they also lend it the unmistakable visual likeness, although superficial, of real calligraphy, of Islamic calligraphy, moreover. So the essential questions are not only which is the value of this script-like likeness?, and how much did this likeness influence the preference for such a decoration form?, but also why Byzantine artists found suitable for their purposes an alien pseudo-script?

Whence the problem of the interpretation of the possible reasons for this process of cross-contextual defunctionalization and refunctionalization. The idea that this kind of misuse of Arabic script could be due to the lack of linguistic competences by Western artists seems too simple, if only because pseudo-kufic ornamentation is found also in several Islamic artistic productions.[10] Furthermore, we have to take into account the scope and persistence of the contagion phenomenon, from both a geographic and chronological point of view, with examples that range from medieval art to Renaissance painting and sculpture, where we find these ornamental motifs substantially unchanged in a variety of contexts (representations of embroideries, textiles, halos and so on), all the stylistic novelties notwithstanding.[11]

Perhaps just in order to bypass the difficulties or the shortcuts of contextual interpretations, some scholars have favored an "aesthetic" account, if not even an extremely formalistic explanation, drawing attention to the "terpnopoietic" feature – to use the term fashioned by Grabar[12] – of calligraphic elements, so characteristic of Arabic script, and to the taste for the exotic allure, although more or less indeterminate.[13] Others, instead, supposed that beyond aesthetic preferences there might be also cultural reasons of more specific functional kind, like an archaizing intent,[14] a religious apotropaic value,[15] or the visual suggestion of some ancient occult power, so that pseudo-Arabic inscriptions may have been seen as ritual formulas by the beholders, not unlike the *Ephesia Grammata* of Greek magic tradition, thus turning the exotic appeal in esoteric charm.[16] In fact, it is not so easy to verify such hypotheses, especially

of exchanges, intersections, contaminations, reinterpretations and misunderstandings across different artistic languages and cultures[8]. All this thanks to the somehow omnipresent nature of ornament, through the most different media, and to its structural "stability". Even the most original decorative creation, in its absolutely aniconic quality, is much less conditioned than representational art genres, at least from a formal point of view, as we have noted above, and therefore also much more easily "transmissible" through different and even ideologically opposing contexts. On the other hand, it is not less true that the infection of an artistic culture by an external not endemic agent is never so inert as an extremely formalistic theory seems to believe, even when the infectious element, as it were, has a harmless and neutral appearance.

These critical features are particularly clear – as for the Byzantine context we want here to deal with – if we examine the case of that specific kind of ornament that has been called pseudo-kufic or kufesque decoration[9], widespread starting from the beginning of ninth century and that exhibits interesting peculiarities, worth not only of philological but also methodological scrutiny. Such a decoration exploits the formal and geometric properties of Arabic kufic script, with its combination of vertical, angular and horizontal segments that makes it especially fitting for architectural and monumental settings, but also trans-

3 – Robert W. Schultz – Sidney H. Barnsley, **Drawing of the champlevé decoration in the Katholikon of Daphni Monastery (Greece)**, pencil, ink and watercolor 1888. British School of Athens

4 – Champlevé cornices with pseudo-kufic motif, 11th century. Katholikon, Daphni Monastery

when taking into account a reader-response approach, but it is reasonable to suppose that in different circumstances there may have been a concurrence of several factors. By and large, there is also an aesthetics of opacity and "otherness" as such, and pseudo-kufic ornament was actually "an opaque signifier that signified 'alien signifier'", as Christopher Wood has recently put it, so that "whereas to the ignorant eye all scripts were equally opaque, now some were more opaque than others".[17]

But, to be true, any arbitrary set of visual marks would be equally opaque, so we need an extra explanation for the choice of a sign system resembling and derived from a real writing system. It might be that the process has also psychological and perceptual causes. Independently of the meaning of the words and of the intrinsic iconicity of single elements,[18] the graphic structure of Arabic script could be better suitable for the geometric permutations and transformations that are required in the "syntax" of ornament.[19] As observed by Owen Jones in *The Grammar of Ornament*,[20]

the repetition of the same motifs sequentially ordered allows a visual "reading" that composes and decomposes the single units according to variable formal rhythms and "rhymes". The regular but not monotonous recursivity of graphic elements is the essential feature of this kind of decoration, like that of similar repertories based on the stylization of phytomorphic or purely geometrical forms. The alphabetic repertory could thus provide a regulated pattern, or a ready-made grammar, from which to develop a free series of variations and, as Gombrich would have said, it is much easier to work from the constraints of a given scheme than to start from scratch. If so, we may say that the recognizable script-like appearance of pseudo-kufic ornament is something like a "residual" feature or, to use a more technical term, a skeuomorph,[21] not a completely useless scrap but a by-product useful for ancillary functions.

Such functions are salient, for instance, in architectural application of ornament, where the obvious visual reference to the eurhythmic disposition of writing makes

the pseudo-kufic motifs particularly apt to fill frieze-like bands for building decoration. In the Byzantine artistic context the architectural use of pseudo-kufic found a specially fitting application within the so-called "champlevé" sculptural technique.[22] Thanks to its material properties this method is perfectly suitable to transfer in durable forms and on a monumental scale the graphic intricacies of kufic ornamentation. The planarity of surfaces and the sharp chromatic contrast between the color of the ground, filled with dark mastic, and the optically outlined sign of characters enhanced the clarity and the geometric graphic finesse of the champlevé. And these were the qualities that Byzantine artists and viewers probably most appreciated in the polished refinement of Arabic calligraphy. At least from the point of view we have sketched here behind the taste for pseudo-kufic script there was a cross-cultural, anthropologically rooted *Schmucktrieb*, as German theorists called it, and the sense of order of Byzantine craftsmen was not so much different from that of Islamic artists. Nonetheless, to what extent Byzantine artists were also actually aware of the ideological, political or cultural implications of the forms they were reusing is another question, and a much more difficult one to answer.

Be that as it may, the problem of pseudo-kufic ornament marks a crucial point within the broader issue of the complex relationships between the Byzantine artistic culture and Islamic civilization. A multifaceted relationship not only due to a dynamic and instable interaction of spatial and temporal factors – as in every kind of cultural connection – but also because the interpenetration between Byzantine and Islamic culture became an object of historical inquiry in its own right only from a specific disciplinary point of view, with its presuppositions and aims. To better understand the current remarkable interest for such a topic, we have briefly to trace the origin and historical developments of that perspective.

2. A brief look at nineteenth-century studies

It is from the start of nineteenth century that the forms of islamicizing ornamentations begin to gain a new appeal in Europe, when the first systematic surveys of artistic styles were conducted and art works coming from outside the Western artistic culture began to be classified and evaluated for their peculiarities. This produced a double trend, on the one hand, the increase of field surveys and archaeological excavation campaigns on sites of historical interest, on the other hand, a progressive work of systematization of the materials, in order to have a chronological and geographical reference system to frame artistic phenomena, in particular the exotic ones, according to a taxonomic, genealogic and evolutionary approach, either conceived as linear or cyclic (for the recurrence of naturalistic and non-natu-

ralistic periods). The new interest in great repertories, including those devoted to ornament, originated from these scientific efforts.[23] The concern for Byzantine art was then at its beginnings, perhaps slightly in advance of the study of Islamic art, that became more popular in the second half of the century with the spread of orientalizing fashions.[24] But notwithstanding the constraints of a largely incomplete knowledge of original materials, the classification work began to point out forms that we may call "of contact", the outcome of a reciprocal stylistic influence between artists of different cultures. The islamicizing ornamental motifs are among the most impressive witnesses of such artistic exchanges.

The study of ancient and medieval sources contributed in that time to a more deeply rooted awareness of the Western artistic tradition, raised by the insert of classical heritage in the great development of religious Christian art. But this improved knowledge defined also the "distance" from forms external and "alien" to that tradition. On the other hand, the historical researches in the field of Islamic art showed not only the high level of quality of Muslim art productions, especially in Spain, but revealed also the unmistakable signs of a contact, the consequences of a contagion. If that contagion had been ubiquitous in medieval and Byzantine art, at least for a while, it had no lesser effects, in a sense, on the aesthetic inclinations of nineteenth-century beholders, that entertained a real passion for Orientalism and orientalizing ornament. For historical reasons, such an attitude was fostered especially in those countries that, like France and Great Britain, cultivated politic, economic and colonial interests in the Near and the Far East.[25]

It is against this cultural background that the work of Adrien de Longpérier (1816–1882) stands out. The pioneering researches of the French archaeologist and numismatist play a very important role in the history of pseudo-kufic scholarship. In 1846 Longpérier published an essay on the *Revue Archéologique*,[26] in which he examined several European epigraphic records, analyzing the forms of "false" Arabic writings, [*fig. 1*] "qui ne donnent aucun sens",[27] as he put it, and exploring their relations with authentic kufic scripts, also thanks to the possibility to draw on a more detailed knowledge of original Islamic calligraphic inscriptions, both in manuscripts and in epigraphic art and decoration.[28] But the relevance of Longpérier's essay is not only technical, in the philological sense of the term. In a letter published on a later issue of the same journal – in reply to a communication of a reader – the French scholar took the opportunity also to take a stand against some (no better qualified) critics of his original essay. Showing a keen foresight, he stressed the historical importance of his subject because "la question n'est pas tout à fait sans importance; elle constitue un petit chapitre d'esthétique qui doit trouver sa place dans l'histoire de l'art".[29] To the critics complaining
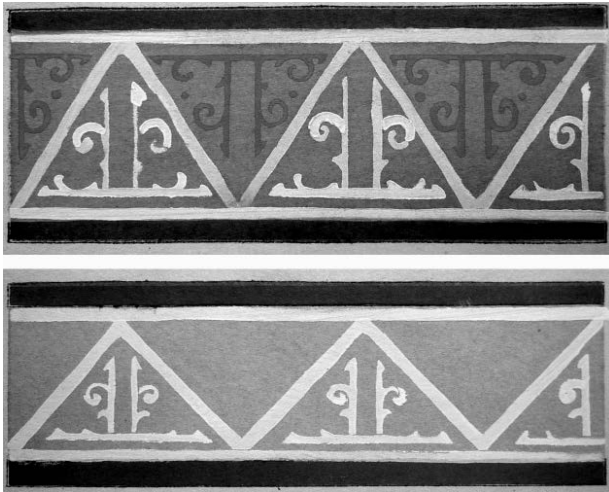
5 – Ernest Mamboury, **Watercolour drawings of decorative patterns in Cappadocia churches**, In: Jerphanion (note 37), 1928, pl. 111–112.

6 – Ms. Graecus II, 4 (=832), fol. 153v., 10th century. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice
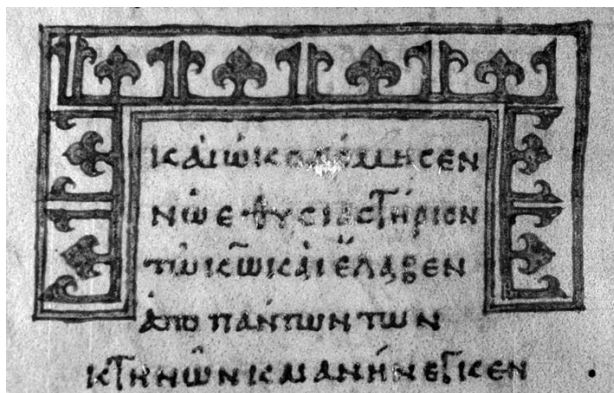
7 – Ms. Graecus II, 4 (=832), fol. 207v., 10th century. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice

that such an approach could "rabaisser l'art national" and to those "qui trouvant fort *humiliant* pour l'occident l'emploi des caractères arabes dans quelques monuments chrétien", Longpérier ironically reminds that rather surprisingly the same people have no difficulty to profess a religion actually "founded on Mount Sinai and on the shores of the Jordan".[30]

The "observations" of Longpérier, however peripheral and incidental, are nevertheless symptomatic of the perception of a much deeper and wide-ranging problem, in which scientific interests, aesthetic preferences, and also political and ideological reasons inextricably intertwine. In a sense, the ancient, arcane power that perhaps medieval and Byzantine artists vaguely felt in the "alien signifier" of pseudo-Arabic scripts was somehow still effective after more than a millennium and still aroused an apotropaic reaction.

Obviously, the empirical evidence at hand for Longpérier was still lacking and his observations took into account only Western samples, moreover without a systematic distinction between the technical peculiarities and constraints of different media. However, at the end of the nineteenth century the great archaeological surveys of Byzantine sites allowed a much more detailed knowledge of pseudo-kufic ornaments, both in terms of media and in terms of geographical and chronological distribution. In regard to architectural decoration, the best known examples are to be found in Greece [*fig. 2*] and reveal a clear Islamic inspiration.[31]

Important studies were dedicated to the analysis of Greek pseudo-kufic ornament, notably those of George C. Miles, therefore, for reasons of space constraints, and rather from a historical perspective, we may be content to cite here as a telling example only the work of Robert Weir Schultz (1860–1951) and Sidney Barnsley (1865–1926),[32] that devoted their researches to the monastic complex of Daphni. In their painstaking description and graphic survey of the monument, hitherto only partly published,[33] Schultz and Barnsley made also an accurate drawing of the champlevé frieze with pseudo-kufic characters running along the cornice of the bema, just under the semi-dome of the apse.[34] [*fig. 3*] The plate depicts the two kufic letters tied together, sharply showing up on the dark mastic of the ground, partly still visible on the cornice.[35] [*fig. 4*]

During the twentieth century the knowledge of these aspects of Byzantine art considerably increased, taking into account a broad typology of forms, from painting and sculpture[36] to monumental art, furthermore on a wider geographical area. As a further example, we may consider the survey carried on in 1928 by the Swiss scholar Ernest Mamboury (1878–1953), projected to illustrate the volume of Guillaume Jerphanion devoted to the churches of Cappadocia.[37] [*figs. 5a–b*] The pioneering work of documentation of the then still little known treasures of the Byzantine cave churches is enriched by some watercolors depicting the or-

namentation of the so-called column churches of Göreme, dating from the half of eleventh century.[38] The case of Cappadocia – that is a peripheral but economically strategic region for the trade through the eastern line of the empire – reveals a particular phenomenon of orientalizing influence, probably affected by returning fashions already widespread in the Byzantine capital.[39]

However, just in Byzantium, in spite of the historical sources speaking of buildings directly inspired by oriental models – as the famous Bryas Palace, erected by the emperor Theophilos (813–842)[40] – the pseudo-kufic ornament seems to have been not so appreciated, at least for monumental art or architecture,[41] and was rather relegated to a lesser and marginal role, as the decoration of manuscripts, of the ceramic ware coming from the Monastery of Constantine Lips,[42] or very particular objects such as the bowl of San Marco in Venice. Should we think that in Byzantium the pseudo-kufic architectural decorations were "rejected" for some specific reasons? Is it reasonable to suppose that this kind of ornament was too much overtly indebted to a Muslim cultural milieu? (in spite of the statements of Theophanes speaking of "imitation"). Under the Macedonian dynasty the Islamic presence in Constantinople was represented not only by diplomats and ambasadors but also by merchants and prisoners, but, in fact, the force and direction of forwing influence were fragmetary and hindered.[43] The highly specialized artistic workshops of Byzantium rather developed a specific version of islamicizing ornaments, putting together two different stylistic lines, inspired, on the one hand, by traditional forms and motifs, and on the other hand by a new taste, from which unique and completely original creations originate, like the architectural sculpture and ceramic decoration from Constantine Lips complex.[44]

[S. P.]

3. The twentieth-century contributions

The interest in the artistic exchanges between Byzantine Empire and Islamic world was particularly lively throughout the twentieth century, but for the specific case of pseudo-kufic decoration some remarks are in order. In an early period the attention of the international scientific community toward the topic of Byzantine ornament was sporadic, despite the precocious researches of Alois Riegl[45] and the contribution of Alison Frantz,[46] however confined to illuminated manuscripts. In fact, the gathering and classification of pseudo-kufic motifs pertaining to the Greek monumental architecture represent a marginal aspect of a specific field of investigation, that of the Byzantine ornament. Nevertheless, some scholars soon realized the relevance of the topic. During the 1920s and 1930s, after the important discoveries early in the century, the role of Byzantine art within the Mediterranean area was revaluated and redefined. From this point of view, the early concerns
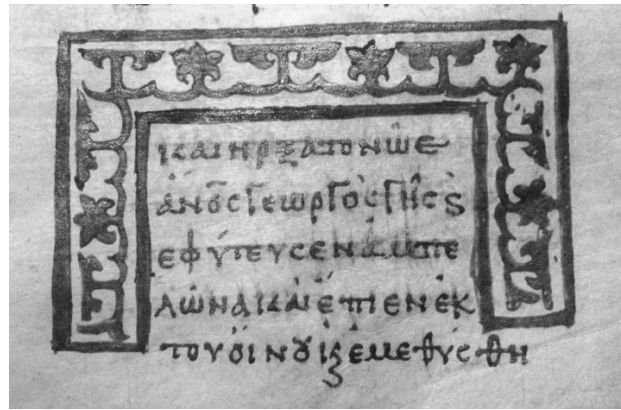
8 – Ms. Graecus II, 4 (=832), fol. 229r., 10th century. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice

9 – Ms. Graecus II, 4 (=832), fol. 16r., 10th century. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice

10 – Marble fragment from the Panagia Church, 10th century. Museum, Hosios Loukas

of Georgios Sotiriou and André Grabar[47] for pseudo-kufic ornaments helped to make clear the spread of islamicizing decoration throughout the Greece. However, it was only in the 1950s that the Byzantine pseudo-kufic motifs became an object of some scientific relevance and of shared interest. After the publication of Grabar's important essay devoted to the success of oriental arts in Byzantium under the Macedonian dynasty – published in 1951 on the second issue of the *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*[48] – the theme of the relationship between Byzantium and Islam was no more considered as a peripheral aspect, chronologically and geographically restricted, of a subtopic of Byzantine art, that is the ornamental.

Grabar was interested in the problematic dimension of the question. He was in search of the reasons of the diffusion of ornamental forms inspired by Arabic models in regions marred by the raids of pirates; for he rejected the hypothesis of mediation through Arabic sumptuary arts, rather stressing the direct contacts between monumental models and Greek artists. According to Grabar, the pseudo-kufic ornaments and the islamicizing decoration earned a remarkable reception in Constantinople, in the very moment in which the revival of ancient art reaches a climax of classicizing refinement, under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. During the 1950s such an idea must have seemed quite radical, if we consider the way in which Grabar himself suggested and restated it several years later,[49] for the hypothesis undermined the alleged monolithic classicism of Macedonian age, all to the good of a more comprehensive view of Byzantine art, in keeping with the methodological approach of the French scholar, aiming at integrating in a historical perspective all the different elements – even if seemingly contradictory – contributing to the formation of art.

The half of the century thus marks a significant turn in the understanding of the complex relationships between Byzantium and Islam, particularly as far as artistic and cultural exchanges are concerned. And this not only thanks to the methodological contribution of André Grabar, but also by virtue of new studies on Islamic arts, assessing the variety and chronology of works circulating in the Mediterranean area.[50] These researches were crowned by an important symposium, dedicated to *The Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs*, held in May 1963 at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Center of Washington. The proceedings of the conference were published a year later, on the number XVIII of *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (1964), in the same year when

11 – **Fragment of a shawl with preudo-kufic inscription**, 9th or 10th, from Upper Egypt. New York, Metropolitan Museum

during the tenth century. This could help defining some central critical questions pertaining to Byzantine art, that is to say the history of ornamental and the interaction of classical legacy, Constantinopolitan aristocratic patronage and Islamic art in Macedonian period. To this end we can profitably consider here a manuscript book now held in Venice, whose ornamental elements have hitherto never been studied by art historians, although familiar to paleographers, but display, not unlike a lot of other codices, a repertory shared by other types of artistic objects. The manuscript is a clear example of the aesthetic coexistence of a classic ornamental repertory and pseudo-kufic elements. The codex thus testifies to the assimilation, with equal dignity, of a language of forms of "Others" into the Byzantine ornamental world, and that could be seen as a symptom of the controversial exchanges that occurred in the contemporary Byzantine social world, when Arabs, forced to be baptized, were integrated into Grek aristocracy making brilliant careers as officials, soldiers or courtiers.[56]

4. Byzantium and Islam in the codex Greco II, 4 (=832) of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana of Venice[57]

The manuscript Greco II, 4 (=832) is decorated with thirty-three ornamental initials the mark the incipit of each of the homilies on Genesis by John Chrysostom[58] contained in the book. The elegant *Perlschrift* with which the text is written betrays a Constantinopolitan provenance, around tenth century,[59] what is confirmed also by the stylistic analysis of the illuminations.

The decorations of the book are characterized by classicizing foliages, palmettes and interlaced ribbons. Two initials, on the folios 153v and 207v [*figs. 6–7*] are instead decorated by pseudo-kufic motifs, constituted of linear and angular elements, partially modular, on which rigid lanceolate leafs, turgid palmettes and symmetric hooked motifs are inserted. A third initial, on the fol. 229r, [*fig. 8*] shows a different elaboration of graphic models, a kind of variation on the theme, fruit of the creativity of the limner but coherent with a internal principle of *varietas*, according to which each of the thirty-three initials shows a version of the geometric, foliated or ribbon-like motifs that are typical of middle-byzantine "carved" repertory [*figs. 9–10*], a repertory that includes also the kufic[60] This ornamental graphic stylization of Arabic calligraphy stems from the "floral" kufic of the period,[61] so called for the foliated ends of the letters, treated as in a phytomorphic alphabet, from which also the Arabic pseudo-kufic originate. [*fig. 11*]

Miles published his classification of pseudo-kufic elements in Greek architecture.[51]

During the next decade the researches aimed at reconstructing the complex whole of the relationships between Byzantium and Islam, in a historical, sociological and artistic perspective. After the Washington conference the topic of the exchanges between Greek world and Islamic culture gained a new attractiveness,[52] that has by no means vanished today. From the 1990s on the studies devoted to the vitality of the cultural and artistic contacts between the shores of Mediterranean greatly flourished,[53] also thanks to museum collections[54] and the scholarly contributions of studies and translations of Arabic sources that shed new light on the rhetorical devices of medieval authors. Arabic writings are often characterized by a kind of self-apologetic verve, not uncommon in Greek sources, masking under a religious pretext the continuity of social and cultural relationships, in spite of a no less continuous state of war.

From this historical point of view the Byzantine manuscripts offer a useful contribution in order to clarify the process of circulation of Islamic arts within the Mediterranean that however still remains unclear in many respects[55]. The pseudo-kufic ornaments reveal the reception of the repertories inspired by Islamic world in manuscripts commissioned by aristocratic patrons for liturgical use. Byzantine codices give us a not marginal example of the relationships connecting Byzantine culture and Islamic world

Without pretending to be here exhaustive, we may briefly consider the works that seem more closely related to the illuminations of the Venetian codex, not only as far as formal features are concerned, but also from the point of view of dating (around tenth century). These too are examples that show the reception of pseudo-kufic ornament in the capital of Byzantine empire and the regions governed by aristocracy, under the Macedonian dynasty.

As it is well known, the church of the Panagia at Hosios Loukas[62] is a clear evidence of the diffusion of this kind of decoration on a monumental scale. The monastery, founded soon after the death of the Venerable St. Luke in the 953, represents somehow a monumental catalogue of kufesque ornament. The fresco formerly in the porch of the Panagia and then annexed to the Katholikon depicts Joshua crowned with a helm decorated with pseudo-kufic motifs. [fig. 12] The same motifs are present also in some mosaics decorating the second church, in the frescoes of the crypt and in the reliefs of the sarcophagus of St. Luke.[63] Also the formerly polychrome stone friezes of the Panagia display decorative patterns similar to those we find on folios 153r

and 207v of the Venetian manuscript, thus further confirming a dating around tenth century.

The church of Holy Apostles, in the Agora of Athens,[64] is likewise inspired by Constantinopolitan models and preserves extended parts of the original walls, although it was largely rebuilt after 1954. The pseudo-kufic decorations date to the same period of some marble slabs, now in the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens,[65] that reveal how these motifs were used also in the chancel screens of sacred buildings. Within the heterogeneous repertory of marble spolia that characterizes the so-called "Little Metropolis" of Athens, or Panagia Gorgoepikoos,[66] we find a fragment decorated with pseudo-kufic inscriptions that in their overall pattern seem not unlike that of the Venetian manuscript. [fig. 13]

This kind of ornament was employed not only in religious building, but also in secular art. A gilded silver and niello bracelet decorated with pseudo-kufic characters, in Benaki Museum,[67] [fig. 14] and the ceramic ware from Corinth and Cherso, now in the Byzantine collection of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, are an evidence of the early reception of this exotic style within the provincial élites dur-

13 – **Main portal, architrave** – marble fragment with pseudo-kufic ornaments, 10th century. Panagia Gorgoepikoos, Athens

14 – Bracelet, 10th – 11th century, gilded silver and niello. Museum Benaki, Athens, inv. num. 11456

ing tenth and eleventh century, probably well acquainted with Islamic productions of the period, using the same ornamentations on ceramic ware and textiles.[68] [*fig. 11*]

This widespread presence is due not only to a fashion, but has also a historical and sociological cause. Under the reigns of Basil I (867–886), Nikephoros II Phoka (963–969), John I Tzimisces (969–976) and Basil II (976–1025), that is to say for more than 150 years, the political relations between Byzantines and Muslims were by and large favorable, as a consequence of social and military transformations well documented by the historical sources. So, the appreciation of the islamicizing ornament could be also a byproduct of an overall exotic taste seeped through the Constantinopolitan court thanks to the mediation of Arabic influences on Byzantine aristocracy, in a moment, between ninth and tenth century, when human, economic and artistic exchanges were continuous, the state of war notwithstanding. The decoration of Venetian codex reproduced on parchment a repertory esteemed by the aristocracy of the capital during the tenth century, and thus gives us an evidence of a Constantinopolitan fashion, together with other well-known artworks, like the illuminations of the Menologion of Basil II,[69] the ivory triptych of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the Hermitage,[70] and the glass cup of the Treasure of San Marco in Venice.[71]

[V. C.]

15 – Dish from Cherson, 10th century, pottery. State Hermitage, Museum, Oriental Collection, Byzantine and Post Byzantine section, Saint Petersburg, inv. num. X 1534

5. Conclusions

The pseudo-kufic ornament seems to occupy a middle position between the purely formal abstractness and freedom of arabesque and the purely symbolic form of a semantic and referential mean. This double nature (that is also a double negation) makes of pseudo-kufic decoration a very interesting liminal object, an object of "transition", as it were, at the crossroad of different domains. It defies an extreme formalistic treatment by virtue of its preserved mimetic semblance of writing proper, but at the same time it excludes also every immediately cognizable conceptual content and resists a straight semantic interpretation. As ornament, pseudo-kufic script obeys the geometric regularities of ornamental patterns, and thus seems to represent a universal cross-cultural formal "language", ruled by intrinsic rules and law-like constraints, understandable and appreciable in these terms by any sort of viewers. But its language, within Byzantine context, is cross-cultural also because it is obviously borrowed from a foreign culture, the culture of "the Other", of the historical enemy, moreover.

So the liminality of pseudo-kufic is perhaps also in this overlapping of appropriation and deprivation, something more than an accidental misunderstanding of the original and rather something like an "intentional" misreading, maybe a way out of the anxiety of influence, just to cite Harold Bloom. This is not to contend (at the least is not easily to contend) that Byzantine craftsmen or their patrons were transparently aware of such a deep psychological move, and to evoke the "unconscious" here is surely not a recommended move. Nonetheless, we might also ask which kind of response a "false" or "mock Arabic"[72] script could elicit in a Muslim viewer, if only not to shrink our perspective solely to Byzantine beholders. Can we imagine that pseudo-kufic inscriptions were intended to be, and to be viewed as, a "debased" Islamic script? Or we should instead see in this phenomenon a kind of homage, even if involuntary, to the great culture of writing and calligraphy? It is difficult to settle the question. To be sure, there was a contact and then a transmission or "transition" of forms, that even as an anonymous phenomenon, always involves technique and taste, that is to say material and social dimensions. Perhaps the pseudo-kufic ornament is to be better explained as a case of "exaptation" than as "adaptation", if we want to adopt (and to adapt) here the term famously introduced by Stephen Jay Gould[73], a process in which more than a "function shift" occurred. From this point of view, the migration of ornament is neither a secluded formal event nor a simple redundant mirror of major social, political, economical events. It rather emerges as an evidence of the multiple-shaped feature of every historical cross-cultural contact, indeed it is itself a dynamic evolving shape in which we can perceive a contact and a transition.

Photographic credits: 1: repro: Adrien de Longpérier, De l'emploi des caractères arabes. L'ornementation chez peuples chrétiens de l'occident, *Revue Archéologiques* 2, 2, 1846, pl. 45; 2: photo: Silvia Pedone; 5: repro: Guillaume Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce, Deuxième album*, Paris 1928, pl. 111–112; 6–9: by courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana; 10, 12: photo: Valentina Cantone; 11: repro: Helen C. Evans – Brandie Ratliff (edd.), *Byzantium and Islam. Age of transition (7th–9th Century)*, New York 2012, pp. 163 and 185; 13: 1st Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities / Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports / Archaeological Receipts Fund and Expropriations; 14: by courtesy of Benaki Museum Athens; 15: repro: Vera Zalesskaya, *Masterpieces of Byzantine Applied Art. Byzantine Ceramics of the 9th–15th Centuries* [Catalogue of the Collection], St. Petersburg 2011, p. 46.

Notes

[1] We would like to thank Ivan Foletti for his generous encouragement, and the anonymous reviewers for their productive suggestions. Many thanks also to Michele Di Monte for helpful comments on text and translation.

[2] According to Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, New York 1968, p. 126.

[3] For the revival of Riegl's work see Sandro Scarrocchia, *Studi su Alois Riegl*, Bologna 1986. – Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art*, University Park 1992. – Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, Cambridge 1993. – Diana Graham Reynolds, *Alois Riegl and the Politics of Art History. Intellectual Traditions and Austrian Identity in Fin de Siècle Vienna*, San Diego 1997. – Christopher Woods (ed.), *The Vienna School Reader. Politics and Art Historical Method in 1930s*, New York 2000. – Richard Woodfield (ed.), *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work*, London 2001. – Michael Gubser, *Time's visible surface. Alois Riegl and the Discourse on History and Temporality in Fin de Siècle Vienna*, Detroit 2006. For the location of Riegl's theory about ornament see the still valuable classic study of Ernst

H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order. A Study of the Psychology of Decorative Art*, London 1979.

[4] The English term for *Schmuck* is "decoration", as opposed to ornament, in the translation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* edited by Paul Guyer, Cambridge 2000, pp. 110–111. The standard translation by John Meredith (Oxford 1911) was "finery". The classic critical assessment of Kant's account of *parerga* is in Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture*, Paris 1978.

[5] Within the plethora of titles devoted to ornament in the last thirty years see, in particular for an "apologetic" approach and for a distinction between ornament and decoration, Brent C. Brolin, *Flight of Fancy. The Banishment and Return of Ornament*, New York 1985. – Jacques Soulillou, *Le decoratif*, Paris 1990. – Frank-Lothar Kroll, *Das Ornament in der Kunsttheorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Hildesheim 1987. – Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Princeton 1992. – Michael Snodin – Maurice Howard, *Ornament. A Social History since 1450*, New Haven and London 1996. – *L'envers du décor. Dimensions decorative dans l'art du XXe siècle* (exhib. cat.), Villeneuve d'Ascq 1998. – Massimo Carboni, *L'ornamentale tra arte e decorazione*, Milano 2000. – Markus Brüderlin – Ernst Beyeler (edd.), *Ornament and Abstraction*, Köln 2001. – Isabelle Frank – Freia Hartung, *Die Rhetorik des Ornaments*, München

2001. – James Trilling, *Ornament. A Modern Perspective*, Seattle – London 2003. – David Brett, *Rethinking Decoration. Pleasure and Ideology in the Visual Arts*, New York 2005. – Eva Di Stefano, *Estetiche dell'ornamento*, Milano 2006. – Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Philosophie de l'ornament*, Paris 2008. – Gianluca Tusini, *La pelle dell'ornamento. Dinamiche e dialettiche tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Bologna 2008. – Giuliana Altea, *Il fantasma del decorativo*, Milano 2012. – Vera Beyer – Christian Spies (edd.), *Ornament. Motiv, Modus, Bild*, München 2012.

6 This is the distinction suggested by Theodor Hetzer, according to which the "ornamental" is a "selbständiger Organismus". See *Das deutsche Element in der italienischen Malerei des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1929, reprinted in *Schriften Theodor Hetzers*, III, *Das Ornamentale und die Gestalt*, ed. by Gertrude Berthold, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 15–286.

7 Slavik V. Jablan, *Symmetry, Ornament and Modularity*, Singapore 2002, p. 292.

8 The role of the morphological analysis and comparisons resting on ornamental materials is clearly exemplified by the debate about the origins of and influences between Oriental and Western art, that at the beginning of the twentieth century opposed the "defenders" of pro-Hellenic or pro-classical positions to the vehemently polemical attacks against the alleged "Romzentrismus" of art-history orthodoxy of such scholars like Josef Strzygowski, aiming at demonstrating an oriental origin of European art. See, for some telling examples, the contentious essays by Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst*, Leipzig 1901. – *Kleinasien: Ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte*, Leipzig 1903. – Mschatta II: kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchung, *Jahrbuch der Preußischen Kunstsammlungen* 25, 1904, pp. 225–373. – *Die Stellung des Islam zum Geistigen Aufbau Europas*, Abo 1922. On the other side of the trench, see, among others, Dmitrii Ainalov, *Ellinisticheskie osnovy vizantiiskogo iskusstva*, St. Petersburg 1900 (English trans., *Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*, New Brunswick 1961).

9 The term "Kufesque" was coined by Georg C. Miles, Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18, 1964, pp. 1–32, esp. p. 20. For a full previous bibliography see the classical survey of Kurt Erdmann, Arabische Schriftzeichen als Ornamente in der abendländischen Kunst des Mittelalters, *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz* 9, 1953, pp. 467–513. For further references see *ultra*.

10 Except for few studies, little attention has been devoted to this specific aspect of the problem. See anyway Don Aanavi, Devotional Writing: Pseudo-Inscriptions in Islamic Art, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,* N.S. 26, 1968, pp. 353–358. – idem, *Islamic Pseudo Inscriptions* (Ph.D Thesis), Columbia University 1969. – Richard Ettinghausen, Kufesque in Byzantine Greece, the Latin West and the Muslim World, *A Colloquium in Memory of George Carpenter Miles (1905–1975)*, New York 1976, pp. 28–47. For a wider material perspective, see also, for example, Herwig Bartels, Kufic or pseudo-kufic as Anatolian border design, *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies* 3, 2, 1989, pp. 31–39. – Géza Fehérvári, *Ceramics of the Islam World*, London 2000. For an overall view on Arabic epigraphy, Richard Ettinghausen, Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation?, *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History. Studies in Honour of George C. Miles,* Beirut 1974, pp. 297–319.

11 On a general framing of the topic of pseudo-inscriptions in Renaissance art, see S. Denys T. Spittle, Cufic Lettering in Christian Art, *Archaeological Journal* 111, 1954, pp. 138–154. – Rafique A. Jairazbhoy, The Decorative Use of Arabic Lettering in the West, in: idem, *Oriental Influences in Western Art,* London 1965. – M. Barasch, Some Oriental Pseudo-inscriptions in Renaissance Art, *Visible Language* 23, 1989, pp. 171–187. – Hidemichi Tanaka, Arabism in 15th century Italian paintings, *Bijutsu Shigaku* 19, 1997, pp. 1–39. – Charles Burnett – Anna Contadini (edd.), *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, London 1999, in particular the essays of Maria Vittoria Fontana, *Byzantine Mediation of Epigraphic Characters of Islamic Derivation in the Wall Paintings of Some Churches in Southern Italy*, pp. 61–75, and Hugh Tait, *Venice: Heir to Classmakers of Islam or of Byzantium?*, pp. 77–104. See also Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza, Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300–1600*, Berkeley 2002, specially chapter 3, "Oriental Script in Italian Paintings", pp. 51–71. –

Alexander Nagel, Twenty-five notes on pseudoscript in Italian art, *Res* 59/60, 2011, pp. 228–248.

12 Grabar (note 5), p. 59.

13 On the aesthetic value and appreciation of exotic pseudo-scripts, see Meyer Schapiro, On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art, in: Krishna Bharatha Iyer (ed.), *Art and Thought. Issued in Honour of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*, London 1947, pp. 130–150. Some thirty years later, Stanley Ferber, Islamic Art and the Medieval West: the State of the Question, in: idem (ed.), *Islam and the Medieval West, Loan Exhibition at the University Art Gallery (April 6–May 4, 1975)*, New York 1975, pp. 67–74, wondered if "beyond the delight in exotic" pseudo-kufic forms could be "a magical sign language, obscure and occult" (p. 69). In the same anthology see also Oleg Grabar, Islamic Architecture and the West. Influences and Parallels, pp. 60–66.

14 See, for example, Anthony Cutler, Parallel Universes of Arab and Byzantine Art, in: Marianne Barrucand (ed.), *L'Egypte fatimide. Son art et son histoire*, Paris 1999, pp. 635–648. – idem, Visual Communities in Byzantium and Medieval Islam, in: Nicholas Howe (ed.), *Visions of Community in the Pre-modern World*, Notre Dame 2002, pp. 37–74.

15 Among others, see Miles (note 4), p. 27.

16 Alicia Walker, Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl, *The Art Bulletin* 90, 1, 2008, pp. 32–53. – eadem, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power. Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries*, Cambridge 2012.

17 Christopher S. Wood, *Forgery, Replica, Fiction. Temporalities of German Renaissance Art*, Chicago 2008, pp. 278–279.

18 Usually, pseudo-kufic or pseudo-script ornaments avoid visual configurations suggesting a representational or mimetic content, even if in other contexts the characters of script can be used to reach pictorial effects. In this case, anyway, the characters are only the "material" of depiction *qua* depiction, often independently of their semantic values, so we should distinguish cases in which material has a substantial semantic connection with the content of visual representation – as in the famous "Tale of a Mouse" of Lewis Carroll – from those ones in which such a connection lacks. On the specificity of the type of "visible visuality" see the illuminating essay by Richard Shusterman, Blindness to Textual Visuality, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41, 1, 1982, pp. 87–96. On the sensual dimension of Islamic script, in particular, see David J. Roxburgh, The eye is favored for seeing the writing's form. On the sensual and the sensuous in Islamic calligraphy, *Muqarnas* 25, 2008, pp. 275–298. For a recent more generic introduction to the topic of iconicity in writing forms see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, Iconicity of Script, *Word and Image* 27, 3, 2011, pp. 249–261. A theoretical discussion of the limits of iconicity in language is to be found in Ludovic de Cuypere, *Limiting the Iconic. From the Metatheoretical Foundations to the Creative Possibilities of Iconicity in Language*, Amsterdam – Philadelphia 2008.

19 As early as 1922 Archibald H. Christie proposed an evolutionary account of the genesis of ornament from Arabic calligraphy, according to which the pseudo-script is "the result of a succession of gradual changes, brought about by causes that came into operation as soon as craftsmen began to use Arabic inscriptions on their work". The central idea was that "in the process of variation, decorative qualities first appeared as something in the nature of by-products, and, in the perfection of these new found powers, the original information-giving purpose was lost". See Archibald H. Christie, The development of ornament from Arabic Script, *The Burlington Magazine* 40, 231, 1922, pp. 287–288, 291–292. Christie published also a second paper under the same title in *The Burlington Magazine* 41, 232, 1922, pp. 34, 37–38, 41.

20 Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, London 1856.

21 The term, then largely in use in archaeology, was coined at the end of nineteenth century by Henry Colley March just with regards to ornament. See his *The Meaning of Ornament, or its Archaeology and its Psychology*, Manchester 1890.

22 For a synthesis on the presence of the technique in Byzantine world, see the recent studies by Claudia Barsanti, Una nota sulla diffusione della scultura bizantina nelle regioni adriatiche italiane tra IX e XIII secolo, in: Charalambos Pennas – Catherine Vanderheyde (edd.), *La sculpture byzantine, VIIe-XIIIe siècle, Actes du colloque international (Athènes 2000)*, Athènes

2008, pp. 515–557. – Claudia Barsanti – Silvia Pedone, Una nota sulla scultura ad incrostazione e il templon della Panaghia Episcopi di Santorini, in: François Baratte et al. (edd.), *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Sodini (Travaux et Mémoire,15)*, Paris 2005, pp. 405–425. – Claudia Barsanti, La scultura mediobizantina fra tradizione e innovazione, in: Fabrizio Conca – Gianfranco Fiaccadori (edd.), *Bisanzio nell'età dei Macedoni. Forme della produzione letteraria e artistica, Atti della VIII giornata di studi bizantini (Milano, 15–16 marzo 2005)*, Milano 2007, pp. 5–49. On the diffusion in Italy, see Fabio Coden, *Corpus della scultura ad incrostazione di mastici*, Padova 2006. On the relations between champlevé sculptural technique and pseudo-kufic inscriptions, see Silvia Pedone, Le cornici champlevé negli esempi medio-bizantini del Katholikon di Hosios Loukas e di Dafnì, *Rolsa. Rivista on line di Storia dell'Arte* 5, 2006, pp. 17–49, and eadem, Visual effects and visual infection in Islamic and Byzantine champlevé sculpture, in: Anna Zakharova (ed.), *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art. II. Collection of Articles*, St. Petersburg 2012, pp. 73–77.

[23] In this sense, it is symptomatic the number of studies devoted in the nineteenth century to the "grammars" of ornament. See, for instance, in addition to the best known volume of Owen Jones, Jules Bourgoint, *Grammaire élémentaire de l'ornement*, Paris 1880, or Johann E. Jacobsthal, *Die Grammatik der Ornamente*, Berlin 1874.

[24] A break with the oriental fashion trends and a new stimulus toward a more scientific knowledge of Islamic art was the great exhibition held in Munich in 1910, organized by Friedrich Sarre and Hugo von Tschudi. On that exhibition see now Andrea Lermer – Avinoam Shalem (edd.), *After One Hundred Years: the 1910 Exhibition 'Meisterwerk muhammedanischer Kunst' Reconsidered*, Leiden 2010. On the islamicizing fashion, see Rémi Labrusse (ed.), *Islamophilies. L'Europe moderne et les arts de l'islam*, Paris 2011; Stephen Vernoit (ed.), *Discovering Islamic Art. Scholars, Collectors and Collections 1850–1950,* London – New York 2000. – Linda Komaroff (ed.), Exhibiting the Middle East. Collections and Perceptions of Islamic Art, *Ars Orientalis* 30, 2000, and *ultra*, note 28.

[25] For a classic discussion of colonial implications of a Eurocentric approach to oriental culture see Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978. See also Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, Ithaca 1991. – John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts*, Manchester 1995 and, more recently, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France. Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime*, Oxford 2008.

[26] Adrien de Longpérier, De l'emploi des caractères arabes. L'ornementation chez peuples chrétiens de l'occident, *Revue Archéologiques* 2, 2, 1846, pp. 696–706.

[27] Longpérier (note 26), p. 703.

[28] Among the major contributes to the scholarly study of Arabic script in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Jacob G. C. Adler, *Descriptio codicum quorundam cuficorum partes Corani*, Altona 1780; Antoine I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Chrestomanthie arabe*, Paris 1806; Ulrich Friedrich Kopp, *Bilder und Schriften der Vorzeit*, Mannheim 1819–1821; Joseph-Toussaint Reinaud, *Monuments arabes*, Paris 1828; Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, *Essai sur l'architecture des arabes et des mores*, Paris 1828; Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey, *Essai sur l'architecture des arabes et des mores*, Paris 1841. On the modern rediscovery of Islamic art, see geenerally Stephen Vernoit, Occidentalism: Islamic Art in the 19th Century, in: Id. (note 24); Doris Behrens-Abouseif – Stephen Vernoit (eds.), *Islamic Art in te 19th Century. Tradition, Innovation, and Eclecticism*, Leiden, Boston 2006 and supra, note 24.

[29] Adrien de Longpérier, Observations, *Revue Archéologiques* 3, 1, 1846, pp. 408–411, the quotation from p. 408. On the problem of eastern influences on French art, at the beginning of twentieth century, see Jean Ebersolt, *Orient et occident. Recherches sur les influences byzantines et orientales en France avant et pendant les Croisades*, Paris 1928. For a critical assessment, see Pedone (note 22) 2012.

[30] Longpérier (note 29), p. 409.

[31] The earliest example of use of pseudo-kufic elements on a monumental scale is that of the church of the Panagia at Hosios Loukas, where kufesque characters are abundantly present in the architectural decoration, in the famous fresco of Joshua, and in some fragments of the long champlevé cornice running on the exterior of eastern side. The latter, constituted of

broken fragments, presents three type of kufic motifs, from a close imitation of original Arabic lettering to a more radical stylization, isolating the visually most conspicuous segments, that is the vertical lines of the letters *lām* and *alef*. See Pedone (note 22) 2006, 2012.

[32] Some years later they published the first detailed study on the Monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phocis, in which they carefully recorded also the several pseudo-kufic forms of the internal and external decoration. Robert Weir Schultz – Sidney Howard Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris in Phocis*, London 1901 (see in part. pls. 11, 15, 28).

[33] The beautiful plates in china ink and watercolor, in part still unpublished, are held by the archive of the Byzantine Research Fund (BRF) of the British School of Athens. I thank Andrea Paribeni for having pointed out to me this fund.

[34] The watercolor drawing is dated "April 28, 1888". The caption reads: "Monastery of Daphne. Detail of wall lining to upper part of apse of bema. The string is […] with ornament incised and filled in white and black composition. The mosaic pattern and lining generally of coloured marbles".

[35] On some plates of Weir Schultz and Barnsley, see Eugenia Drakopoulou, British School at Athens research on Byzantine Attica, in: Michael Llewelyn Smith – Paschalis M. Kitromilides – Eleni Calligas (edd.), *Scholar, Travels, Archives: Greek History and Culture through the British School at Athens*, Athens 2009, pp. 145–151, and the recent work of Eleni-Anna Chlepa, *Τα Βυζαντινα μνημεια στη νεοτερη Ελλαδα. Ιδεολοια και των αποκαταστασεων, 1833–1939*, Αθήνα 2011. On the influence of the Greek-Byzantine fashion on the English artistic culture, see Mary Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: Exchanges Between Greece and Britain (1876–1930)*, M.Phil. Thesis, University of Birmingham 2010. The theme is topical, considered the title of a forthcoming London conference: *Byzantine Influences on Arts&Crafts Movement*, scheduled for the autumn 2013.

[36] On the use of pseudo-kufic in sculptured works, see the paper given by Sarah A. Taft at the Annual Byzantine Studies Conference in 1998: Pseudo-Kufic Decoration on Byzantine Sculpture, in *Annual Byzantine Studies Conference. Abstracts 24–27*, 1998, p. 19 (http://www.bsana.net/conference/archives/1998/abstracts_1998.html).

[37] Guillaume Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce, Deuxième album*, Paris 1928, pls. 111–112.

[38] I thank dr. Teresa Falcone for having drawn my attention on the only three occurrences of pseudo-kufic elements of big dimensions in the churches of Göreme (Karanlık kilise and Çariklı kilise) and Avçilar (Yusuf Koç kilise), datable around the half of eleventh century. See Teresa Falcone, *La Pittura ornamentale nella Cappadocia mediobizantina*, MA Thesis, Sapienza Università di Roma, a.a 2011/2012. It is noteworthy that also in Byzantine tradition pseudo-kufic ornaments are often represented in textiles and clothes. In Cappadocia we may cite the decoration of the veil of the Virgin and her maidservant in the fresco of the Qarabach Kilise (cfr. Jerphanion note 37) with the *Baptism of Christ*. On the Islamic element in the artworks of Cappadocia, see J. Eric Cooper – Micheal J. Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia*, New York 2012, esp. pp. 206–208.

[39] Andrè Grabar, Le succès des arts orientaux à la court byzantine sous les Macédoniens, in: André Grabar (ed.), *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquite et du Moyen Age*, Paris 1968, I, pp. 272–288. The debate on the presence of an Islamic community in Constantinople is still open, substantially based on several historical sources and few epigraphic and artistic evidences. See the well documented essay of Glaire D. Anderson, Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy in Constantinople, *Medieval Encounters* 15, 2009, pp. 86–113. Of major interest is also the study of Alicia Walker 2012 (note 16).

[40] The construction of the palace in a suburb of the city, along the shores of the Bosphoros, is recorded by Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia* (3, 142). According to his well known account, the ambassador John the Synkellos, returning from Baghdad and fascinated by the beauty of the Arab city persuaded the Byzantine emperor to build a palace in imitation of the Abbasid palaces. See Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire. 312–1453. Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs 1972, p. 160. The remains of the Bryas Palace were initially identified with those in the Maltepe area, near Küçükyalı, but further excavations and a better interpretation of the available sources have made possible to confirm the hypothesis, already suggest-

ed by Claudia Barsanti in 1977, that the remains are to be identified with the foundations of Satyros Monastery. See Claudia Barsanti, Le architetture "ad limitem" del Menologio di Basilio II (Cod. Vat. Greco 1613) e la miniatura con la commemorazione del patriarca Ignazio, *Commentari* 28, 1977, pp. 3–25. See also, more recently, Alessandra Ricci, Baghdad to Byzantium: the Bryas Palace, in: Leslie Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, Adershot 1998, pp. 131–149 (with full bibliography). – eadem, Palazzo o monastero, Islam o Occidente: il complesso mediobizantino a Küçükyalı (Istanbul), in: Rosa Fiorillo – Paolo Peduto (edd.), *III Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale*, Firenze 2003, pp. 515–519. – Hussein Keshani, The Abbasid Palace of Theophilus: Byzantine taste for the arts of Islam, *Al-Masaq* 16, 1, 2004, pp. 75–91.

41 Panayotis I. Vocotopoulos, The Role of Constantinopolitan Architecture during the Middle and Late Byzantine Period, *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten I/2, 31, 2, 1981, p. 551–573. – Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, Princeton 1999, p. 159.

42 Sharon E. Gerstel – Julie A. Lauffenburger, *A Lost Art Rediscovered: the Architectural Ceramics of Byzantium*, Baltimore 2001, p. 198.

43 As Alicia Walker has recently emphasized (note 16, 2012, p. XV), "it is impossible to contend that there exists a unified 'corpus' of exoticizing works of middle Byzantine art". For a wider analysis of the interaction of emulation and rivalry in the context of the relationships between Byzantine art and Islamic models during Macedonian age, in addiction to Walker's book (especially pp. 20–24), see also Ead. *Exotic Elements in Middle Byzatnine Secular Art and Aesthetics*. 843–1204. C. E., Ph. D. Thesis, Harvard University 2004. On the Islamic presence in Constantinople, see Koray Durak, Through an Eastern Window: Muslims in Constantinople and Constantinople in Early Islamic Sources, in *From Byzantium to Istanbul. 8000 Years of a Capital* (exh. cat.), Istanbul 2010. pp. 102–111.

44 On the pivotal role of sculptural decoration of Lips Monastery (in particular that of the Theotokos Church) within the context of islamicizing influences on Constantinopolitan art, see André Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVᵉ–Xᵉ siècle)*, Paris 1962, pp. 100–122, pls. 47–56. – Theodore Macridy, The Monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii) at Istanbul, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18, 1964, pp. 249–277. – Arthur H. S. Megaw, The Original Form of the Theotokos Church of Constantine Lips, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18, 1964, pp. 279–298. – Cyril Mango – Ernst J. W. Hawkins, Additional finds at Fenari Isa Camii, Istanbul, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 22, 1968, pp. 177–184. A more recent overall study on Constantine Lips complex is that of Vasileios Marinis, *The Monastery tou Libos. Architecture, Sculpture, and Liturgical Planning in Middle and Late Byzantine Constantinople* (Ph.D. Thesis), University of Illinois 2004.

45 Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen*, Berlin 1893.

46 Alison M. Frantz, Byzantine Illuminated Ornament. A Study in Chronology, *The Art Bulletin* 16, 1934, pp.43–76.

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