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Παρατηρήσεις στις μορφές των χορευτών στη σκηνή του εμπαιγμού του Χριστού στο Staro Nagoričino

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Notes on the Dancers in the Mocking of Christ at Staro
Nagoričino

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NOTES ON THE DANCERS IN THE MOCKING OF CHRIST AT STARO NAGORIČINO

In the wall-painting of the Mocking of Christ, in the church of St George at Staro Nagoričino (1316/7), the mockery involves dancing children, of which there is no mention in biblical accounts of the theme (Fig. 1)¹. The children appear bending sharply at the knee and raising both arms, from which trail long sleeves (Fig. 2).

As Svetozar Radojčić demonstrated, various elements of the imagery of the Staro Nagoričino Mocking were inspired by secular events, such as court ceremonies or public ridicule of defeated enemies². A number of representations of the Mocking of Christ depict Christ as a mock king, based on Hellenistic tradition³. In Byzantium, musical elements were a part of the customary punishment for criminals – punishments were carried out to the sound of trumpets and musicians made noise to torment criminals⁴. Thus the children here can be seen as a cruel parody of court entertainers

acclaiming an emperor⁵. One wonders, however, what their funny, exaggerated gestures and long flapping sleeves are intended to signify. This study examines paper is why the striking feature of the dancing children was included in the Staro Nagoričino Mocking, considering in particular the specific meanings of their appearance and costume.

Musicians and dancers had been introduced into representations of the Mocking of Christ by the late eleventh century⁶. Two examples are found in two Sinai icons dated to the eleventh-twelfth century. One is a panel for the month of February with scenes of the Passion of Christ on the reverse⁷. The other is a panel with five images of the Mother of God and scenes of the Miracles and Passion of Christ (Fig. 3)⁸. Though badly damaged, both scenes feature a kind of parody of Byzantine court ceremonies, depicting a dancer

¹ G. Millet and A. Frolov, *La peinture de moyen âge en Yougoslavie*, III, Paris 1962, pl. 88.2, 3; B. Todić, *Staro Nagoričino*, Beograd 1993, 110-13, figs 63-65. The event, also known as the Crowning with Thorns, is mentioned in Matthew 27:27-30, Mark 15:16-19, and John 19:2-3. I am grateful to Prof. Ch. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi who offered me generous advice, and to Prof. L. Mavrodinova for valuable references on this subject and the photograph of the Mocking scene in the Zemen Monastery. I would also like to thank Prof. S. Kalopissi-Verti and anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments.

² S. Radojčić, "Ruganje Hristu na fresci u Starom Nagoričinu", *Narodna Starina* 35 (1939), 15-32, repr. idem, *Uzori i dela starih srpskih umetnika*, Beograd 1975, 155-79, pl. 20. For the practice of public ridicule, see Ph. Koukoules, *Bvζαντινών βίος και πολιτισμός*, III, Athens 1949, 186, 203-4.

³ G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, Paris 1916, repr. 1960, 640. The framing of a criminal as a mock king with makeshift royal insignia was described by Philo of Alexandria, *In Flaccum*. See, *Philo* IX (trans. F. H. Colson), London 1941, repr. 1960, The Loeb Classical Library 363, 322-3 (VI:36-38).

⁴ A. Grabar, *La peinture religieuse en Bulgaire*, Paris 1928, 240, note 4; Koukoules, op.cit. (n. 2), III, 203. We see how Michael Anemas, after his plot against Alexios I failed, was tortured with scornful songs (Alexi-

ad, XII:5-6). See B. Leib (trans.), *Anne Comnène. Alexiade*, III, Paris 1945, 73.

⁵ A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris 1936, 66, note 2; idem, "Une pyxide en ivoire à Dumbarton Oaks. Quelques notes sur l'art profane pendant les derniers siècles de l'empire byzantin", *DOP* 14 (1960), 121-46, esp. 145.

⁶ The earliest known Byzantine image of the Mocking of Christ is found in the Georgian Typikon (Tbilisi, Cod. A-648, fol. 39r) of 1030. Christ appears as a reigning emperor clad in the chlamys with tablion. An arm band inspired by the *tirāz*, an Islamic badge of office, is attached to his right sleeve. Neither musicians nor dancers are depicted in the scene. See G. Alibegašvili, *Hudožestvennyj princip illjustrirvanija gruzinskoj knigi XI-načala XIII vekov*, Tbilisi 1973, 41-2, fig. 17.b.

⁷ G. and M. Sotiriou, *Eixónes τῆς Μονῆς Σινᾶ*, I-II, Athens 1956 and 1958, 123-5, pl. 145; K. Weitzmann, "Byzantine Miniature and Icon Painting in the Eleventh Century", *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination* (ed. H.L. Kessler), Chicago - London 1971, 296-301, fig. 300.

⁸ Sotiriou, *Eixónes* (n. 7), 125-28, pl. 146; Weitzmann, op.cit. (n. 7), fig. 302; A. Cutler and J.-M. Spieser, *Das mittelalterliche Byzanz: 725-1204*, Munich 1996, fig. 310; A. Weyl Carr, "Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople", *DOP* 56 (2002), 75-92, fig. 1.



Fig. 1. *Mocking of Christ. St George, Staro Nagoričino, 1316/17.*

wearing a full-length tunic with long sleeves beside the frontal Christ and a soldier kneeling before him. A drummer and a man blowing his horn at Christ appear in the latter panel.

In the Florence Gospels, Laur. VI.23, fol. 58r (Mat. 27:27-30), on the other hand, the Mocking is represented as a procession, which is juxtaposed to the procession to Calvary in the lower strip; Christ, led by a dancing youth, becomes a subject of spectacle⁹. This seem to convey a similar notion to that conveyed in the Way to Calvary, that is, Christ on the road to sacrifice is paralleled with the triumphal procession that follows God's triumph (Col. 2:15).

Much the same image occurs in a contemporary miniature in the Vatican Kings gr. 333, fol. 46r, which illustrates the dancing David leading the triumphal procession of the Ark

to Jerusalem (II Kings 6:14)¹⁰. This is especially interesting in relation to the interpretation of the old and the new sacrifices as symbolizing the expiation of sins stressed in the old covenant, which was fulfilled in the self-sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9:15). We may wonder whether a typological allusion between the Old Testament Ark and the sacrifice of Christ prompted the creation of an analogous dancing figure in the Florence Mocking. It should be noted that the dancers in these works share common elements: fitted long-sleeved costumes and dance poses with the right hand raised, the left stretched downward and the face turned slightly to the back. These elements are frequently encountered in representations of dancers in Middle Byzantine art¹¹.

In the extensive Passion cycle of the late thirteenth and the early fourteenth century, the course of events was elaborated to create a link with Holy Week Services, in which Christ's sufferings, and consequently hope for Resurrection, were particularly stressed¹². The pictorial emphasis of the Mocking of Christ directs the focus onto Christ's dignity under the humiliation; a large crowd is taunting him, gloating over his misfortune and making noise in mockery.

How conspicuous this intention was rendered is demonstrated by the presence of a musical ensemble as well as of soldiers in full armor. Helmeted soldiers are already present in the Mocking of Christ illustrated in the Cilician Armenian Gospels of ca. 1270, Erevan Mat. 7651, fol. 79¹³. According to Andreas and Judith Stylianou's study of Cypriot wall paintings, soldiers in full armor and fighting gear arrayed in the Betrayal of Christ allude to the Crusaders rather than to Roman soldiers and may reflect Byzantine animosity to the Crusades and Western hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean¹⁴. If the armed soldiers in the Betrayal were to hold such an allusion, the helmeted soldiers in the Mocking, in the Cilician Armenian Gospels, would too¹⁵. The scene shows a concern for more intricate treatment of narrative elements with the participation of musicians and a dancer,

⁹ T. Velmans, *Le Tétraévangile de la Laurentienne: Florence, Laur. VI.23*, Paris 1971, fig. 118. A similar dancing figure is seen on fol. 160r for Luke 22:63, in which Jews take Christ before Pilate (ibid., fig. 262). One difference is that the dancer's sleeves are not long enough to cover the hands.

¹⁰ J. Lassus, *L'illustration byzantine du Livre des Rois. Vaticanus Graecus 333*, Paris 1973, 72, fig. 86.

¹¹ A. Xyngoropoulos, "Σαλώμη (:)", *ΕΕΒΣ* 12 (1936), 269-77; Koukoules, op.cit. (n. 2), V, Athens 1952, 232, 238.

¹² Todić, *Staro Nagoričino* (n. 1), 111; idem, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Beograd 1999, 130-8.

¹³ T. F. Mathews and A. K. Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel Iconography. The*

Tradition of the Glajor Gospels, Washington, D.C. 1990, 113, fig. 172c.

¹⁴ A. and J. Stylianou, "The Militarization of the Betrayal and its Examples in the Painted Churches of Cyprus", *Ευφρόσυνον. Αφιέρωμα στον Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, II, Athens 1992, 570-81; A. Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy. Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant*, Cambridge 1996, 59-60.

¹⁵ Armed soldiers also appear in the Mocking scenes of other Cilician Armenian Gospels of the thirteenth century, such as Walters 539, fol. 195 (Mathews and Sanjian, op.cit. (n. 13), fig. 172b) and Freer 32.18, p. 319 (S. Der Nersessian, *Armenian Manuscripts in the Freer Gallery of Art*, Washington, D.C. 1963, 36, fig. 125).

incorporating aspects of Byzantine, Western and Islamic art. The standing Christ, exposed to public display, relies on Byzantine iconography, but is nevertheless rendered as a sorrowful Christ with his head bowed, which suggests Western influence. In the foreground, a female dancer performs an acrobatic dance; this baladine-like appearance is Western¹⁶, while turbaned musicians squat on the ground in oriental fashion.

The emphasis on soldiers is also observed in the Mocking of Christ in churches such as the Panagia Perivleptos at Ochrid, 1294/5 and St Nicholas at Prilep, 1299. In spite of its position in a rather narrow space above the arch, the Ochrid Mocking is crowded by helmeted soldiers, suggestive of the tense atmosphere before an execution¹⁷. Musicians are placed among the soldiers; two horn-blowers herald the public ridicule, and others play cymbals, a flute and a long drum (*dauli*), which were popular instruments in the Balkans¹⁸. What is interesting about this scene is that no dancer joins in the ridicule of Christ. The preference for images of armed soldiers over dancers is observed in two other Mocking scenes in the region of Macedonia.

Soldiers are aggressively involved in Christ's torment in the Mocking in St Nicholas at Prilep¹⁹. Christ is encircled by armed soldiers, some of them wearing helmets that extend down the back of the neck²⁰. Christ is attired in a sumptuous purple mantle with a golden tablion, but his bare feet identify him as a false king. The soldier on the left is raising his hand, as if to strike Christ, while two other soldiers, one on either side of Christ, are insulting Christ by blowing horns close to his ears. A similar figure blowing a horn at Christ already existed in the twelfth-century Sinai Mocking (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2. Detail of Fig. 1.

The motif can also be observed in the mid-thirteenth century Tuscan version of the Mocking of Christ²¹.

Compared with the late thirteenth-century versions of the Mocking scenes, the number of armed soldiers decreases in St Nicholas Orphanos at Thessaloniki, ca.1310-20, which is presumably an endowment of King Milutin²². While soldiers appearing before and after the Mocking scene are in full armor, just two soldiers, who are kneeling ceremoniously before Christ, are depicted wearing armor, but without helmets. A particularly interesting detail is the musicians: two men are blowing *buisines* (Medieval trumpets) instead of horns, and a drummer is wearing a pleated skirt that is probably of Western derivation. This may reflect the painter's in-

¹⁶ T. Seebass, *Musikdarstellung und Psalterillustration im früheren Mittelalter. Studien ausgehend von einer Ikonologie der Handschrift Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Fonds Latin 1118*, Bern 1973, 161-4, pls 101, 111, 127.

¹⁷ P. Miljković-Peppek, *Deloto na zografite Mihailo i Eutihij*, Skopje 1967, 48, sch. II. I would like to thank Mrs. D. Bardzieva for kindly providing me with the photograph of the Ochrid Mocking.

¹⁸ R. Pejović, "The Mocking of Christ and Other Scenes from the Cycle of the Sufferings of Christ as Illustrated by Musical Instruments in Southern European Art", *New Sound*, II, Beograd 1993, II, 71-93. Big drums (*dauli*) were one kind of traditional instrument also played on the battlefield. See Ph. Anogianakis, *Ελληνικά λαϊκά μουσικά όργανα*, Athens 1976, 130.

¹⁹ Millet et Frolow, op.cit. (n. 1), III, pl. 24.2. P. Kostovska, "Programata na živopisot na crkvata Cv. Nikola bo Varoš kaj Prilep i neizinata phinkcija kako grobna kapela", *Zbornik Srednovekovna Umetnost 3*

(Skopje 2001), 50-77, esp. 67. I am grateful to Mrs N. Radošević for kindly sending me this article.

²⁰ This type of a helmet is not common in Late Byzantine art. Nevertheless, a similar helmet can be found in the Metropolis at Mystras. See M. Chatzidakis, *Mystras. The Medieval City and the Castle*, Athens 1983, fig. 20 (Soldier from a scene of the martyrdom of St Nestor); A. Babuin, "Later Byzantine Arms and Armour", *A Companion to Medieval Arms and Armour* (ed. D. Nicolle), Woodbridge, Suffolk 2002, 97-104, fig. IX-11.

²¹ Derbes, op.cit. (n. 14), 96, fig. 56.

²² A. Tsitouridou, *Ο ζωγραφικός διάκοσμος του Αγίου Νικολάου Ορφανού στη Θεσσαλονίκη. Συμβολή στη μελέτη της παλαιολόγειας ζωγραφικής κατά τον πρώιμο 14ο αιώνα*, Thessaloniki 1986, 121-2, figs 39, 40. For the discussion about the founder, see S. Kissas, "Srpski srednovekovni spomenici u Solunu", *Zograf 11* (1980), 29-43.

terest in contemporary habits, in which Western manners were often adopted²³. Indeed, specific details taken from Western fashion frequently appear in late thirteenth-century art²⁴.

The church of St George at Staro Nagoričino was built by the Serbian King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282-1321) in 1312/3, after the victory of the Serbian army, which was sent to help the Byzantines against the Turks in Asia Minor. Its interior was decorated by the Thessalonikan painters, Michael and Eutychios in 1316/7. The Mocking of Christ is placed on the north wall of the naos and is framed by a red strip (Fig. 1). The painters created a sense of space by placing numerous characters in various positions across a basically flat surface. A high wall of the praetorium is set in the background, behind which the tops of cypress trees are visible.

The representation of the Mocking at Staro Nagoričino is highly dramatic: synthesizing the silence of Christ, the vigorously portrayed crowd, resounding musical instruments, gestures and costumes. Christ, who is emphasized by his height, stands at the centre of the scene, facing the viewer. His tranquil figure puts the viewer in mind of the suffering servant who shuts his mouth (Isa. 53:7), referred to during Holy Week Services, while his shabby half-sleeved tunic and the musical mockery seem to be a visual explanation of Psalm 68:11-13, sung during the Ninth Hour on Holy Friday: "I put on sackcloth for my covering; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate talked against me, and they that drank wine sang against me"²⁵.

Most remarkable is the difference from other works in that armed soldiers are absent; instead children, in a parody of soldiers kneeling before the king, have been placed in the foreground (Fig. 2). Not only is the scene much enhanced by the presence of these children, but their theatrical postures contrast effectively with the serenity of Christ²⁶.

The question now needs to be asked why the dancers here are depicted as children. S. Radojčić supposes that the inclusion of children is inspired either by mime perfor-



Fig. 3. Mocking of Christ. Icon with scenes of the miracles and Passion of Christ, St. Catherine, Sinai, twelfth century.

mances, which had replaced antic comedies, or by religious theater like that of the West. He remarks that in the Passion play at Dubrovnik under Venetian protection, the role of masked Jews was performed by children, while the main actors in religious performances at Florence were also children²⁷. Serbia and Dubrovnik maintained close diplomatic and cultural contacts in the fourteenth century²⁸. Neverthe-

²³ M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images. Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th Centuries)*, Leiden - Boston 2003, 235, n. 57.

²⁴ For example, the donor's wife, Dessislava, in the church of Sts Nicholas and Panteleimon at Boyana (A. Grabar, *L'église de Boïana*, Sofia 1924, 2nd ed. 1978, pl. I) and the Samaritan woman in the Perivleptos at Ochrid (Parani, op.cit., pl. 239) are portrayed in a Western-style mantle secured by crossed strings.

²⁵ E. Mercenier, *La prière des Églises de rite byzantin, II: Les fêtes*, Cheve-

togne 1962, 206.

²⁶ H. Maguire, "The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature", *DOP* 53 (1999), 189-205, esp. 205, n. 85.

²⁷ Radojčić, op.cit. (n. 2), 174-5.

²⁸ B. Krekić, "La Serbie entre Byzance et l'Occident au XIVe siècle", *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies* (ed. J. M. Hussey et al.), Oxford 1967, 62-5; P. Marjanović, "The Theatre", *The History of Serbian Culture* (ed. P. Ivić), Middlesex 1999, 255.

less, the influence of medieval religious plays in the iconography of the Staro Nagoričino Mocking requires further discussion²⁹.

The following interpretation proposed by Anne Derbes might interest us. Referring to the Old Testament prototype of the suffering Christ, Job, Derbes argues that the musical intrusion by the children may allude to the torment of Job³⁰. Job, for instance, curses in response to his friend, Zophar: “They remain as an unfailing flock, and their children play before them, taking up the psaltery and harp; and they rejoice at the voice of a song” (Job 21:11-12)³¹. Similar musical intrusion is described in Job 30:1-9: “But now the youngest have laughed me to scorn, now they reprove me in their turn ... But now I am their music, and they have me for a byword”.

Whether the children at Staro Nagoričino are to be understood as having a negative connotation of the wicked may depend upon how they look. In his “Ο χορός παρά Βυζαντινοῖς”, Phaëdon Koukoules argues that dancing with a swinging handkerchief indicates mockery³². Could the flapping long sleeves of the children, which create a sense of movement and flow, have such an implication (Fig. 2)? The image of dancing children with floppy sleeves, which to Eastern eyes evoke the characteristic aspect of dancers in

the East, seems to be the key to the specific meaning of the children.

The major symbolic feature is the tight-fitting long-sleeved clothing, which reminds us of that worn by nomadic peoples in the Eurasian Steppes, where cultural interactions along the trade routes linking northern China, Central Asia and the Black Sea shores occasionally resulted in similar customs and artistic tastes³³. Even though long-sleeved garments are well known in the art of ancient Persia from the earliest times³⁴, there is so far no pictorial evidence that they were used as a costume of dancing figures.

In ancient China, on the other hand, the long-sleeved dress was considered characteristic of dancers. A Chinese philosopher, Han Fei (d. 233 BC), tells of this custom by citing a contemporary proverb: “If you have long sleeves, you’ll be good at dancing”³⁵. Already in earlier known representations of dancers, on bronze vessels of the Eastern Zhou period (771-221 BC), these figures wear robes with tight-fitting long sleeves and antler-like headgear which suggests an influence from the nomadic North. The dancers on a bronze ladle (*yi*) of the late sixth to the mid-fifth century BC, in the collection of the Seattle Art Museum, display such characteristics (Fig. 4)³⁶.

²⁹ W. Puchner’s article entitled “Το βυζαντινό Θέατρο”, *EKEE* 11 (1981-1982), 169-274, offers extensive references regarding the controversy of whether theatrical performance developed in Byzantium. See also, idem, “Acting in the Byzantine Theatre: Evidence and Problems”, *Greek and Roman Actors. Aspects of an Ancient Profession* (ed. P. Easterling and E. Hall), Cambridge 2002, 304-24.

³⁰ Derbes, op.cit. (n. 14), 105-7. Asserting that music had a specific role connoting mocking in the Old Testament, James Marrow argues that trumpeters appear frequently as agents of ridicule in the Passion scenes of both Byzantium and northern Europe in the thirteenth century and later. J. H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. A Study on the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative*, Kontrijk 1979, 153-4.

³¹ A Commentary on Job by Olympiodoros, Vat. gr. 1231, of the thirteenth century, has the illustration to Job 21:11-12 on fol. 285v (PG 93, col. 225B), in which two musicians appear, but no dancers. See P. Huber, *Hiob-Dulder oder Rebell? Byzantinische Miniaturen zum Buch Hiob in Patmos, Rom, Venedig, Sinai, Jerusalem und Athos*, Düsseldorf 1986, 206-7, fig. 159.

³² Koukoules, op.cit. (n. 2), III, 202; I. Kollias, “Η διατόμηση του Χριστού στο ζωγραφικό διάκοσμο του Αγίου Νικολάου στα Τριάντα”, *Ευφρόσυνον. Αφιέρωμα στο Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, I, Athens 1991, 243-61, esp. 249-50. For criticism of Koukoules’s study on dance, see E. Antzaka-Vei, “«Ο χορός παρά Βυζαντινοίς» του Φ. Κουκουλέ. Κριτικές παρατηρήσεις”, *Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες* 91 (2004), 72-7. I am grateful to Mrs S. Tambaki for calling my attention to this periodical.

³³ Long-sleeved garments were in fact excavated from ancient tombs at Pazyryk in the Altai Mountains of southern Siberia together with fifth-

fourth century BC materials. Some of them are of Persian and Chinese origin. See S. I. Rudenko, *Frozen Tombs of Siberia. The Pazyryk Burials of Iron Age Horsemen* (trans. M. W. Thompson), Berkeley - Los Angeles 1970, 83-9.

³⁴ Concealing the left hand inside long sleeves, for instance, had long been a mark of respect in ancient Persia (Xenophon, *Cyropédie*, III, trans. E. Delebecque, Paris 1978, 110-11 [VIII 3, 9-10]). The earlier image is found on the so-called Darius krater (c. 350 BC). See, Sh. A. Shahbazi, “Studies in Sasanian Prosopography”, *AMI* 16 (1983), 255-68, Abb. 2. The Sasanians and the Parthians absorbed this manner into their court ritual. Examples are seen on Sasanian rock reliefs of the third and fourth centuries at Naqsch-e Rostam (R. Ghirshman, *Iran: Parthes et Sassanides*, Paris 1962, pl. 218; Shahbazi, op.cit., 262-3, pls 25, 26), as well as at Bishapur (Ghirshman, op.cit., pl. 196), and on bone plaques from Olbia in the northern Black Sea region, dating to the first-second century AD (ibid., pls 351, 352).

³⁵ Han Fei, *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings* (trans. B. Watson), New York - London 1964, 114 (Book 49: The Five Vermin).

³⁶ M. Sullivan, “Pictorial Art and the Attitude Toward Nature in Ancient China”, *ArtB* 36 (1954), 1-19, fig. 6; C. Weber, *Chinese Pictorial Bronze Vessels of the Late Chou Period*, Ascona 1968, 49-70, fig. 21c. The pictorial bronze vessels of that time show a wide range of subjects taken from ritualistic life in the culturally-hybrid upper class of northern China. The image of long-sleeved dancers is also represented in other materials. See, for example, a brocade body shroud with dancers and animal pattern of the fourth-third century BC from tomb 1 of Mashan in Hubei (*The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology. Celebrated Discoveries*

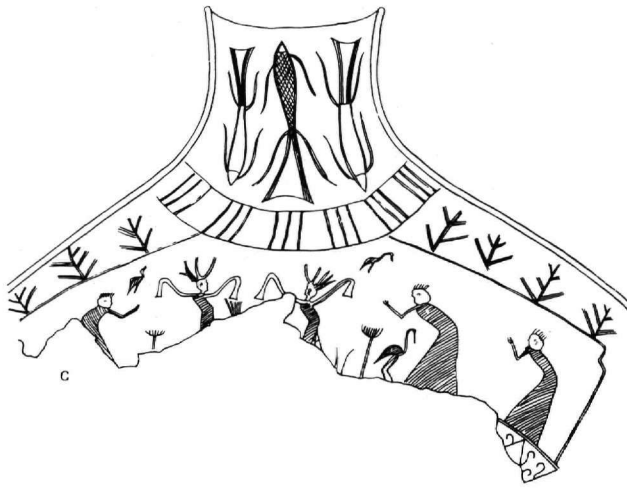


Fig. 4. Ceremonial scene. Drawing of bronze ladle, Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, late sixth - mid-fifth c. BC.

The dancer with long sleeves or scarves was a favourite subject in the art of succeeding periods. What is interesting is that dancers of Iranian origin, brought to China from Central Asia, were also depicted swinging long sleeves, as seen in the feasting scenes on stone relief panels of the Eastern Han period (AD 25-220): dancers appear wearing knee-length belted tunics with long narrow sleeves, trousers and Phrygian caps with diadems ending in long ribbons flowing in the wind³⁷. Later, the carved panels of a Sogdian funerary couch, which was made when nomadic kingdoms flourished in the

North, around the sixth century, portray two dancers dressed in girded short tunics with long fitted sleeves and trousers, which reflect the contemporary fashion of Central Asia³⁸.

We see a number of works with court attendants, entertainers either Chinese or non-Chinese, costumed in long narrow-sleeved dresses in the art of the Sui-Tang period (AD 581-907). An excellent example are the dancers in Chinese popular performance scenes depicted on flipping bows in the Shoso-in at Nara, of the eighth century, which show a vibrant mixture of cultures, manners and customs (Fig. 5)³⁹. The long-sleeved costume was adopted in the representation of Tibetan dancers produced in Dunhuang in western China under Tibetan occupation (AD 781-848)⁴⁰.

This motif came to be known in the art of the Near East around the tenth century. A dancer depicted on a slip-painted ceramic bowl from Nishapur in eastern Iran, that is, Khurasan, is one such example (Fig. 6)⁴¹. It is important to recall that the Byzantine Empire was confronted by the Seljuqs in the eleventh century. By this time, Turkish tribes from areas surrounding China had moved into Central Asia (where the Islamization of Iranian-speaking peoples had progressed), and continued their expansion westward, pressing Byzantium's eastern frontiers⁴². Byzantium had from early in its history been in constant conflict with its nomadic neighbors. Further, continuous warfare as well as diplomatic contact with the Islamized Turks, that is the Seljuqs, resulted in a strong presence of the Turkish people in Byzantine territory⁴³. In addition, Turkish mercenaries and military corps settled in Byzantium in the service of the

from *The People's Republic of China at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.* (ed. Xiaoneng Yang), Washington, D.C. 1999, 323-8, cat. no. 112b).

³⁷ T. Sugihara, "Images of Hu in Mural Paintings in Han Dynasty (in Japanese)", *Bulletin of the Graduate Division of Letters, Arts and Science of Waseda University*, Tokyo 1988, 219-35; *Zhongguo hua xiang shi quan ji* (Chinese Stone Relief Series), III, Jinan 2000, fig. 8.

³⁸ The Institute of Archaeology of Shaanxi, "Excavation of the An Jia's Tomb of the Northern Zhou in Xi'an", *Wenwu* (2001/1), 4-26, figs 20, 22; B. I. Marshak, "Central Asia from the Third to the Seventh Century", *Nomads, Traders and Holy Men Along China's Silk Road. Papers Presented at a Symposium Held at The Asia Society in New York, November 9-10, 2001* (ed. A. L. Juliano and J. A. Lerner), Turnhout 2002, 11-22.

³⁹ Traditional Chinese performances, which meant acrobatics, juggling, dance and the like, were also popular in Japan at that time. See, *Treasures of the Shoso-in. The Middle Section* (ed. Shoso-in Office), Tokyo 1988, XXXII, nos 104, 105.

⁴⁰ R. Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia. The Stein Collection in the British Museum, I: Paintings from Dunhuang I*, Tokyo 1982, 313-4, pl. 20.1-2. For the influence of Chinese fashion on Tibetan costumes, see H. Kar-

may, "Tibetan Costume, Seventh to Eleventh Centuries", *Essais sur l'art du Tibet* (ed. A. Macdonald and Y. Imaeda), Paris 1977, 64-81.

⁴¹ *Kunstschatze aus Iran*, exhibition catalogue, Zürich 1962, cat. no. 505, pl. 74. E. Grube, "Realism or Formalism. Notes on Some Fatimid Lustre-Painted Ceramic Vessels", *Studies in Islamic Painting*, London 1995, 25-44, esp. 29, fig. 9. I am deeply grateful to Mrs S. Frigerio-Zeniou, who took a picture of this bowl from the catalogue, which was not available to me.

⁴² M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204. A Political History*, London 1984, 15-26; D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, Cambridge 1990, chs 11-13. Of great value for the study of the history of Central Asia is by R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia from Antiquity to the Turkish Expansion*, Princeton 1996.

⁴³ The series of conflicts are recorded by the emperor Maurice's historiographer Theophylact Simocattes (*Theophylacti Simocatae Historiae*, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig 1887, repr. with corr. P. Wirth, Stuttgart 1972), as well as by the later Byzantine chronicler Theophanes (*The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History, A.D. 284-813*, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, Oxford 1997). For the issue of Byzantium's knowledge of its oriental neighbours, see A. G. C. Savvides, "Η γνώση των Βυζαντινών για τον τουρκόφωνο κόσμο της



Fig. 5. Traditional Chinese popular performances. Ink painting on the surface of a bow, Shoso-in, Nara, eighth century.

Byzantine armies from the period following the Byzantine disaster at Manzikert in 1071⁴⁴. It is in this period that the long-sleeved dancer emerged in Byzantine art.

Though archaeological evidence has demonstrated that long narrow sleeved-garments were worn in the sphere of Byzantine influence already in the six-seventh century, the representation of such clothing only became popular from the eleventh century onward⁴⁵. Byzantine artists portrayed in long narrow-sleeved clothing not only dancers, but also subordinate characters in narrative scenes, for example, a youth covering his nose in the Raising of Lazarus and court attendants before an emperor. An earlier representation of this fashion occurs in the scene of the Sacrifice of Abraham, painted ca. 1050 in St Sophia at Ochrid, where a boy beside an ass is depicted wearing a short tunic and hiding his left hand inside long-fitting sleeves, reminiscent of Iranian manners⁴⁶. Around that time, one of the earliest images of dancers with long narrow sleeves appears in the scene of David and Musicians in the Vatican Psalter of 1059, Vat. gr. 752, fol. 3r⁴⁷. The long-sleeved dancer also featured in works with both sacred and secular subjects of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries in particular⁴⁸. A bone casket in the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows a dancing youth swinging long sleeves next to a turbaned oriental-style warrior with baggy trousers – this combination must bespeak the Byzantines' taste for fun⁴⁹. For example, an eleventh-century bone cas-

Ασίας, των Βαλκανίων και της Κεντρικής Ευρώπης μέσα απο την ονοματοδοσία", *Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium "Communication in Byzantium"* (ed. N. Moschonas), Athens 1993, 711-27.

⁴⁴ A. G. C. Savvides, "Late Byzantine and Western historiographers on Turkish Mercenaries in Greek and Latin Armies: the Turcoples / Turkopouloi", *The Making of Byzantine History. Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on His Seventieth Birthday* (eds R. Beaton and Ch. Roueché), London 1993, 122-36.

⁴⁵ The silk-trimmed woollen caftans found in graves at Antinoe have long narrow sleeves and both textiles are thought to be made in Iran. See A. Geijer, "A Silk from Antinoë and the Sasanian Textile Art: Apropos a Recent Discovery", *Orientalia Suecana* XII (1963), 3-36; M. Martiniani-Reber, *Lyon, Musée historique des tissus. Soieries sassanides, coptes et byzantines Ve-XIe siècles*, exhibition catalogue, Paris 1986, 54-6, cat. nos 22, 23.

⁴⁶ V.J. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien*, Munich 1976, fig. 5.

⁴⁷ E. De Wald, *The Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint, III, Psalms and Odes. Part 2: Vaticanus Graecus 752*, Princeton 1942, 4.

⁴⁸ Xyngopoulos, op.cit. (n. 11); V. P. Darkevič, *Svetskoe iskusstvo Vizantij*, Moscow 1975; T. Steppan, "Tanzdarstellungen der mittel- und spätbyzantinischen Kunst. Ursache, Entwicklung und Aussage eines Bildmotivs", *CahArch* 45 (1997), 141-68.

⁴⁹ A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskul-*

ket in the Metropolitan Museum of Art represents a dancer swinging long sleeves next to a turbaned oriental-style warrior with baggy trousers – this combination provides exotic tone.

The motif of the dancer with long sleeves or scarves was prevalent both in the Byzantine and the Islamic worlds as a subject of pleasure. A variety of artifacts of the Fatimid period (909-1074) as well as of the Seljuq period of Iran (1038-1194) depict dancers in this manner⁵⁰. So, too, Byzantine metal objects intended for gifts to allied rulers, Christian and Muslim, were frequently adorned with enchanting subjects – fantastic creatures and feasting scenes with dancers swinging long sleeves – imagery preferred beyond the boundary of faith⁵¹.

At the same time, it should not go unnoticed that outlandish headgear and costumes were often used to depict pagan deities or infidels in Byzantine tradition⁵². For example, a tight-fitting cap taken from Western fashion is used as multi-valent headgear worn not only by laborers and musicians, but also by persecutors of Christ, such as Pilate or the Roman executioner⁵³. This could also be the case for the long narrow-sleeved costume. When the long-sleeved dancers come into the Mocking iconography, artists might have infused them with the negative implication of eastern infidels.

Interestingly, we encounter a further indication of the negative aspect of this costume in the art of Spanish Christians, in the *Beatus* manuscripts. The Last Judgement in the Urgell-*Beatus* of the last quarter of the tenth century, Museu Diocesà de La Seu d'Urgell, Num. Inv. 501, fols 184v, 185r, as well as in the Facundus-*Beatus* of 1047, Madrid, Bibl. Nac., Vit. 14-2, fols 250v, 251r, represents the con-



Fig. 6. Slip-painted ceramic bowl with a dancer. Iran, Nishapur, Teheran Foroughi Collection, tenth century.

demned in Hell wearing long narrow-sleeved tunics, which could be the sign of infidels, that is Muslims⁵⁴.

Turning our attention to the children in the Staro Nago-ričino Mocking, it should be said first of all that the imagery of children in Late Byzantine art was more than just a motif to amuse the eyes. Children are frequently included in crowds, witnessing the manifestation of the divinity of Christ, such as

pturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts, I, Berlin 1930, repr. 1979, 27-8, no. 12e; A. Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes", *JWalt* 42/43 (1984/85), 32-47, fig. 23.

⁵⁰ For the imagery of this sort in Islamic art, see *A Survey of Persian Art. From Prehistoric Times to the Present* (eds A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman), X, London 1939, repr. Tokyo 1964, pl. 603. Grube, op.cit. (n. 41), pls 1-3, 10.

⁵¹ S. Redford, "How Islamic is it? The Innsbruck Plate and its Setting", *Muqarnas* 7 (1990), 119-35. Also see T. Steppan's entry for the Innsbruck plate in *Byzantine Hours. Byzantium. An Oecumenical Empire*, exhibition catalogue, Athens 2002, cat. no. 141, 262-68.

⁵² Kono K., "The Personifications of the Jordan and the Sea. Their Function in the Baptism in Byzantine Art", *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα*, Thessaloniki 2002, 161-212, esp. 170-2. The same subjects that form part of courtly cycles were adapted to decorate Byzantine ceramics. See, H. Maguire, "The Feasting Cycle and the Meanings of Hybrids in Byzantine Ceramics", *7ο Διεθνές Συνέδριο Μεσαιωνικής*

Κεραμικής της Μεσογείου, Πρακτικά (ed. Ch. Bakirtzis), Athens 2003, 205-10.

⁵³ A. Grabar, "Un reflet du monde latin dans une peinture balkanique du 13e siècle", *Byz* 1 (1924), 229-43. For the image of persecutors of Christ, see the Roman soldier in the Betrayal of Christ painted in Panagia Chrysaphitissa (1290) in Laconia (E. Albani, "Byzantinische Freskomalerei in der Kirche Panagia Chrysaphitissa", *JÖB* 38 (1988), 363-88, fig. 18) and Pilate in the scene of Christ before Pilate in the church of Holy Apostles (1300) at Peć (V. Djurić et al., *Pećka Patrijaršija*, Beograd 1990, fig. 74). This sort of cap also has negative connotations in the Passion scenes of the West. See, R. Mellinkoff, *Outcasts. Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, I-II, Berkeley - Los Angeles 1993, 60-4.

⁵⁴ J. Williams, *The Illustrated Beatus. A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse*, III, London 1998, figs 82, 83 (the Urgell-*Beatus*), figs 323, 333 (the Facundus-*Beatus*).

the Baptism and the Entry to Jerusalem. Even though children at times tended to be comic characters, in part through posture and movement, they are not always depicted as innocent onlookers. Children, at a particular time, became wicked, as seen in the figure of a boy annoying the legs of an ass in the Entry to Jerusalem, in the Omorphi Ecclesia in Attica, dated to the second half of the thirteenth century⁵⁵. Moreover, in the Passion cycles children appear to be depicted with specific features, such as tight-fitting caps or turbans, which create an impression of pagan identification⁵⁶.

In these respects, it is tempting to suggest that the children positioned at the feet of Christ at Staro Nagoričino are not depicted merely to enliven the scene as genre, but serve as eastern others who cannot discern the Redeemer. Their dress of oriental flavour and their jocular gestures were

especially suited for expression of the evil character of the children.

It was during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that Mongol dominance heightened the movement of armies, people, and ideas across Eurasia. Of great importance for Byzantium was that Turkish tribes of western Asia were forced to move into Asia Minor⁵⁷. By the early fourteenth century the Ottomans advanced into western Asia Minor, while the Black Sea regions were taken over by the Mongols. Under these circumstances, eastern elements might have come to be treated more consciously in art. Aside from this speculation, the fact remains that the motif of children with ridiculous gestures and floppy sleeves was frequent in depictions of the Mocking in the Balkans after Staro Nagoričino⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ A. Βασιλάκη-Καρακατσάνη, *Οι τοιχογραφίες τῆς Ὁμορφῆς Ἐκκλησιᾶς στὴν Ἀθήνα*, Athens 1971, 42-4, pls 25, 26.

⁵⁶ This detail is observed especially in the works of Michael and Euty-chios. For instance, a turban is worn by a boy spreading the cloak in the Entry of Jerusalem at Staro Nagoričino (Millet and Frolow, op.cit. (n. 1), III, pl. 82.2) and a boy servant in the Wedding at Cana in St Nikitas at Čučer wears a tight-fitting cap (ibid., III, pl. 38).

⁵⁷ The Mongols accelerated their expansion westward by absorbing Turkish tribes into their military and internal administration. For a general history of the Mongols, see D. Morgan, *The Mongols*, Oxford 1986.

⁵⁸ Long-sleeved dancers are depicted in the Mocking of Christ in the following churches: Athos, Hilandar Monastery, Katholikon, 1318-21 (G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos, I: Les peintures*, Paris 1927, pl. 73.2. The Mocking scene was overpainted in 1804); Čučer, St Nikitas, ca.1320 (R. Hamann-Mac Lean and H. Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei*

in Serbien und Makedonien vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert, Giessen 1963, fig. 223. The Mocking scene was overpainted in 1483/84); Zemen Monastery, St John the Theologian, second half of the fourteenth century (L. Mavrodinova, *Zemenskata Crkva*, Sofia 1980, 78, 80, figs 53, 54, 56); Ivanovo, Crkvata, mid-fourteenth century (M. Bičev, *Stenopisite v Ivanovo*, Sofia 1965, pl. 39); Markov Monastery, St Dimitrios, 1388-89 (G. Millet and T. Velmans, *La peinture de moyen âge en Yougoslavie*, IV, Paris 1969, pls 95.173, 98.178).

Sources of photographs

Fig. 1: after *New History of World Art 6* (ed. E. Takahashi), Tokyo 1997. Fig. 3: after *Cutler und Spieser* (see n. 8). Fig. 4: after *Weber* (see n. 36). Fig. 5: after *Treasure of Shoso-in* (see n. 39). Fig. 6: after *Kunstschätze aus Iran* (see n. 41).

ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΙΣ ΜΟΡΦΕΣ ΤΩΝ ΧΟΡΕΥΤΩΝ
ΣΤΗ ΣΚΗΝΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΜΠΑΙΓΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ
ΣΤΟ STARO NAGORIČINO

Η σκηνή του Εμπαιγμού του Χριστού, που εικονίζεται στο ναό του Αγίου Γεωργίου στο Staro Nagoričino, περιλαμβάνει και μορφές παιδιών που χορεύουν. Τα παιδιά εικονίζονται με έντονα λυγισμένα γόνατα και με υψωμένα τα χέρια, από τα οποία κρέμονται οι μακριές χειρίδες του ενδύματός τους. Δεν έχει ακόμη ερμηνευθεί πλήρως αν αυτό το εντυπωσιακό χαρακτηριστικό των παιδιών μπορεί να θεωρηθεί απλώς ως εμπνευσμένο από την εθιμοτυπία της αυλής ή από τη διαπόμπηση ηττημένων εχθρών.

Όπως συμβαίνει στις παραστάσεις του θέματος κατά τον ύστερο 13ο και τον πρώιμο 14ο αιώνα, ο Εμπαιγμός στο Staro Nagoričino δίδει έμφαση στο μαρτύριο του Χριστού και κατά συνέπεια στην αξιοπρέπεια του εν μέσω των χλευασμών. Από αυτή την άποψη, η θεατρική στάση των παιδιών έρχεται σε εντυπωσιακή αντίθεση προς τη γαλήνια μορφή του Χριστού. Ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζουν οι μακριές και στενές χειρίδες που κρέμονται και που στα μάτια ενός ανθρώπου της Ανατολής παραπέμπουν στη χαρακτηριστική εμφάνιση χορευτών από την Ανατολή.

Μία έρευνα στις εικονογραφικές πηγές του μοτίβου του χορευτή με μακριά και στενά μανίκια αποκαλύπτει ότι πρώιμα παραδείγματα εντοπίζονται στην τέχνη της αρχαίας Κίνας από τα τέλη του βου έως τα μέσα του 5ου αιώνα π.Χ., αν και ενδύματα με στενές και μακριές χειρίδες εμφανίζονται στην τέχνη της Εγγύς Ανατολής καθώς και στους λαούς της στέπας ήδη από τους πρώιμους χρόνους. Έως τα μέσα του 11ου αιώνα αυτή η συγκεκριμένη ενδυμασία είχε γίνει γνωστή στη βυζαντινή τέχνη ως στολή δευτερευόντων προσώπων, καθώς και

χορευτών. Χορευτές με χειριδωτά ενδύματα εμφανίζονται και στη σκηνή του Εμπαιγμού του Χριστού τον ύστερο 11ο αιώνα. Είναι η εποχή που εξισλαμισθέντα τουρκικά φύλα από την Κεντρική Ασία ασκούν πίεση στα σύνορα του Βυζαντίου στη Μικρά Ασία.

Αν και ο χορευτής με μακριά μανίκια ήταν από τα αγαπητά θέματα διασκέδασης τόσο στο βυζαντινό, όσο και στον ισλαμικό κόσμο, η αρνητική σημασία του ενδύματος με τις στενές μακριές χειρίδες –οι ξενόφερτες αυτές στολές χρησιμοποιούνταν συχνά στη βυζαντινή τέχνη κατά την απεικόνιση απίστων– δεν πρέπει να αγνοηθεί. Επιπλέον, σε υστεροβυζαντινές παραστάσεις του Πάθους παιδιά εμφανίζονται σε ορισμένες περιπτώσεις να εικονίζονται μάλλον ως μοχθηροί παρά ως αθώοι θεατές.

Τον πρώιμο 14ο αιώνα η μογγολική επέλαση οδήγησε στη μετακίνηση των τουρκικών φύλων προς τα δυτικά, αποτέλεσμα της οποίας ήταν η οθωμανική προέλαση στη Μικρά Ασία. Κάτω από αυτές τις συνθήκες τα ανατολικά στοιχεία ίσως έτυχαν περισσότερο συνειδητής αποδοχής. Από αυτή την άποψη είναι ελκυστική η υπόθεση ότι η απεικόνιση των παιδιών που χορεύουν στα πόδια του Χριστού στην παράσταση του Staro Nagoričino δεν αποσκοπεί απλώς να ζωντανέψει τη σκηνή με στοιχεία της καθημερινής ζωής, αλλά και να στιγματίσει τους απίστευτους από την Ανατολή, που δεν είναι σε θέση να αναγνωρίσουν τον Σωτήρα. Επιπλέον ο πονηρός χαρακτήρας των παιδιών εξαιρείται με τις ανατολικής έμπνευσης μακριές και στενές χειρίδες των ενδυμάτων τους, καθώς και με τις αστείες χειρονομίες τους.