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Χάλκινες εικόνες έκτυπης διακόσμησης μεσοβυζαντινής και υστεροβυζαντινής περιόδου

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COPPER REPOUSSÉ ICONS OF MIDDLE AND LATER BYZANTINE TIMES

A group of icons made of thin sheets of copper alloy or bronze worked in repoussé is presented here. Despite their fragmentary state, the various purposes to which they were put can be suggested, often as imitations of precious icons known from contemporary writings. Their modest monetary worth can be deduced from references to them in literary sources. Such pieces were most likely found in the upper class milieu, where they would have served as icons for private prayer, decoration of modest churches and chapels and donations or bequests given to monasteries.

Keywords
Middle-Byzantine period, Late-Byzantine period, metalwork, copper-alloy repoussé icons, repoussé technique.

Byzantine art is best known to the public through icons and mosaics, which are both dependent on gold for much of their visual effect. In publications, it is usually the images of such precious materials which are featured, as seen to advantage on the recent covers of both Gesta and The Art Bulletin. Of course there was, as medievalists know, a body of Byzantine art which was much less costly: the realm of base metal objects. And included in this is a surprising number of icons. It is a subset of these which this article considers, part of a much larger study of base metal icons which is ongoing.

It will never be possible to know the full extent of metal icon creation. Metals were and are too useful as materials for other purposes to have allowed many metal icons to survive. Precious metals can be melted down, or set into other purposes to have allowed many metal icons to survive. Precious metals can be melted down, or set into precious revetment, not mentioning other, all-metal images of either bronze or copper. A. Weyl Carr, “Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art,” Gesta 45/2 (2006), 189-198, at 193-194. Other Byzantine bronze objects have been more recently studied; see B. Pitarakis, Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze, Paris 2006, for a study of a single type of object, or R. Bork (ed.), De re metallica, The Uses of Metal in the Middle Ages, Aldershot 2005, for a recent discussion of medieval metal objects in general.

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2 Even now, bronze and copper icons remain relatively ignored; Pentcheva gives a definition of an icon as “a portable portrait of Christ, the Virgin, and saints with scenes from their lives on wood panels or precious surfaces such as ivory, metal, enamel, mosaic and steatite.” See B. V. Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon,” ArtB 88/4 (2006), 631-55, at 631; Weyl Carr speaks at length of the materiality of painted surfaces and precious revetment, not mentioning other, all-metal images of either bronze or copper. A. Weyl Carr, “Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art,” Gesta 45/2 (2006), 189-198, at 193-194. Other Byzantine bronze objects have been more recently studied; see B. Pitarakis, Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze, Paris 2006, for a study of a single type of object, or R. Bork (ed.), De re metallica, The Uses of Metal in the Middle Ages, Aldershot 2005, for a recent discussion of medieval metal objects in general.

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The copy of Rodin’s Thinker, one of seven bronze pieces stolen from the Singer Laren Museum near Amsterdam, was recovered damaged; this, along with the fact that only bronzes (and none of the iron artworks nearby) were taken suggests that they might have been after the bronzes for their value as metal.” Rodin Thinker Recovered,” in ‘Arts, Briefly,’ The New York Times (January 20, 2007), A16. Our local paper reported the stealing of gravesite urns for their copper; A. Aisner, “Metal Thieves Target Graves; Incidents Soar along with the Price of Copper,” The Ann Arbor News (July 22, 2007), A1, A6. And on October 8, 2007 WXYZ radio of Detroit discussed the disabling of fire hydrants to harvest a small amount of brass, rendering them inoperable. Similar losses and recycling of metal objects appear to have happened in Byzantine times: the crushing and rolling-up of so much of the 6th-century silver Sion treasure seems to have been in preparation for the melting pot. See S. A. Boyd, “A ‘Metropolitan’ Treasure from a Church in the Provinces: An Introduction to the Study of the Sion Treasure,” in S. A. Boyd – M. Mundell Mango (eds), Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth Century Byzantium, Washington, D.C. 2006, 5-37. It has been posited that the gold table wares from the early Byzantine era had long been turned into coins by late Byzantine times; see V. H. Elbern’s introductory essay to the metalwork section of Brussels, Musées royaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Splendeur de Byzance (Exhibition catalogue), Brussels 1982, 128-130, at 128. On the Crusaders’ depredateion, see sections 648-655 in N. Choniates, O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates (transl. H. J. Magoulias), Detroit 1984, 357-362.

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4 “Έτος του τισίον αλουμίνιο ή Αρχετοποιήσεως τον εικάστου εικονογράφον. Αποκαλύπτονται οι ιστορικοί και γεωργιακοί συλλογοι Ευσταθίων Βούλας; οι επιστάμενοι θα παρατίθενται ως μοίρασμα της επιστήμης,” in I. Vrponas – I. Hutter (eds), DOP 11 (1957), 263-277 at 268.


6 This process has hardly changed; the materials found as part of a metalworking studio exhibited in the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki is almost identical to that of the metalworking studio of Eastern Michigan University where I teach. I thank my friend and colleague in metalworking, Dr. Gretchen Otto, for her help in understanding these materials and techniques.
figures or designs, including interior contour lines. Often heads, knees, etc. will be pushed out into the pitch from behind. The plaque is then removed from the bowl and thoroughly cleaned. It is next annealed, or subjected to heat, to render it more malleable. The piece is then worked both from the back, pushing out other parts of the design, and from the front. Front working involves chasing (pushing the metal around), and engraving (scratching lines in the front). Inscriptions are usually made by the latter technique. While most pieces are worked entirely by hand, some repetitive elements, such as borders or details of costume, may have been made with the use of punches or molds (Figs 2-4), more commonly seen in pieces displaying a less elegant style. Sometimes copper images are

7 This may well be the case in the Metropolitan Museum pieces’ borders and the arcade in the Munich donor and Deesis plaque; details of costume probably created with punches are see in the Deesis and the Gabriel plaques. The Jaharis temple will be published by S. T. Brooks; a preliminary discussion can be found in S. T. Brooks, “Sculpting the Triumphant Cross: The Byzantine Templon and an

Unpublished Cycle of Precious-metal Icons at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” Thirty-Fourth Byzantine Studies Conference, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey (October 2008), Abstracts, 54. I thank Helen Evans for alerting me to these icons and Christine Verzár for detailed photos. Many thanks to Sarah Brooks for sharing information about them with me. My most heartfelt thanks to Dr.

3 This technique has been in use since early times through the present day; information on ancient techniques may be found in W. A. Oddy, “The Gilding of Roman Silver Plate,” in F. Baratte (ed.), Argenterie romaine et byzantine, Paris 1988, 9-26. Other manufacturing techniques for crafting bronze as well as silver and gold have been used together, and it is sometimes hard to differentiate among techniques used. On this issue in earlier eras, see M. Y. Treister, Hammering Techniques in Greek and Roman Jewellery and Toreutics, (Colloquia Pontica 8), Leiden 2001, 320, 326. In discussing the precious images, Pentcheva asserts that there were more relief icons than painted ones in middle Byzantine times; see Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon,” op. cit. (n. 2), 631, 636. 9 In discussing the precious images, Pentcheva asserts that there were more relief icons than painted ones in middle Byzantine times; see Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon,” op. cit. (n. 2), 631, 636. 10 C. Stiegemann (ed.), Byzanz, Das Licht aus dem Osten (Exhibition catalogue), Mainz 2001, 134-135, cat. no. I.38. 11 See below for a discussion of these. The Hermitage plaque is illustrated and discussed in T. Yashaeva – E. Denisova – N. Ginkul – V. Zalesskaya – D. Zhuravlev, Nasledie vizantikijskogo Hercena / The Legacy of Byzantine Cherson, Sevastopol – Austin 2011, 491, cat. no. 135. The publication by Bank lists this icon as having been discovered in a tomb in Cherson; see A. Bank, L’Art byzantin dans les musées de l’Union Soviétique, Leningrad 1977, 311, fig. 209.

Fig. 4. Part of a templon beam with donor Alexander Torma- chos and the Archangel Uriel (from a Deesis) under an arcade, copper repoussé, Asia Minor (?), 11th -12th century; Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 2913.
Pantocrator can be found in collections in Munich and in Cherson; roundels of saints are also occasionally found. Almost all of these have single figures, or pairs of figures belonging together, such as the Virgin and Child, or saints as pairs like the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael on the Jaharis beam in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 5). Rarest are narrative illustrations; a plaque of the Anastasis in the Hermitage and some of the pieces from the Jaharis beam in New York are the few with such scenes, usually depicting some of the great feasts.

Some of these pieces were originally gilded, such as the famous Hodegetria (Virgin as the Indicator of the Way) from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. One, depicting St. Nicholas, is said to have been tin-plated, rendering it a silver-like appearance (Fig. 6). One 10th-century image from Asia Minor depicting the Archangel Michael had gems inserted in the drapery; this appears rarely to have been done, probably due to the extreme thinness of the plaques.

Most of these repoussé pieces have individual frames around the images. Some have simple beaded or meander borders, like those found on the sides of the London plaque. More elaborate frames are occasionally seen: a 13th-century icon of St. George from the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, has an extensive foliate border. The Malcove pieces are framed, like several others,

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12 The Pantocrators are published in Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 127-128, cat. no. 1.32, and Yashaeva et al. op.cit. (n. 11), 198-199 and 490-491, cat. nos. 133, 134. A roundel of St. John can be found in W. F. Volbach, Mittelalterliche Bildwerke aus Italien und Byzanz, Berlin 1930, 148 and pl. 9, cat. no. 6592.

13 The Hermitage plaque can be seen in Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 204, cat. no. 140. On the Jaharis plaques, see Brooks, “Sculpting the Triumphant Cross,” op.cit. (n. 7).

14 See above, n. 5.

15 Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 131-132, cat. no. 1.36.

16 See T. Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 496, cat. no. 141. Dumbarton Oaks photograph acc. no. 94-000179 erroneously lists this icon as Archangel Gabriel, dated to the 10th century and housed in the Ukraine Museum of History and Archaeology, no. 5505.

17 O. Okrutzou – A. Lazaridou (eds), Από τη Χριστιανική Συλλογή στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο (1884-1930), Athens 2006, 251, cat. no. 346.
laos is framed by inscriptions contained within meanders, the only one preserved with such a frame. Some icons are framed with borders which imitate gem incrustation, discussed further below. Several pieces have come down to us without frames, either deliberately fashioned so, or damaged at the edges. And some, such as the Munich archangel Uriel from the 12th century, are surrounded by a large flange, presumably to help with mounting.

With jewels, plating, and frames imitating gems, the repoussé pieces evidence a clear relation to precious metal images. Ross suggested that these copper alloy pieces and many cast bronze icons were created as cheap copies of precious metal icons, or copies of famous icons from Constantinople or loca sancta. Recently Pentcheva has proposed a copper relief roundel as the famous Christ Chalkites image itself. Certainly, the repoussé ones echo elements of the few precious pieces remaining from the same general period. The technique for their manufacture is the same. Often, the layout and decorative motifs are close. The wide frame of the 12th-century Hermitage Enthroned Christ (Fig. 7) echoes the frame of the well-known 11th-century standing St. Michael in Venice. Similarities include the geometric fields utilizing both cross- and X-shaped patterns, alternating with panels of figural design. Particularly striking is the inclusion of standing saints and bust-length images. The St. Nicholas plaque from Munich is bordered with square and ovoid gem forms surrounding an inner frame of palmettes (Fig. 6). Other icons have frames and halos which contain raised rounded forms, cited as imitations of pearls. Several have pearl-like beads flanked by small chevrons, like the St. John roundel in Berlin and a pearl border framed by meanders is seen at

with a design of arches which can be understood as a stylized egg and dart band. The Dumbarton Oaks St. Hermo-

Fig. 7. Plaque with the Enthroned Christ, copper repoussé, Byzantine, 12th-13th century; St. Petersburg, The Hermitage. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum.

18 The inscription is transcribed and discussed in Boyd, “Ex-Voto Therapy,” op.cit. (n. 5), 17-18. 19 These include the Chersonese St. Michael (see above, n. 16) and a fragmentary image of St. Paul from Kiev, State Sofievsky Monuments Museum, unnumbered photograph at Dumbarton Oaks. This latter piece, with just the head of the saint and a double-lined inscription, may date to the 11th century. 20 Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 128-129, cat. no. 1.33. 21 Ross wrote this opinion in his introduction, “Byzantine Bronzes,” in Council of Europe (ed.), Byzantine Art, A European Art (Exhibition catalogue), Athens 1964, 439-443, at 442. A similar imitation of more expensive media decorating sanctuary screens can be seen in the case of ceramic icons; see C. Mango, The Brazen House, Copenhagen 1959, 108-142. 22 Not only are basic processes of repoussé similar, objects of bronze and silver are gilded in much the same way. See Oddy, op.cit. (n. 8), 9-26. Certain techniques, however, are either rare or impossible to copy: one unique piece is a very large Pantocrator in enamel on copper instead of on gold. The enamel process requires too high a heat to work on copper with its solder, thus the rarity of this unusual piece. It is reproduced in Exposition internationale d’art byzantin (Exhibition catalogue), Paris 1931, 148, pl. XX, cat. no. 509. The insertion of gems is another rare technique; see above, note 16. 23 Recently Pentcheva has proposed a copper relief roundel as the famous Christ Chalkites image itself. 24 Certain techniques, however, are either rare or impossible to copy: one unique piece is a very large Pantocrator in enamel on copper instead of on gold. The enamel process requires too high a heat to work on copper with its solder, thus the rarity of this unusual piece. It is reproduced in Exposition internationale d’art byzantin (Exhibition catalogue), Paris 1931, 148, pl. XX, cat. no. 509. The insertion of gems is another rare technique; see above, note 16. 25 The vegetal forms on the Venice icon find elaboration in the later metalwork plaques such as the Athen St. George.
the top of the Hodegetria from London. 25 The Christ in
the Hermitage on a plaque with a half-round top not only
displays the pearl border; it clearly reflects coin types: par
alleles are found in gold histamenoi of the 11th and early
12th centuries, such as those of Alexios I Comnenus.26
The Munich roundel with the Pantocrator as a bust-length
figure also recalls contemporary coins.27
Like precious metal pieces, the repoussé icons functioned
in a variety of ways. Some were almost certainly indepen
dent pieces, backed with wood for stability like the modern
elements on sale in liturgical supplies stores in Thessaloniki today. They would have been used in many
of the contexts a panel piece might have with the major
constraint being that of size: the largest single icon is
32x23 cm. These individual pieces have integral frames
and the edges are partially preserved, showing that noth
ing extended beyond them. Holes for attachment interrupt
the frame, which would have been left whole if a flange had
protruded beyond. Examples of this type are both Her
mitage plaques and the Athens St. George. Serving as vo
tive plaques, both in petition and in thanks, they would
have been offered to a holy figure, perhaps in his or her
chapel or church, or attached to such a saint’s icon or
stand. Study of modern Orthodox practice suggests that
larger metal images are often attached to walls, columns,
or the iconostasis, while smaller ones might be suspended
on an individual icon or its stand, but nothing can be truly
ascertained as to the location of such individual pieces.28
Others of this repoussé group were undoubtedly part
of an icon beam atop a templon. This is borne out by the
copper icons and decorative sections on loan from the Ja
haris collection, currently at the Metropolitan Museum
(Fig. 5). These pieces, attributed to the 10th or 11th centu
ry, covered both the front of the beam, and are about 28
cm. in height, as well as the bottom of the beam, where the
sections measure about 15 cm. in height. Both sets of sec
tions were surrounded by a flange, which would have
helped with mounting these pieces to a wood structure.
Several plaques with the Deesis and archangels in Mu
nich probably also come from such an icon beam. And the
plaques with arched tops in Geneva, Poughkeepsie and
Toronto (Fig. 3) which are roughly the same size and dis
play similar border ornament also might have formed part
of the same ensemble, decorating a templon beam. 29
The partial piece with a donor and archangel Uriel under an
arcade is the right size and shape to have also served as
ecladding of a templon beam (Fig. 4). Others which might
be seen as functioning in a similar way are the gilded
Hodegetria from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which
has a large, decorative frame on the top and a minimal
frame on the side, perhaps an indication that it was placed
next to another in a series. The Archangel Uriel in Mu
nich, with a very wide flange around the border, was also
probably meant to be attached to a templon or piece of
liturgical furniture in a sequence with the other
archangels. The Dumbarton Oaks plaque also exhibits a
flange beyond its border, indicating that it may have been
affixed next to another one of similar technique and relat
ed content – in this case, a second healing saint. It, too,
may have been part of a templon.30 The use of copper in
this role of decorating the chancel barrier undoubtedly
echoes the role of precious cladding; copper images would
have shared the glitter and shine of more expensive metal
surfaces, especially in lamp- and candelit church interi
ors.31 Such precious covering of templon screens is pre
served in fragments, and described in contemporary writ
ings. Enamel icons are known to have decorated some
templon beams in Constantinople, such as a lost one at the
The seven uppermost enamels of the Pala d'Oro in Venice are generally accepted as having come from a templon screen. Another mid-Byzantine description of a plated templon beam is found in the 9th-century description of the Nea Ekklesia, where the templon, along with the syntronon and other features, are described as being of “silver that is gilded all over.” Further, plaques of metal, precious or bronze – gilded or tinned, perhaps – may have embellished doors on the templon, as well.

Additional bronze plaques were found on larger doors, namely those opening onto the sanctuary. Doors ornamented with bronze plaques in repoussé are known from the Athonite monastery of the Great Lavra; a bronze fragment made in Constantinople in 1070 for the Roman church of St. Paul Outside the Walls shows the use of this humber metal to decorate doors in another technique.

Again, these may have been imitating the precious metal sheathing of architectonic features. Descriptions of silver-covered doors with gold inlay depicting scenes are preserved in literary accounts from the same period. One such is mentioned in the Typikon of Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Convent of the Mother of God Kecharitomene in Constantinople from the early 12th century. The silver doors of the sanctuary there are said to be “completely [covered with] gold inlay [depicting] the Annunciation,” along with “The doorposts of the holy doors of silver completely [covered with] gold inlay depicting Christ and the Mother of God...” The copper alloy repoussé plaques may be imitating earlier cast bronze doors, another use of a less expensive medium and technique imitating a more costly one.

Along with the silver plating of doors, similar covering of other architectural features such as walls, dividers and columns can be found in various building descriptions, like the early account of Justinian’s Hagia Sophia by Paul the Silentiary, and the description of a church in the mid-Byzantine Vita Basilii. Photius’ aforementioned text is included, along with descriptions of walls and pavements covered in silver, mention of a ciborium over the altar, which echoes an early 7th-century description of a similar one at the church of Hagios Demetrios, Thessaloniki.

32 The seven uppermost enamels of the Pala d’Oro in Venice are generally accepted as having come from a templon screen at the Pantocrator monastery; these are discussed in A. W. Epstein, “The Middle Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier: Tempion or Iconostasis?” Journal of the British Archaeological Association 134 (1981), 1-28, at 5. The second church is described in the Vita Basilii; See Vita Basilii Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati Nomine Fertur Liber Quo Vita Basilii Imperators Amplectitur (ed. i. Ševčenko) (CFHB 42), 2011, 87.


34 Vita Basilii, op.cit. (n. 32), 275, section 84. This text goes on to describe another church with an altar screen covered in silver; see ibid., 285, section 87.

35 Bouras, op. cit. (n. 7), 229-250. The engraved piece cited is published in J. Durand et al. (eds), Byzance, L’art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises (Exhibition catalogue), Paris 1992, cat. nos 238, 323. Another bronze plaque thought to be from a door is a circular piece with the numbed bust of a saint in a border of acanthus scrolls, no. 1941.57 in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Slightly convex, this appears thick enough to have been cast. See http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1941.57/collection_search_views_fultext=&created_date_op=%3Acreated_date_between_start=&between_end=&field_d_artist=&page=1&field_classification_text%3AMetalwork&f1=object_on_view%3A1 (accessed 25 June 2013).


37 The Lavra doors include cast elements; Bouras implies that this indicates an attempt to imitate fully cast bronze doors. See Bouras, op.cit. (n. 7), 37. On Byzantine bronze doors in general, see G. Matthiae, Le porte bronze Bizantine in Italia, Rome 1971. A discussion of the imitations of precious materials in lesser expensive ones and the hierarchy of metals can be found in A. Cutler, “Art in Byzantine Society: Motive Forces of Byzantine Patronage,” JOB 31/2 (1981), 759-787 [reprinted in Imagery and Ideology in Byzantine Art (Varioirum Collected Studies Series, Great Yarmouth Norfolk 1992, XI)].

38 G. Forsyth – K. Weitzmann, The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian, Ann Arbor, MI 1973, pl. XLVI. I thank Sharon Gerstel for alerting me to this plaque, and Rob Nelson for sending me pictures of it.

39 See above, n. 33 and 34. On Hagia Sophia, see Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire, op.cit. (n. 33), 80-91.

40 Ibid., 129.
The bronze fragments interpreted as an 11th-century ciborium from Constantinople, today in Munich (Fig. 8), allow us to see how closely the bronze repoussé sheathing echoes that of precious metal. Silver cladding of an altar and perhaps other liturgical furniture has been found as part of the Sion treasure from Lycia. While this material comes from the 6th century, a small rectangular plaque depicting the visit of the Magi and dated to the 8th-9th century is just the size to have decorated such a piece of liturgical furniture; it, along with the revetment of furniture discussed in later writings, offers evidence of the continued use of such decoration. Part of an engraved inscription in Latin attributed to the 9th-10th century offers a bronze parallel to the silver altar cladding, albeit from the west; its shape indicates its possible use as the edge of an altar table or the framing of a door.

Another obvious set of precious-metal objects which might suggest themselves as comparisons are the metal revetments of icons. Such revetments are usually silver or silver-gilt. They, too, are produced by the repoussé technique; by covering much of the icon, they largely produce the impression of a precious metal icon. Most of these, however, are from the 14th century, and, while they add three-dimensionality and a glittering surface to an icon, they are too late to serve as models for the icons under consideration. These revetments, however, are linked to our icons in a different way. Like other metalwork items such as reliquaries and book covers, they often include small icon-like inserts showing individual saints, complete with inscriptions; these squares, rectangles and roundels occasionally depict narrative scenes from the life of Christ. A similar use of small inserted images or scenes reminiscent of our more diminutive icons may be found on silver book covers, especially those made in Georgia and on reliquaries. Some of the smaller repoussé icons, such as the Magi plaque is pictured in Volbach, op.cit. (n. 12), 153, pl. 5, cat. no. 1007. A silver table is described in a description of the Chrysotriklinos in the writings of Theophanes Continuatus (first half of the 9th century), found in Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire, op.cit. (n. 33), 208.


For an example, see Y. Piatnitsky et al. (eds), Sinai, Byzantium, Russia, Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century, London 43
the St. Nicholas in Munich (Fig. 6), have even been suggested as originally forming part of the elaborate frames of enamel icons. Precious metals, either as decorative coverings or as the materials out of which icons are fashioned, were clearly used for a number of purposes and in a variety of contexts and were thus open to imitation in less expensive materials.

Bronze icons imitate more than just precious metal images. They are closely related to carved and painted icons in a variety of forms, as well as to other works. Due to the far better survival of these in later times, comparanda are not hard to find. The repoussé pieces share many characteristics with these in terms of iconography, composition and style, as well as function. The composition of the Jaharis icon beam is a case in point. The copper beam has scenes and figures set under double and triple-arched arcades (Figs. 2, 4, 5). The arched setting is similar that has scenes and figures set under double and triple-arched arcades (Fig. 5). The arched setting is similar to that in other media; the ornamental sections at the end of the Jaharis icon beam relate closely to marble slabs in Athens and New York. And a similar vocabulary of decorative forms fills the underside of a carved marble altarpiece in Sebaste. The repoussé works clearly partake of the standard vocabulary of forms as well as terms of layout and style, numerous parallels in other media may be invoked. The figure of St. Cosmas (Fig. 8) from the bronze ciborium discussed above can be compared to the figure of John Chrysostom painted on the interior lid of a staurotheke from 10th-century Constantinople: proportions of face and body as well as drapery patterns show many similarities. The Dumbarton Oaks Hermitage also finds parallels in paint, seen in a saint from a monologion icon for August from Sinai, dated to around 1200. The stance, shape of head and beard, and folds of drapery are close despite the difference in material.

Three-dimensional media show even closer affinities. The St. George standing under an arch (11th-12th century) from Munich finds similarities in proportion, posture, and placement of inscription in a pair of 12th-century stone reliefs in the Hermitage. The large scale of the enthroned Christ in the Hermitage half-round plaque echoes a number of images in ivory, cameo and steatite from the 10th through the 12th century. The facial types in the bronzes often echo those in ivory carving; scholars often date the metal pieces, in fact, by comparing them to the better-studied ivories. Closeness in face and draperies can be seen when comparing the Dumbarton Oaks Hermolao and figures in the Vatican ivory triptych dated to the 10th-11th century; especially close is the figure of St. Paul in the lower register. Not only are the figurative pieces related to those in other media; the ornamental sections at the end of the Jaharis icon beam relate closely to marble plaques carved to screen spaces between columns in churches. The diamond-shaped field filled with a roundel and the round floral or vegetal ornaments filling the corners find parallels in several of these mid-Byzantine parapet slabs in Athens and New York. And a similar vocabulary of decorative forms fills the underside of a carved marble altar screen in Sebaste. The repoussé works clearly partake of the standard vocabulary of forms as well as

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48 N. Asutay makes this assertion this for this tinned icon in her entry in Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 132. A comparison cited is a gold/enamel ensemble depicted in Bank, op.cit. (n. 11), fig. 192. Similar usage has also been asserted in the case of a similarly-sized silver-gilt icon repoussé image of the Virgin in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. The same may be posited for the Andrew plaque in Recklinghausen (see above, n. 10).

49 Similar to the patterned arches of the Jaharis set is the monochromatic decoration in two of the Sinai beams; see R. S. Nelson – K. M. Collins (eds), Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai (Exhibition catalogue), Los Angeles 2006, 170-173, cat. no. 20, and 174-177, cat. no. 21; a beam with burnished arches is published in Evans – Wixom (eds), op.cit. (n. 26), 337 and 339, cat. no. 248.

50 Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 130, cat. no. 1.34 and Evans – Wixom, op.cit. (n. 26), 76-77, cat. no. 35.

51 Nelson – Collins (eds), op.cit. (n. 49), 196-99, detail on 198, cat. no. 31.

52 Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 11), 130-131, cat. no. 1.35, and Bank, op.cit. (n. 11), figs 247, 248, described on 318.

53 Evans – Wixom (eds), op.cit. (n. 26), cat. nos 104, 129, 135 and 139, for example.

54 Ibid., 131-132, cat. no. 79.

55 The parapet slabs are published in Gkratziou – Lazaridou (eds),
inscription language of their time. They seem to come from a variety of places, as the stylistic variation and relationship to comparanda indicate; some pieces are associated historically with certain places like the London Hodegetria may be with Torcello, and several icons with Cherson and its region. Copper repoussé should thus be seen as an international medium option among the high- and more popular style of artistic productions in the middle and later eras of the Byzantine empire.

Despite all the references to precious materials in their appearance and the occasional gilding preserved, the modest monetary worth of these icons can be deduced from references to them in literary sources such as monastic foundation documents. These various documents mention bronze icons as part of the listings of wills, bequests to monastic establishments, and monastery inventories. They are often listed among the other icons, separated by the presence or absence of adornment or decoration. This epithet, which often refers to a frame or revetment, seems to have been one of the deciding factors in monetary worth, the other being size. Bronze icons are often listed last, even after icons painted on wood. Bronze objects of other types, such as tools and kitchen or table utensils, are also listed toward the bottom of such groupings, indicating the lower monetary value and status of this more humble material. And some icons show a lower level of craftsmanship one might expect in a less precious material. Nonetheless, bronze icons were not cheap. The social milieu to which they most likely belonged included the upper class patron or household, where the images would have probably served as icons for private prayer and as gifts to churches and monasteries. The London Hodegetria, for example, was commissioned by an ecclesiastic of high rank; the inscription on the plaque reads, ‘Mother of God help thy servant Philip the Bishop.’

The high quality of a number of these images may indicate cultivated patrons of some means. Boyd makes the analogy of tin-plated liturgical vessels imitating silver which were common at the time our icons flourished, along with water containers of similar materials used by the nobility, and others of high status. The small size of a number of copper icons may indicate their function in a private context, related to

op.cit. (n. 17), 283-84, cat. nos 431 and 432, and Evans – Wixom (eds), op.cit. (n. 49), 38, cat. no. 3. The architrave carving is reproduced in Gerstel – Lauffenburger (eds), op.cit. (n. 21), 55, fig. 18.

50 The Metropolitan Museum label on the Jaharis pieces, for example, indicates that the expressive style and some spellings in the inscriptions suggest that they were made outside of Constantinople.


52 Evans - Wixom (eds), op.cit. (n. 26), 495.

53 While these vessels were used by the nobility on military campaigns, the emperor used real silver. Boyd discusses the different metal equipment as noted in the Book of Ceremonies in “Ex-Voto Therapy,” op.cit. (n. 5), 25, on this tinned copperware, see M. Mundell Mango, “The Significance of Byzantine Tinned Copper Objects,” Θησεύματα από μέταλλο της Αρχαίας Αυλής, Athens 1994, 221-227. My thanks to Dr. Mundell Mango for her offprint of this article.

Illustration Credits
Fig. 1: Photograph courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks. Fig. 2: C. Verzár. Fig. 3: Photograph courtesy of the Malkove Collection. Fig. 4: Photograph courtesy Friedrich, Munich. Fig. 5: E. C. Schwartz. Fig. 6, 8: Photograph courtesy of Dr. Christian Schmidt. Fig. 7: Photograph courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photo by Světlana Suštova, Leonard Kheifets.
by a single worshiper, either in a private chapel or a domestic setting. These icons, thus, help illuminate the private sphere of devotion and donation, while widening our knowledge of artistic practices in Byzantine times.

The copper repoussé icons find their place as part of the corpus of Byzantine icons from the post-Iconoclastic period. Gilded, they could double for precious icons, or echo the golden glow of painted images with gold-leaf backgrounds. Their small size meant that they could serve as revetment, part of a composite piece such as a smaller icon beam, or as single small panels for private devotion and votive offerings. Their humble medium belies their exacting craftsmanship and often high artistic quality. Copper repoussé should thus be seen as yet another material option in the artistic production of icons during middle and late Byzantine times.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF BYZANTINE COPPER REPOUSSÉ ICONS

1. Plaque with St. Simon, 9th-10th century, 21.9×13.8 cm, New Haven, CT, Yale University Art Gallery, acc. no. ILE2008.15.3, on loan from Cindy Heusel; unpublished.
4. Saints Lucilian and Cyrrus, Asia Minor, excavated from a secular setting in Cherson, gilt, 10th-11th century, 22×23.5 cm, Sevastopol, Crimea, National Reserve of Tauric Chersonesos, no. 11/36672; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 494, cat. no. 139.
5. Covering of a templon beam with 12 large panels including scenes of Christ’s life (the Nativity, Crucifixion, Ascension, Empty Tomb, Doubting Thomas, Anastasis and Deesis), portraits (Constantine and Helen, and Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael, and apostles James and Phillip, Thomas and Bartholomew, and Theodore and George) and decoration, along with 12 smaller panels displaying crosses and decorative designs, from provincial Byzantium or Cappadocia, 10th-11th century, main panels forming a lintel totaling 28 cm × c. 2.75 m. and secondary panels, 15×23 cm. each, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, on loan from the Mary and Michael Jaharis Collection, nos L.1999.34.1-12, L14.118-21, 23; Brooks, forthcoming and ead, “Sculpting the Triumphant Cross,” op.cit. (n. 7).
6. Standing Christ, Asia Minor (?), early 11th century, 11×8.6 cm, Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 2346; unpublished.
8. Archangel Michael of Chonai with donor John from Asia Minor, found at Cherson, 11th century, 12.3×8.5 cm., Sevastopol, National Reserve of Tauric Chersonesos, no. 5505; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 496, cat. no. 141.
9. Fragment of a Christ Pantokrator, from Asia Minor, excavated from a secular setting in Cherson, 11th century, 7.1×13 cm., St. Petersburg, The Hermitage, no. × 1565; ibid., 490, cat. no. 133.
12. Fragment of an altar ciborium with St. Cosmas and a cross from Constantinople (?), 11th century, 19.2×14.4 cm., Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 1044; Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 129-130, cat. no. L.34.
13. Circular plaque of St. John found in Syria, 11th century, 14.3 cm. in diameter, Berlin, Staatliche Museen; Volbach, op.cit. (n. 12), 148 and pl. 9, cat. no. 6592.
14. Virgin Hodegetria, Constantinople (?), said to be found at Torcello, gilt, late 11th century, 20.8×14 cm., London, Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 818-1891; Vassilaki (ed.), op.cit. (n. 5), 304, cat. no. 20; Evans – Wixon (eds), op.cit. (n. 26), 495-496, cat. no. 331.
15. Fragments of an Anastasis, Byzantium, excavated in Cherson, turn of the 11th-12th century, 19×16.8 cm., St. Petersburg, The Hermitage, no. × 872; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 495, cat. no. 140.

* Listed chronologically. References focus on primary publication of pieces and catalogue entries with extensive bibliography. Full citations can be found in the footnotes to the text. Only figural plaques are included in the count.

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18. Christ Pantocrator with an arched top, provincial Byzantium, 11th-12th century, 23.4×13.2 cm., Geneva, Musée d’art et d’histoire, inv. no. AD 2401; Martiniani-Reber (ed.), op.cit. (n. 29), 104, cat. no. 45.

19. St. Damien with an arched top, provincial Byzantium, 11th-12th century, 22.2×13.4 cm., Geneva, Musée d’art et d’histoire, inv. no. AD 2403/ibid., 104, cat. no. 45. Undoubtedly originally paired with another of the ‘moneyless healer’ saints such as St. Cosmas, perhaps one sold in Munich in 2007, discussed in the catalogue.

20. St. George under an arch from Asia Minor (?), 11th-12th century, 12.7×5.1 cm., Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 1724; Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 130-131, cat. no. 1.3.5.

21. Circular plaque of Christ Pantocrator from Asia Minor (?), 11th-12th century, 14.5 cm. in diameter, Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 1112; ibid., 127-128, cat. no. 1.32.

22. Circular plaque of Christ Pantocrator with inscription in relief, gilt, Cherson, excavated from a church 11th-12th century, 17.2 cm in diameter, Sevastopol, National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos, no. 34286; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 491, cat. no. 134.

23. Circular plaque of St. Panteleimon, possibly from Asia Minor, 11th-12th century, 3.9 cm in diameter, Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 2271; unpublished.

24. Circular plaque of St. Peter, Asia Minor (?), 11th-12th century, 3.3 cm. in diameter, Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 2866; unpublished.

25. Fragments of a Deesis, Byzantium, excavated from a secular site at Cherson, 11th-12th century, 10.8×11.2 cm., Sevastopol, National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos, no. 117/37226; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 493, cat. no. 138.

26. Part of a templon beam with donor Alexander Tornachos and the Archangel Uriel (from a Deesis) under an arcade, Asia Minor (?), 11th-12th century, 17.6×20.4 cm., Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 2913; unpublished.

27. St. Nicholas from Asia Minor (?), said to have been tin-plated, 11th-12th century, 9.5×7.9 cm., Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 1413; Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 131-132, cat. no. 1.36.


30. Plaque displaying the Enthroned Christ with an arched top, Byzantium, excavated from a church in Cherson, 12th century, 12×9 cm., St. Petersburg, The Hermitage, no. ×872; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 491, cat. no. 135.

31. Trefoil-shaped plaque consisting of a central rounded of St. Michael flanked by two circles containing flowers or stars, probably from the top of an icon, Asia Minor?, 12th century, 4.9×8.8 cm., Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 6026; unpublished.

32. Six plaques from a templon beam, door, chest or icon frame with David on horseback and two of Gabriel, along with a cross and two displaying spiral interlace, provincial Byzantium, second half of the 12th century, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, The Makove Collection, University of Toronto Art Centre.

33. Six plaques (listed by figure number in the Maldove collection catalogue) [Campbell (ed.), op.cit. (n. 7), 130-132, no. M82/159]:
   a. plaque with spiral interlace made of leaves, enclosing an 8-petaled flower, 14.2×19.5 cm.; ibid., 130, fig. 188.
   b. plaque with spiral interlace made of leaves, enclosing an 8-petaled flower, 13.6×19 cm.; ibid., 130, fig. 189.
   c. plaque with foliate jeweled cross, 13.5×18.8 cm.; ibid., 131, fig. 190.
   d. David on horseback, 14×18.5 cm.; ibid., 131, fig. 191.
   e. plaque depicting Archangel Gabriel (probably from an Annunciation pair), with a rounded top, 12.5×24 cm.; ibid., 132, fig. 192.
   f. plaque with frontal Archangel Gabriel, with a rounded top, 12×23 cm.; ibid., 132, fig. 193.

34. Deesis with Archangels Michael and Gabriel, eastern Asia Minor (?), late 12th century, Deesis: 17.9×15.1 cm, Michael: 16.7×13.7 cm, Gabriel: 9×12 cm. Deesis and Michael in Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. nos. 81, 82, Gabriel in Recklinghausen, Ikonen-Museum, no. 282; Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 132-134, cat. nos. L.37, a, b, c.

35. Enthroned Christ and saints, Byzantium, excavated from a house at Cherson, turn of the 12th-13th century, 24.3×18 cm., St. Petersburg, The Hermitage, no. x 1038; Yashaeva et al., op.cit. (n. 11), 492, cat. no. 136.


37. St. George, 2nd quarter of the 13th century, Greece, 13×4.5 cm., Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum, no. 1129; Gkatzioiu – Lazariou, op.cit. (n. 17), 251, cat. no. 346.

38. Apostle Andrew, gilt, Byzantine, beginning of the 14th century, 4.5 by 4.8 cm., Recklinghausen, Ikonen-Museum, no. 248; Stiegemann (ed.), op.cit. (n. 10), 134-135, cat. no. L.38.


ΧΑΛΚΙΝΕΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΕΣ ΕΚΤΥΠΗΣ ΔΙΑΚΟΣΜΗΣΗΣ ΜΕΣΟΒYZΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΥΣΤΕΡΟΒYZΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΟΥ

To παρόν άρθρο εστιάζει σε μια ομάδα έκτυπων εικόνων από χρυσή καλυκία, μέρος ενός πολύ μεγαλύτερου υπό μελέτη συνόλου μεταλλικών εικόνων. Αυτή η ομάδα των εικόνων δεν έχει ακόμη μελετηθεί, ενώ η δημιουργία ενός συγκριτικού καταλόγου λόγω της χρησιμότητας του μετάλλου τους. Ωστόσο, έχουν σωθεί αρκετές εικόνες, τόσος που να επιτρέπουν να καθοςτούν απομείνει η τελείτη. Πάντα λοιπόν εδώ μια πρώτη προσπάθεια διερεύνησης αυτών των εικόνων ως προς το ύφος, την εικονογραφία, το ύψος, το σκοτάδι και τη λειτουργία τους μέσα στην κοινωνία, στην οποία δημιουργήθηκαν.

Αυτές οι έκτυπες εικόνες αποτελούνται από λεπτά φύλλα χρυσέας καλυκίας, επέξεγευμένα με μια χρονολογία και κοινωνικό διάσταση, που χρησιμοποιείται για την παραγωγή αυτών των μοναδικών εικόνων. Οι περισσότερες έκτυπες εικόνες αυτής της ομάδας είναι πολύ ψηφιακά ποιότητες οι μορφές αποδίδονται με σωστές αναλογίες και σε επιτραπέζιες είναι συνήθως ευανέγγυες και ορθογραμμικές. Παρά τη συχνή επισημαστική της κατάστασης, υπάρχουν ακόμη περαιτέρω σε διάφορες πιθανές χρήσεις τους, όπως και ταξινομεί άλλων εικόνων ιδιαίτερης λειτουργίας, ημετέρων επιστημών ή εικόνων τέμπλων, διακόσμησης θυρών, ή όπως τον αντίκηπο στην υπογραφή επόπτη και άλλα αντικείμενα.

Ως λογότητα ακριβώς αντίγραφα των πολλών επενδύσεων και διακοσμήσεων, γνωστών από περιγραφές γραπτών πηγών, αυτές οι εικόνες από χρυσόμαλλο μπορούν να συνθέτονται με τις συζευκτές πολύτιμες μεταλλικές επενδύσεις που μοιράζονται. Σχεδόν απεκτάνονται επίσης, με εικόνες ξυμπλασμένες, αλλά και αποδοσμένες σε χαμηλά ανάλογα είδη, όπως επιτρέπονται ανάλογα έκτυπα ή ως απομιμήσεις αιτίοβάντων εικόνων. Η μέτρια χρηματική αξία της προσέμεθος και χαμηλών εικόνων μπορεί να συναρθεί από σχετικές αναφορές σε διαθέσιμες και άλλες φιλολογικές πηγές, όπως περιττάνονται με αλλά έργα, εξόδους χαμηλής αξίας στην αποτίμηση του υλικού. Το κοινωνικό περιβάλλον των περισσότερων πιθανώτατα εικόνων αποτελούν οι οικογένειες της ανάστασης, οι οποίες χρησιμοποιούν τις εικόνες για ειδική λειτουργία, για τη διάσωση τεπεινών εκκλησιών και παρεκκλησιών, αλλά και ως δωρεές ή εκλεκτική σε μοναστήρια. Έτσι, αυτές οι εικόνες φωτίζουν το ιδιωτικό πλαίσιο της ανεπίσημης και της χρησιμοποιούν για τις καλλιτεχνικές πρακτικές σε διάφορα έργα κατά τη διάρκεια των βυζαντινών χρόνων.

Στο τέλος, παρατηθείς δύο παρατηρήματα, στο πρώτο αναφέρονται οι βυζαντινές έκτυπες εικόνες με τις σχετικές πληροφορίες και στο δεύτερο οι αντίστοιχες μια βυζαντινές.

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APPENDIX B: LIST OF NON-BYZANTINE COPPER REPOUSSÉ ICONS AND OTHER PIECES

1. Magi before the Virgin, gilt, 8th-9th century, 6×13.1 cm., Berlin, Staatliche Museen; Vollb., op.cit. (n. 12), 153, pl. 5, cat. no. 1007.
2. Inscription in Latin found in Salerno, 9th-10th century, 12.8 cm. in height, Berlin, Staatliche Museen; ibid., 154, cat. no. 6416.
3. Virgin and Child from Italy, originally gilt, 14th century, 22×14.7 cm., Berlin, Staatliche Museen; ibid., 150-151, pl. 10, cat. no. 722.
4. St. Matthew with relief inscription, western origin, gilded, 12th-13th century, 6.2×5.1 cm., Munich, Collection of Dr. Christian Schmidt, inv. no. 0083; Die Welt von Byzanz, op.cit. (AP-PENDIX A no. 16), 179, cat. no. 221.

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