

Chantry Library Bibliographies:**No. 7: Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Bookbindings by Georgios Boudalis**

Codex National Library of Greece, EBE 1912, (left) written on paper between 1425-1475 and rebound c. sixteenth century. Detail (right) of braided silk endband string markers in codex Sinai Greek 206, written on parchment in 1279, rebound in the seventeenth century.

My involvement with Byzantine bookbindings started after graduating in conservation when, in 1997, I began working as a book conservator in the monastic libraries of Mount Athos. In 1999 I received a scholarship for a PhD at the University of the Arts, London, and started working for the St Catherine's Library Conservation Project on the survey of the almost 3,500 bound codices of this historic library. This has been a life-changing experience. Ever since, in parallel with my job as a conservator, I have pursued research on different aspects of Byzantine and other eastern Mediterranean bookbinding traditions. My conviction is that one has to have a wider view and awareness of the general cultural and technological context within which books were produced and used, in order to better understand and conserve them. I am currently the Head of Book and Paper Conservation at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Introduction

The available bibliography on the various aspects of Byzantine bookbindings is today much less limited than fifteen years ago. This is primarily because of more active scholarship in the field, easier access to collections and resources both physical as well as digital, and of course the greater awareness that in order to properly repair a book you need to know as best as you can how it was made. Quite significantly, published research is more and more focused not just on the decoration of these bindings but also on other aspects, such as how they were made and used, how they evolved, how they relate to other bookbindings and other artefacts. The following bibliography is an overview and as such is by no way exhaustive. I have not included papers that consider specific groups of books written, owned or collected by specific persons, or belonging to specific collections. Although such papers are often extremely useful -- in fact necessary, for serious research on Byzantine bindings -- I preferred to put them to one side, and opt for a more concise, technically focused selection of literature. For practical reasons I have organised this bibliography in six different sections each starting with a comment on the usefulness of the sources chosen. The entries within the sections are organised *chronologically*, rather than alphabetically, to give an idea of the progression of knowledge and thought.

1. Overview

The literature in this section is mostly aimed at giving an overview of the historical and technical aspects of Byzantine bindings, and is a good starting point for the non specialist. I have included literature which is now considered to have been superseded by more recent work, but which I believe is worth considering for historical reasons and in order to get an idea of how much our knowledge has evolved through the years.

van Regemorter, B., 'La reliure des manuscrits grecs', *Scriptorium* 8 (1954) 3-23.

van Regemorter, B., 'La reliure byzantine', *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 36 (1967) 247-312.

van Regemorter, B., *Binding Structures in the Middle Ages. A selection of Studies by Berthe Van Regemorter, Studia Bibliothecae Wittrockianae, vol. 3* (Brussels: Bibliothecae Wittrockianae, 1992). Contains translations into English of van Regemorter's first two papers (above) by Jane Greenfield.

Baras, E., Irigoin, J., and J. Vézin, 'Le relieur byzantine', *La reliure médiévale: trois conférences d'initiation* (Paris: École normale supérieure, 1978) 23-54.

Federici, C., Houlis, K. et al, *Legature bizantine vaticane* (Rome: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1988).

Szirmai, J., *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999) 62-92.

Tsironi, N. ed., *The Book in Byzantium: Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Bookbinding. Proceedings of an International Symposium, Athens 13-16 Oct 2005, Series ΒΙΒΛΙΟΑΜΦΙΑΣΤΗΣ v. 3* (Athens: Hellenic Society for Bookbinding et al, 2008).

Grosdider, D. and F. Vinourd, 'Description et catalogage des reliures byzantines', in R. Mouren ed., *La description des reliures orientales: conservation, aspects juridiques et prise de vue* (London: Archetype, 2013) 13-23.

2. Literary and iconographical sources

These articles are important for identifying historic bookbinding terms which for the Byzantine traditions were rather rare and mostly limited to the decorative aspects or appearance of bookbindings. Terminology is a major issue these days and projects like the 'Language of Bindings Thesaurus' (LoB) of Ligatus aim to achieve some order and consistency in bookbinding terminology for bookbindings in general and including Byzantine binding <https://www.ligatus.org.uk/lob/> There is nothing in Byzantium that could be compared to the bookbinding manuals we have from the Islamic world but here and there it is possible to 'extract' terms which relate to the making and mostly to the appearance of the book. Iconographical evidence from paintings, mosaics, sculpture, etc. should be also considered as potentially valuable sources of information.

Atsalos, B., 'Sur quelques termes relatifs à la reliure des manuscrits grecs', in Berza, M. and E. Stanescu eds., *Actes du XIVe Congrès International des Études Byzantines, vol. 1* (Bucharest : Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1974) 43-49.

Atsalos, B., 'Termes Byzantines relatifs à la décoration des manuscrits Grecs', in Prato, G. ed., *I manoscritti greci tra riflessione e dibattito : atti del V Colloquio internazionale di paleografia greca*. Cremona, 4-10 Oct 1998 (Florence : Gonnelli, 2000) 446-511.

Boudalis, B., 'Clarifying the structure, appearance and use of the early codex book around the Mediterranean basin. The use of iconographical evidence', *Care and Conservation of Manuscripts 15* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2016) 287-303.

3. Technical and structural aspects

Besides the literature mentioned above in 'Overviews', the following papers focus specifically on technical and structural aspects of Byzantine bindings.

Les tranchefiles brodées: Étude historique et technique (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1989).

Canart, P., Grosdidier de Matons, D. and Ph. Hoffmann, 'L'analyse technique des reliures byzantines et la détermination de leur origine géographique (Constantinople, Crète, Chypre, Grèce)', in Cavallo, G. et al eds., *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio. Atti del seminario di Erice, 18-25 Sep 1988* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1991) 751-768, and plates I-VIIIb.

Petherbridge, G., 'Sewing structures and materials: A study in the examination and documentations of Byzantine and post-Byzantine bookbindings', in D' Agostino, M. et al eds., *Paleographia e codicologia greca. Atti del II Colloquio Internazionale di Paleografia Greca, 17-21 Oct 1983* (Alexandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1991) vol. 1, 363-408; vol. 2, 201-209.

Houlis, K., 'Research on structural elements of Byzantine bookbindings', in Maniaci, M. and P. Munafò eds., *Ancient and Medieval Book Materials and Techniques, Erice 18-25 Sep 1992, Studi e Testi 357* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1993) 238-268.

Boudalis, G., 'Endbands in Greek-style bindings', *The Paper Conservator* 31 (2007) 29-49.

Boudalis, G., 'Twined endbands in the bookbinding traditions of the Eastern Mediterranean', in Boudalis, G. et al eds., *Historical Book Binding Techniques in Conservation* (Horn/Vienna: Verlag Berger, 2016) 135-152.

Bonnard, I., Magali, D., Christian, F., Marlène, S., and F. Vinourd, 'Étude d'une reliure byzantine du XIVe siècle et de sa mystérieuse tranchefile', *Support/Tracé* 19 (2019) 142-149.

Boudalis, G., 'Straps, tabs and strings: Book-marks in the codices of the St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai', *Journal of Paper Conservation* 20 (2019) 81-105.

Vryzidis, N., 'Reflections of Mediterraneanism on a church practice: The case of Greek textile bindings', in Rodríguez Peinado, L. and F. de Asís García eds., *Arte y Producción textil en el Mediterráneo medieval* (Madrid: Polifemo, 2019) 107-133.

4. Byzantine bindings and their relationship to bindings of neighbouring cultures

Works in this section contextualise Byzantine bookbindings, comparing them with the products of neighbouring binding traditions in both the East and West.

Mokretsova, I., 'Russian medieval book bindings' *Restaurator* 16.2 (1995) 100-122.

Merian, S., 'The Armenian bookmaking tradition in the Christian East: A comparison with the Syriac and Greek traditions', in Sharpe, J. and K. Van Kampen eds., *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition* (London/New Castle DE: British Library/Oak Knoll, 1998) 205-214.

Boudalis, Y., 'Influencias Islámicas en las encuadernaciones Griegas de época post-Bizantina', *Erytheia : Revista de estudios Bizantinos y neogriegos* 26 (2005) 127-176.

Bausi, A. et al eds., *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction* (Hamburg: COMSt, 2015).

A very useful work considering all different manuscript traditions of the East (including rather short chapters on their bindings).

<https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/comst/publications/handbook.html> <accessed 24 Mar 2021>

Dergham, Y and F. Vinour, 'Les reliures syriaques: essai de caractérisation par comparaison avec reliures byzantines et arméniennes', *Manuscripta Syriaca: Des Sources de Première Main, Cahiers d'Études Syriaques* 4 (Paris: Geuthner, 2015) 271-304.

Boudalis, G., 'The transition from Byzantine to post-Byzantine bookbinding. A statistical analysis of some crucial changes', in Vodopivec Tomažič, J. ed, *Konservirangje Knjig in Papirja 2* (Ljubljana: Arhiv Republike Slovenije, 2016) 12-29. [Book and Paper Conservation 2]

Gialdini, A., 'Alla Greca'? Matter and meaning of Greek-style bookbindings in renaissance Venice. PhD Thesis, University of the Arts, London 2017.

Boudalis, G., *The Codex and Crafts in Late Antiquity* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2018).

5. Conservation of Byzantine bindings

Because of their technical and structural particularities Byzantine bindings can pose various issues when it comes to their conservation or that of the manuscripts they contain. The papers in this section deal with the treatment of Byzantine bookbindings ranging from historic to more up-to-date approaches and across countries.

Mokretsova, I., 'Principles of conservation of Byzantine bindings', *Restaurator*, 15.3 (1994) 142-172.

Houlis, K., Sambazioti, A., and G. Boudalis, 'The restoration of manuscripts in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Greece', in Federici, C. and P. Munafò eds, *International Conference on Conservation and Restoration of Archival and Library Materials*, Erice 22-29 Apr 1996 (Rome: ICPL, 1999) 517-536.

Agati, M.L., Canart, P., and C. Federici, 'Giovanni Onorio da maglia instaurator librorum graecorum à la fin du Moyen Age', *Scriptorium* 50 (1996) 363-369.

Boudalis, G., 'The restoration and care of manuscripts in the St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai in the 17th and 18th centuries', in Meynell, K et al eds, *Cunning Chapters* (London: Gefn Press, 2007).

<https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/id/eprint/451> <accessed 24 Mar 2021>

Honey, A., and A. Velios, 'The historic repair and reuse of Byzantine wooden bookboards in the manuscript collection of the monastery of St Catherine, Sinai', in Ambers, J. et al eds., *Holding It All Together: Ancient and Modern Approaches to Joining, Repair and Consolidation* (London: Archetype, 2009) 68-77.

<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:86c26501-b6f1-4077-9b76-d12d0897fcb9> <accessed 6 May 2021>

Honey, A., and N. Pickwoad, 'Learning from the past: Using original techniques to conserve a twelfth-century illuminated manuscript and its sixteenth-century Greek-style binding at the Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai', IIC 23rd Biennial Congress: *Conservation and the Eastern Mediterranean*, Istanbul 20-24 Sep 2010, 56-61.

<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:232590c9-9624-449a-8d41-ebea25a00648> <accessed 6 May 2021>

Boudalis, G., 'Preserving the book as artefact: Conservation as the ideal occasion in which books are both repaired and structurally understood', *Choices in Conservation: Practice versus Research, ICOM-CC Graphic Documents Interim Meeting*, Copenhagen 2010, 59-62.

http://www.icom-cc.org/10/documents?catId=10&subId=228#.X_GXqBbQBPY <accessed 24 Mar 2021>

Boudalis, G., 'The conservation of an early sixteenth-century Greek bound manuscript: An insight into Byzantine bookbinding through conservation', *Care and Conservation of Manuscripts* 13 (2012) 199-214.

Bianconi, D., *Cura et studio. Il Restauro del libro a Bisanzio* 66 (Alessandria IT: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2018).

6. Consistent groups of Byzantine bindings

Rather than focusing on a single binding or a single feature, resources in this section deal with more or less homogeneous groups of bindings coming from specific workshops, places, or belonging to specific historic families. Some of the research concentrates on the decoration or tooling on the covers of bindings while other work also includes a consideration of technical features. Such broader research is extremely helpful because it gives us a wider view of the picture, and allows for regional, geographical or chronological patterns and/or differences to be identified with relative safety.

Irigoin, J., 'Un groupe de reliures crétoises (XVe siècle), *Χρητικά Χρονικά ΙΕ-ΙΣΤ* (1963) 102-112. [Cretan Chonicles].

Grosdidier de Matons, D. and Ph. Hoffman, 'Un groupe de reliures byzantines provenant du monastère athonite de Kastamonitou', *La Legatura dei Libri Antichi tra Conoscenza, Valorizzazione e Tutela*, Parma 16-18 Nov 1989, *Bollettino dell'Istituto Central per la Patologia del Libro* 44-45 (1994) 327-402.

Cataldi Palau, A., 'Legature costantinopolitane del monastero di Prodromo Petra tra I manoscritti di Giovanni di Ragusa (†1443)', *Codices Manuscripti* 37-38 (2001) 11-50.

Boudalis, G., *The evolution of a craft: post-Byzantine bookbinding between the late fifteenth and the early eighteenth century from the libraries of the Iviron monastery in Mount Athos/Greece and the St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai/Egypt*. PhD Thesis, Camberwell College of Arts/University of the Arts, London 2005.

<https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/2298/> <accessed 24 Mar 2021>

Canart, P., 'Les reliures au monogramme des Paléologues. État de la question' in Lanoë, G. ed., *La relieure médiévale. Scriptorium* 63/37 (2009) 155-181.

Sarris, N., *Classification of Finishing Tools in Greek Bookbinding: Establishing Links from the Library of St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt*. PhD thesis, Camberwell College of Arts/University of the Arts, London, 2010.

<https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/6143/> <accessed 24 Mar 2021>

Sarris, N., 'Seeing through the cover: Studying decorated bookbindings at the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai', *Care and Conservation of Manuscripts* 13 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2012) 91-115.

https://www.academia.edu/44594717/Seeing_through_the_cover_Studying_decorated_bookbindings_at_the_Monastery_of_Saint_Catherine_Sinai_Egypt/ <accessed 31 Mar 2021>