

**Interim report on the activities of the
Commission of the History of Byzantine Art / AIEB
(August 2016 - September 2018)
Intercongrès, Athens, 22 September 2018**

The Commission of the History of Byzantine Art was reactivated during the 23rd International Congress in Belgrade in August 2016 on the initiative of Jean-Michel Spieser. It was a collective decision of the commissions' members, following a proposal by Vicky Foskolou, to go ahead with the creation of a Web Portal dedicated to Byzantine studies in the domain of art, archaeology and material culture which has to be continuously updated and operative as much for education as for research. We named it, according to Foskolou's proposal, **ΧΑΛΚΗ ΠΥΛΗ / CHALKE GATE: A Portal to Byzantine Art, Archaeology and Material Culture.**

It was the concern of the commission members who reside in Athens (Ioanna Bitha, Anastasia Drandaki, Vicky Foskolou, Sophia Kalopissi and Maria Panayotidi) to hold meetings and discuss proposals for the creation and function of the Web Portal, which we then communicated and discussed with the other members of the Commission. Two issues were central to our thoughts and intentions:

- a) to find the technological institution which would undertake the creation and upkeep of the Portal and would secure its funding and
- b) to configure the schedule for the implementation phases of the Portal on our part, namely on the part of the Byzantine art historians.

One of our first steps was to seek the appropriate Information Technology Institution which would design the Portal, be responsible for its implementation and maintenance, be in charge of the project coordination and secure its funding. Moreover, this Information Technology Institution should design the Portal in such a way that, even after the completion of the project, the Portal will continue to be updated and supplied with material by the Commission of the History of Byzantine Art / AIEB.

Initially we addressed our request to the National Documentation Centre (NDC) in Athens. Its working team answered with a very good proposal but the funding of the project was insecure. We came then in contact, thanks to Anastasia Drandaki, with the Cyprus Institute (CyI) and received a very interesting proposal, which we will present to you briefly. Thus the Commission decided to initiate a collaboration with the very specialized Science and Technology in Archaeology Center (STARC), of the Cyprus Institute that will act as the technological partner for the CHALKE GATE project. STARC has the infrastructure and expertise to launch and maintain such an ambitious project, but also, STARC people have a deep knowledge and understanding of art historical and archaeological data, particularly of the Byzantine era.

STARC is already partner in an international EU-funded project, ARIADNE, that is closely related to the scope of our project ([Ariadne - Ariadne](#)). ARIADNE brings together and

integrates existing archaeological and art historical research data infrastructures so that researchers can use the various distributed datasets and new and powerful technologies as an integral component of the archaeological and art historical research methodology. Its scope is therefore on a par with CHALKE GATE. In view of the close similarities between the two endeavors, STARC and ARIADNE's project manager Prof. Franco Nicolucci (University of Florence) have kindly agreed to incorporate a pilot of the CHALKE GATE in their deliverables. Under the ARIADNE initiative STARC will design and run on our behalf a pilot that will give us a unique opportunity to test our ideas and proceed with more accuracy and ambition in designing the structure of the CHALKE GATE. We also aspire to use this portal as the ideal platform for the development of new projects on Byzantine art, a veritable electronic hub for the studies and presentation of Byzantine art and material culture in the web.

Concerning the second point, i.e. the organization of the Portal's content and the implementation phases, which is the duty of the Byzantine art historians of our Commission, we think it is necessary to put together and develop the section on the **collection, processing and organization of material** drawn from

- the existing websites for the creation of the **Website Inventory**
- the existing electronic editions for the creation of the **Digital Library**
- and the existing electronic databases for the creation of the **Digital Collections** and the **Thesauri of terms of Byzantine history of art and archaeology**.

This project should be coordinated by an Executive Working Committee (EWC) consisting of three to five members who will derive from and be affiliated with research and educational institutions that promote the research and study of Byzantine history of art and material culture. Members of this committee (EWG) could be either members of the Commission of the History of Byzantine Art / AIEB and/or scholars from other academic and research institutions representing different countries. It should be noted however that the Commission may keep this list flexible and open for future changes and additions. Later this number can be reduced to one collaborator who will be responsible for the conservation of the Portal, according to the program.

The Executive Working Committee (EWC) will seek to establish further collaboration with the intention of putting together an International Working Group (IWG) and establishing an international network of sub-groups or individuals who will undertake on a volunteer basis a thematic or geographical unit for the collection of all relevant material (e.g. from websites of Greek institutions – websites of American institutions etc.), along the lines of the team that collects the bibliographic notices of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.

The final checking will be the responsibility of the International Commission of History of Byzantine Art / AIEB.

We hope that our project, when completed, will be a useful tool for research and education and that we will have more concrete results to announce during the next (24th) International Congress.