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**ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL  
RELATIONS BETWEEN  
THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE  
AND ENGLAND  
IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES**

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The purpose of the article is to consider the dynamics of development and special features of artistic and cultural relations between the Byzantine Empire and England in the early Middle Ages; to find out the ways of the dissemination of the Byzantine culture; to characterise the activities of missionaries, clergy, and Kings of England who contributed to the interpenetration of cultures. The research methodology consists of the general scientific principles of historicism and systematic approach. The article applies general scientific and theoretical methods: source studies – to study the historical prerequisites for the formation of artistic and cultural relations between the Byzantine Empire and England in the early Middle Ages; analysis – to establish the influence of the Byzantine art on the development of art in England; systematisation – to understand the processes of development of cultural and trade relations of the countries in the specified period. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the fact that for the first time in Ukrainian historiography, it examines the influence of Byzantine culture on the culture of England in the early Middle Ages, which is a part of the Romano-Germanic civilization tradition. Conclusions. It has been revealed that in different historical periods the nature of relations between the Byzantine Empire and England underwent a transformation. The article confirms the hypothesis that for several centuries after the fall of “Roman Britain”, the south of Britain continued to remain in the sphere of influence of Byzantium, its partially isolated part. The recognition of Byzantium as the centre of Christianity stimulated the interest of English artists, sculptors and icon painters in Byzantine art and the Byzantine influence could be traced in their works. It has been proved that Britain maintained a constant interest in Byzantine art, transmitting and refracting the traditions of Byzantium through the prism of its national traditions. However, Byzantium conceptually rejected the cultural achievements of England and the West, demonstrating its closed nature, preventing the penetration of foreign elements from the outside. Cultural integrity dominated cultural assimilation.

Keywords: interaction of Byzantine and English culture; art; missionary activities; dynamics of relationships; cultural integrity; cultural assimilation

**Introduction**

The Byzantine culture had a strong influence on the art and religion of various European countries, including England, although it was considered “alien” to the countries of Western Europe for many centuries.

Byzantine culture is an integral part of European identity. In particular, until the 16th century, English historians, writers, and philosophers were not interested in Byzantine history and culture. The research in this area was extremely scarce and limited in knowledge. At first glance, it can be concluded that relations between the Byzantine Empire and England were reduced to the absence of official interstate relations. However, historical chronicles, hagiographies, artefacts, archaeological finds confirm the existence of close contacts between England and the Byzantine Empire in the sphere of trade, politics and religion.

Recent research and publications analysis. In 1945–1948, the researcher R. S. Lopez (1945) published several articles, including “Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire”, where he tried to give an objective assessment of the Byzantine influence on English culture. The scholar Donald Nicol (1974) traced Anglo-Byzantine political and cultural contacts right up to the end of the Byzantine Empire. The famous researcher K. Ciggaar (2001) published a book on the cultural and political relations between Byzantium and the West, part of which was devoted to the medieval history of England and its economic and cultural contacts with the Byzantine Empire. At the same time, the cultural and trade relations between Byzantium and England in terms of political and cultural expediency in the Middle Ages remain insufficiently studied.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in the fact that for the first time in Ukrainian historiography, it examines the influence of Byzantine culture on the culture of England in the early Middle Ages, which is a part of the Romano-Germanic civilization tradition.

### Purpose of the article

The purpose of the article is to consider the dynamics of the development and special features of cultural and trade relations between the Byzantine Empire and England in the early Middle Ages; to find out the ways of the dissemination of the Byzantine culture; to characterise the activities of missionaries, clergy, and Kings of England who contributed to the interpenetration of cultures.

The research methodology consists of the general scientific principles of historicism and systematic approach, which open up opportunities for a comprehensive study of the subject of research. The article applies general scientific and theoretical methods (source studies, analysis, and systematisation).

### Main research material

First of all, it should be noted that there were no stable cultural relations between the Byzantine Empire and England, so historians and archaeologists have to carefully collect and compare facts about cultural and trade exchanges between countries in the early Middle Ages. Despite the fact that in the history of England there were periods of active missionary, diplomatic, cultural or trade relations with the Byzantine Empire, such contacts could not be characterised as intense or stable and tended to fade.

The origins of relations between the Byzantine Empire and England go back to the depths of the “Dark” ages – the period from the 6th to the 10th centuries. It was at this time that the influence of the Byzantine Empire on its territorial neighbours increased due to its cultural and military revival. The first Anglo-Byzantine contact is associated with the county of Cornwall located in the south-west of England. Cornwall tin mines connected England with the Middle East, including Byzantium. The hagiography of St. John the Theologian tells the story of a ship that, arriving from Alexandria (around 610–620), exchanged a cargo of corn for tin. The legendary King Arthur, a hero of the Celtic epic, supplied the Byzantine Empire with tin, the most valuable natural wealth of the Celts, in exchange for Mediterranean wine and other goods. Tin and lead were a high-ranking currency. The archaeologists excavating at the mouth of the Avon River in Devon found 530 fragments of eastern Mediterranean wine amphorae of the 6th century, mainly from North Africa, Palestine, as well as from the territory of modern Turkey. In honour of the arrival of the Byzantine merchants the Celts organised large-scale celebrations with masquerade disguises in the skins of various animals and subsequent feasts with elite Byzantine wine (Keys, 2000).

The archaeological excavations have helped to link the Celtic Kingdom of Dumnonia, which was located in the southern Britain and existed in the 3rd – 10th centuries, to the Byzantine Empire – the successor of the Western Roman Empire. At first, historians believed that the contacts with the Roman Empire were lost in 410 (the year of the end of Roman rule in Britain). However, the archaeological finds in Tintagel (Cornwall) and Bantham (Devon) suggest that close relations have been restored over the centuries (Keys, 2000). While the east of Britain was ruled by the Anglo-Saxons, the west of the country cooperated with the legal successor of the Roman Empire in the field of trade. The nature of relations between the Byzantines and the inhabitants of the south-west of Britain was perhaps not commercial but rather co-dependent, since historians tend to view the south-west of Britain as a partially separated part of the Byzantine Empire. The 7th-century Greek-Christian polemical treatise (*Doctrina iacobi nuper baptizati*), dated around 634-640, stated that the “Roman lands” stretched from Britain (*βρετανία*) to Africa (Mango, 2009, pp. 252-253).

The *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* treatise, one of the earliest examples of a Persian text, contains the following statement: “... There are twelve islands called Britaniya, of which some are cultivated and some desolate. On them are found numerous mountains, rivers, villages, and different mine”, – this comment was made by an unknown author of the treatise (Minorsky & Bosworth, 2015, p. 59).

Indirectly, this information is also confirmed by the story of Harun ibn Yahya, a Syrian who was captured at Ascalon (Ashkelon, Israel) in 886 by pirates. Harun ibn Yahya was brought to Constantinople and held captive, but later he managed to get free (Hermes, 2012, pp. 72-80). The fragments of Harun Ibn Yahya’s memoirs have been preserved, which also contain a mention of the British Isles: “From this city (Rome) you sail the sea and journey for three months, till you reach the land of the king of the Burjan (here Burgundians). You journey hence through mountains and ravines for a month, till you reach the land of the Franks. From here you go forth

and journey for four months, till you reach the city (capital) of Bartiniyah (Britain). It is a great city on the shore of the Western Ocean, ruled by seven kings. At the gate of its city (capital) is an idol (sanam). When the stranger wishes to enter it, he sleeps and cannot enter it, until the people of the city take him, to examine his intention and purpose in entering the city. They are Christians. They are the last of the lands of the Greeks, and there is no civilization beyond them” (Dunlop, 1957, p. 16). The Byzantine historian Procopius, in his work “History of the Wars”, also claimed that the Emperor Justinian financed some territories of Britain and continued to consider south-western Britain as a part of the Byzantine possessions (Biddle, 2012).

In 306, Constantine the Great, the “father of Western Christianity”, was raised to the rank of emperor in the centre of the ancient capital of England – York. According to the records in the chronicle, leaving York, Constantine the Great takes with him to Constantinople about 30,000 Britons (Manuel II Palaeologus, 1893, pp. 51-52). Some historians insist on the kinship of Constantine the Great and the English kings. According to a legend, the mother of Constantine the Great was Helena, the daughter of King Cole of Colchester. In the 12th century, the English historian Henry of Huntingdon called Helena a British princess. Another hypothesis put forward by English scholars suggests that the last six Byzantine emperors are related to the English and Scottish kings. There is no reliable evidence for this statement. However, even the assumption of the possibility of blood kinship between the first Christian Roman emperor and British kings is, on the one hand, bold and, on the other, important in the general cultural and historical sphere of Byzantium and England (Ciggaar, 2001).

The first Greek missionaries, arriving in England in 596, generously shared their knowledge with English and Irish monks who were fluent in Greek (up to the 10th century). In the early Middle Ages, English clergy embellished Latin texts with Greek words, as if paying tribute to fashion. The English nobility, on the contrary, gave other qualities to the Greek language – among them profligacy, depravity and pagan spirit.

The activities of the missionaries of England and Byzantium contributed to the interpenetration of cultures. Already in the 6th century, thousands of residents of British island made pilgrimage trips to the Holy Land, to Jerusalem. They had to cross Eastern Europe to reach Jerusalem by land. The way to Jerusalem was through Constantinople. The patriarchs of Jerusalem, as a rule, warmly welcomed high-ranking pilgrims from England and entertained them with religious songs and dances. Pilgrims, ambassadors, diplomats shared their memories of the Byzantine Empire.

In the famous travel book of the 14th century “The Travels of Sir John Mandeville” (1350) we find a detailed story of the Englishman about Constantinople: “That men of Greece be Christian yet they vary from our faith. For they say, that the Holy Ghost may not come of the Son; but all only of the Father. And they say that their Patriarch hath as much power over the sea, as the Pope hath on this side the sea” (Letts, 1953, pp. 232-233).

In the spread of Byzantine culture, a special place was taken by monks and clergy, who often acted as ambassadors, diplomats, wandering missionaries, artists and doctors. Thanks to missionary work, the excerpts from the Byzantine liturgy could be heard in English chants, and in the English martyrology – a list of recognized Saints, there were stories about Byzantine Saints (the hagiography of the Saint Anastasius of Persia) (Spear, 1993).

Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, founded scriptoria (writing rooms for scribing manuscripts). The manuscripts of the “Winchester school” were decorated with bright slides, and some of the miniatures not only competed with Constantinople illustrations but also showed the Byzantine style, which gives reasons to conclude that the “Winchester school” had contacts with Greek missionaries (Lapidge, 1975).

From the ancient world, the Byzantine Empire inherited the works of Greek writers and doctors, largely lost by the West. They include the works of Hippocrates, Claudius Galenus, Paul of Aegina, Alexander Trallianus, Pedanius Dioscorides. The works of ancient Greek doctors are the subject of careful study in secular educational establishments and monasteries, among practicing doctors, clergy and laity in England. The knowledge in the field of medicine recorded in the treatises was spread in England through Byzantine monks, whose duties were to give advice on how to treat patients (Riddle, 2011). In 668, Theodore, a Byzantine monk from Tarsus, became archbishop of Canterbury. His unlimited influence on the Church of England, the reform of church laws, should not be underestimated. Archbishop Theodore and his colleague Adrian, an African and abbot of the monastery, founded a Greek language school in the monastery of Augustine of Canterbury, where they taught students Greek, Latin, the Law of God, and sacred music. The first library, where the Greek manuscripts were stored (in particular, the works of Homer), was opened in the Canterbury School. However, over time, the interest in the Greek language gradually faded away. Archbishop Theodore compiled the collection “Laterculus Malalianus”, which, along with other issues, regulated and provided punishments for moral violations, where the traditions and customs of the Byzantine Orthodox Church were easily guessed (Brown, 1988).

Researcher R. S. Lopez suggested that due to the active work of Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus, the elements of the Byzantine style penetrated English art. An example is the motif of a vine curl – a symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Ecumenical Church and all believers. This motif is found on Anglo-Saxon stone crosses in the kingdom of Northumbria (Lopez, 1945).

The researchers R. S. Lopez and F. Barlow believed that Byzantine influence and imitation of Byzantine traditions reached their peak during the reign of Edgar the Peaceful (Lopez, 1945; Barlow, 1992). The atmosphere of the court of King Edgar the Peaceful (95–975), who kept in touch with the Holy Roman Empire, France and Byzantium, contributed to the revival of culture and art. The Byzantine iconographic tradition during the reign of this king became a style that English artists adopted, copied and refracted through the prism of their traditions.

The Byzantine model of the image of the Virgin and the holidays dedicated to the days of remembrance of the Virgin were widespread in Western Europe up until the 7th century. In the 9th–10th centuries, the English church introduced the holidays of the Virgin into the liturgical calendar: Christmas, Annunciation, Conception and Assumption of the Virgin.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the cult of the Virgin Mary became widespread. Partially supported by the works of the theologians, it led to the widespread worship of the Virgin. The iconographic type of image of the Virgin in the Byzantine style inspired artists and sculptors in England as well. A vivid confirmation of this fact is the gravestone in York Minster, which depicts the Virgin with the baby on her left hand, and her appearance resembles the Virgin Mary in the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The waist-length image of Mary with the baby in her arms in St Mary's Church, in the small village of Deerhurst in Gloucestershire, is painted in the Byzantine style and resembles the image of the Mother of God of Nicopeia. The frescoes in the Byzantine style are still preserved in some churches located on the coast of Wales and Ireland. Worshipping the Virgin, few people thought about the Byzantine origin of this tradition (Clayton, 2003).

### Conclusions

Thus, for several centuries after the fall of “Roman Britain” (around the year of 410), the south of Britain continued to maintain significant trade connections with Byzantium, remaining in its sphere of influence, its partially isolated part. The culture of England transmitted and refracted the traditions of Byzantium through the prism of its national traditions. Thus, in the works of famous English painters, the Byzantine influence can be easily guessed. The cult of the Virgin has Byzantine roots, which became widespread in England in the Middle Ages. Therefore, it can be stated that England maintained a constant interest in Byzantine art, but Byzantium rarely reciprocated. Literally, Byzantium conceptually rejected the cultural achievements of England and the West. Cultural integrity dominated cultural assimilation. Unlike England and Western countries in general, Byzantium demonstrated its closed nature, preventing the all-consuming penetration of foreign elements from the outside. This can be explained by the need of the Byzantine society and culture to adapt constantly to changing conditions, which was the basic difference between the culture of the Byzantine Empire and England.

The prospects for further research are determined by the need to identify the Byzantine influence on the architecture and art of England in the 19th century.

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## КУЛЬТУРНО-МИСТЕЦЬКІ ВІДНОСИНИ ВІЗАНТІЇ ТА АНГЛІЇ В ЕПОХУ РАНЬОГО СЕРЕДНЬОВІЧЧЯ

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Мета статті – простежити динаміку розвитку й особливості культурно-мистецьких відносин Візантії та Англії в епоху раннього Середньовіччя; з'ясувати шляхи поширення візантійської культури; охарактеризувати діяльність місіонерів, духовенства, королів Англії, які сприяли взаємопроникненню культур. Методологічну основу дослідження складають загальнонаукові принципи історизму та системного підходу. У статті застосовано загальнонаукові й теоретичні методи: джерелознавчий – для дослідження історичних передумов становлення культурно-мистецьких відносин взаємин Візантії та Англії в епоху раннього Середньовіччя; аналізу – для встановлення впливу візантійського стилю на розвиток мистецтва Англії; систематизації – для осмислення процесів розвитку культурних відносин країн в означений період. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в тому, що вперше у вітчизняній історіографії досліджено вплив візантійського мистецтва на культуру Англії доби раннього Середньовіччя, яка є частиною романо-германської цивілізаційної традиції. Висновки. Виявлено, що в різні історичні періоди характер відносин між Візантією та Англією зазнавав трансформації. Підтверджено гіпотезу, що протягом кількох століть після падіння «Римської Британії» південь Британії продовжував залишатись у сфері впливу Візантії, її дещо відокремленою частиною. Визнання Візантії як центру християнства стимулювало інтерес англійських художників, скульпторів та іконописців до візантійського мистецтва, у їхніх роботах простежується візантійський вплив. Доведено, що Англія зберегла незмінний інтерес до візантійського мистецтва, транслюючи й переломлюючи традиції Візантії крізь призму власних національних традицій. Проте Візантія концептуально відкидала культурні досягнення Англії та Заходу, демонструючи закритість, не допускаючи проникнення чужорідних елементів ззовні. Культурна цілісність домінувала над культурною асиміляцією.

*Ключові слова:* взаємодія візантійської і англійської культури; мистецтво; діяльність місіонерів; динаміка відносин; культурна цілісність; культурна асиміляція

**КУЛЬТУРНО-ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЕ  
ОТНОШЕНИЯ ВИЗАНТИИ И АНГЛИИ  
В ЭПОХУ РАННЕГО СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЬЯ**

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Цель статьи – проследить динамику развития и особенности культурно-художественных отношений Византии и Англии в эпоху раннего Средневековья; выявить пути распространения византийской культуры; охарактеризовать деятельность миссионеров, духовенства, королей Англии, которые способствовали взаимопроникновению культур. Методологическую основу исследования составляют общенаучные принципы историзма и системного подхода. В статье применены общенаучные и теоретические методы: источниковедческий – для исследования исторических предпосылок становления культурно-художественных отношений Византии и Англии в эпоху раннего Средневековья; анализа – для установления влияния византийского стиля на развитие искусства Англии; систематизации – для осмысления процессов развития культурных отношений стран в указанный период. Научная новизна исследования заключается в том, что впервые в отечественной историографии исследовано влияние византийского искусства на культуру Англии эпохи раннего Средневековья, которая является частью романо-германской цивилизационной традиции. Выводы. Выявлено, что в разные исторические периоды характер взаимоотношений между Византией и Англией испытывал трансформации. Подтверждена гипотеза, что в течение нескольких веков после падения «Римской Британии» юг Британии продолжал оставаться в сфере влияния Византии, в какой-то степени ее отделенной частью. Признание Византии как центра христианства стимулировало интерес английских художников, скульпторов и иконописцев к византийскому искусству, в их работах прослеживается византийское влияние. Доказано, что Англия сохранила неизменный интерес к византийскому искусству, транслируя и преломляя традиции Византии через призму собственных национальных традиций. Однако Византия концептуально отвергала культурные достижения Англии и Запада, демонстрируя закрытость, не допуская проникновения чужеродных элементов извне. Культурная целостность доминировала над культурной ассимиляцией.

*Ключевые слова:* взаимодействие византийской и английской культуры; искусство; деятельность миссионеров; динамика взаимоотношений; культурная целостность; культурная ассимиляция