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# Disappearing byzantine heritage: The case of the medieval church at Boiana

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## Abstract

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## Abstract

The Church of Saints Nicholas and Panteleemon in the Sofia suburb of Boiana, one of the best-known medieval monuments in Bulgaria, has been the subject of shifting interpretations reflecting the politics of heritage. The church's thirteenth-century frescoes have been utilized in the discourse of Bulgarian political elites since the rise of the Bulgarian nation state in the late nineteenth century. This article reviews that discursive history and ties the most recent interpretations of the monument to forces of globalization and to Bulgaria's recent entry in the supranational European Union. Considering discussions of the relative adherence of the church's architecture and monumental fresco program to Byzantine models in the context of the complex attitudes towards Hellenism in present-day Bulgaria, this article outlines possible reasons why the frescoes at Boiana have been seen as the unique product of a native Bulgarian genius rather than of a multilingual and probably multiethnic team of artists who were familiar with and painted in the highly prestigious Byzantine visual koine. © 2016 by The Modern Greek Studies Association.

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