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THE WESTERN IMITATION OF BYZANTINE BINDINGS: THE 'ALLA GRECA' BINDINGS

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The Western imitation of Byzantine bindings: the 'alla greca' bindings

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Western imitations of Byzantine bindings began to appear in Italy, in connection with the growing interest of the humanists in Greek texts. The main features of both the Byzantine and Western bookbinding traditions will be briefly discussed, in order to examine how they were combined to create the 'alla greca' bindings. While the cover decoration was always executed with tools of Western design, the construction techniques of this new and luxurious bookbinding typology show an interesting evolution, from the highly hybridised examples of the 15th century to a wide range of technical possibilities during the 16th century. Particular attention will be paid to the group of manuscripts with 'alla greca' bindings produced in 1566-68 for the Venetian patrician Daniele Barbaro, now held at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

Silvia Pugliese graduated in 1997 as book and paper conservator from the European School in Spoleto, Italy. She holds a degree in Humanities from the University of Bologna and a PhD in Bibliographical and Archival Sciences from the University of Udine. She has worked at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice since 1999 and is the coordinator of the Preservation and Conservation Department. Her areas of research include historical bookbindings and the history of paper production in the Veneto region.