

Anno XX

Numero XXVIII

Settembre 2023



*What's New in Byzantine Studies?*  
*Reviews and Overviews*

Rivista online registrata, codice ISSN 2240-5240

***What's New in Byzantine Studies?  
Reviews and Overviews***

**Indice:**

- M.C. Campone*, Rec. di **G. RAVEGNANI**, *Civiltà bizantina. Una storia millenaria* .....pp. 5-8
- O. Nelson*, Rec. di **M. MULLETT – S. ASHBROOK HARVEY (ed.)**, *Managing emotion in Byzantium: passions, affects and imaginings*.....pp. 9-14
- A.-F. Stamouli*, Rec. di **A. ALEXAKIS – A.-F. STAMOULI**, *Late Byzantine Hagiography. Writers and texts* .....pp. 15-18
- G. Nadiezhda*, *The Byzantine reception of the image of the holy fool in the works of Olga Tuminskaya, doctor of art history*.....pp. 19-27
- K. Acar*, Rec. di **C. ÜNAL – V. GURULEVA**, *Coins of the Trebizond Empire at the Trabzon Museum*.....pp. 28-31
- J. Liu – Q. Li*, *A Bibliographic Report on Monographs and Translations in Byzantine Studies Published in Chinese (2019-2023)*.....pp. 32-38
- A.-F. Stamouli*, Rec. di **ALEXIOS G.C. SAVVIDES**, *Towards a new biographical dictionary of Byzantium, Introductory contribution. Volume I*.....pp. 39-42
- G. Gousgouriotis*, Rec. di **A.V. NIKOPOULOS**, *Η Διάπλαση του Αρχαίου Καθεστώτος του Αγίου Όρους, I: Η Βυζαντινή Περίοδος (8<sup>ος</sup> – αρχές 15<sup>ου</sup> αι.)*.....pp. 43-45
- L.M. Ciolfi*, Rec. di **M.E. POMERO**, *Propaganda politica, imperatori e iconografia monetale nel mondo bizantino (1204-1328)*.....pp. 46-50
- G.U. Cavallera*, Rec. di **T. BRACCINI – L. SILVANO**, *La nave di Caronte. Immagini dell'aldilà a Bisanzio*.....pp. 51-54

- K. Ilko*, Rec. di **R. HILLENBRAND**, *The Great Mongol Shahnama*.....pp. 55-58
- L. McMahon*, Rec. di **D. MARJANOVIĆ**, *Creating Memories in Late 8th-century Byzantium: The Short History of Nikephoros of Constantinople*.....pp. 59-61
- L. McMahon*, Rec. di **A. CASTRORAO BARBA – G. CASTIGLIA (ed.)**, *Perspectives on Byzantine Archaeology. From Justinian to the Abbasid Age (6th–9th Centuries AD)*.....pp. 62-66
- N. Bergamo*, Rec. di **V. RAPTI – E. GORDON (ed.)**, *Ludics: play as humanistic inquiry*.....pp. 67-70

**In collaborazione con:**

*Oxford University Byzantine Society (University of Oxford)*



*Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia*



*Association des étudiants du monde byzantin*



*Student Network for Byzantine and Medieval Study (University of Cyprus)*



**Redazione:** *N. Bergamo (Direttore), G.U. Cavallera, L.M. Ciolfi  
M. Fasolio, L. McMahon  
E. Bianchi, J. Devoge, M. Di Franco, A. Fernández,  
D.A. Heayn-Menendez, A. Kouroupakis, M. Leitner, Z. Olgun*

**G. RAVEGNANI, *Civiltà bizantina. Una storia millenaria,***

**Roma: Carocci, 2023, pp. 220,**

**ISBN 9788829019960, 18 €**

di *Maria Carolina Campone*

Scuola Militare “Nunziatella” – Napoli

Il volume riassume la storia più che millenaria dell'impero bizantino a partire dalla fondazione di Costantinopoli nel 330 e ne ripercorre le fasi salienti, focalizzandosi attorno ad alcuni nuclei tematici fondamentali, corrispondenti ai capitoli del volume.

Nel primo, “L'imperatore e la sua corte”, si esamina l'evoluzione della figura dell'imperatore da *primus inter pares*, come era stato, almeno formalmente, in precedenza, pur con significative eccezioni, a *dominus et deus*. Ravegnani individua il momento cruciale di svolta nella figura di Diocleziano, il quale, ricorrendo all'appellativo di *Iovius*, realizzò la sua identificazione nel cosmo delle divinità pagane; lo storico poi spiega come, con l'avvento del cristianesimo, divenuta impossibile una simile identificazione, si scegliesse la formula dell'“eletto da Dio”, detentore di un'autorità superiore a quella degli altri mortali, in seguito rimasta tipica del mondo bizantino. Ravegnani mette in luce come tale definizione fosse funzionale a una concezione di stampo formalmente teocratico per la quale l'imperatore era simile a Dio nell'esercizio del suo potere, potere che, dunque, finiva con l'essere automaticamente accettato e giustificato. L'imperatore, che restò di fatto per circa un millennio un sovrano assoluto, manteneva il legame con Roma conservando la titolatura latina, anche se, a partire dal VII secolo, vi affiancò il titolo greco di *basileus*, portato poi da tutti gli imperatori di Costantinopoli. Ravegnani illustra con sintesi efficace le denominazioni imperiali ufficiali, mettendo in rilievo il carattere sacro e intangibile della figura del sovrano, per passare poi a illustrare cariche e gradi di nobiltà, senza tralasciare il ruolo delle

donne di corte. Il paragrafo loro dedicato è di grande interesse: l'autore, che già in passato ha riservato grande attenzione alle figure femminili protagoniste della storia bizantina con alcune importanti biografie (*Teodora* [2016] e *Galla Placidia* [2017]) consegna al lettore un quadro vivace della condizione delle spose imperiali, sottolineando come la scelta della moglie del *basileus* fosse un importante atto della vita di corte, come prova la significativa pratica del “concorso di bellezza” ampiamente attestato fra VIII e IX secolo, ma che aveva probabilmente origini più antiche.

Il secondo capitolo, dedicato a Costantinopoli, presenta la città imperiale e la sua topografia attraverso una ricognizione delle fonti letterarie, che consentono di ricostruire idealmente gran parte degli edifici di epoca bizantina non più esistenti. Fra i monumenti caratterizzanti la capitale, Ravegnani si sofferma inevitabilmente sull'ippodromo, centro della vita urbana, e ne illustra le caratteristiche strutturali di epoca costantiniana, soffermandosi soprattutto sul legame che esso mantenne con alcuni importanti momenti del cerimoniale imperiale, come la proclamazione dei sovrani e i trionfi, e sul mondo variopinto che gravitava intorno all'edificio, ricostruito a partire dalla legge emessa da Giustiniano nel 537. Non mancano ovviamente cenni alla rivalità tra Azzurri e Verdi e alla rivolta di *Nika*, a proposito della quale l'autore si sofferma anche a spiegarne la corretta definizione.

Il ruolo fondamentale della Chiesa in un impero come quello bizantino è oggetto di un intero capitolo, il terzo, in cui Ravegnani pone sin dall'inizio in risalto la posizione di preminenza dell'imperatore nell'assicurarsi ampie prerogative di tipo religioso (convocazione dei concili, ratifica delle decisioni adottate in materia di fede, pareri in ambito liturgico-disciplinare), pur chiarendo correttamente che Bisanzio non era uno stato teocratico e che il sovrano poteva al massimo controllare le decisioni assunte – in ogni caso – dal solo clero. Al riguardo, cita la legislazione di Giustiniano, volta a distinguere nettamente impero e sacerdozio, distinzione che comunque restava netta più a livello teorico che pratico. Lo studioso infatti rileva che l'idea dell'indispensabilità dell'imperatore per il benessere della Chiesa si radicò nella mentalità bizantina tanto da esservi ancora riconoscibile per tutto il XIV secolo. L'articolazione della gerarchia ecclesiastica e l'esame delle funzioni

del clero e della giurisdizione del vescovo sono passate in rassegna, mettendo in evidenza il legame sempre forte fra religione e politica, il ruolo dell'arianesimo, il peso delle grandi eresie del V secolo e dei dissidi di natura religiosa suscitati da alcuni concili, come quello di Calcedonia, con le loro ricadute nell'ambito politico-militare. Ravegnani, in particolare, presenta gli sforzi compiuti da Giustiniano per arrivare a un accordo con i monofisiti, l'apporto e i tentativi del patriarca Sergio, senza nascondere la sua perplessità di fronte ad alcune soluzioni proposte dall'uno e dall'altro, come l'aftardocetismo (dottrina «alquanto astrusa») e il monoenergismo («un'altra teoria bislacca»). Al di là delle proprie perplessità in merito ad alcune teorie religiose, lo storico si preoccupa di chiarire al lettore che esse erano frutto del tentativo di arrivare ad una unità religiosa, mirante sostanzialmente al rafforzamento di Bisanzio.

Collegato a questo capitolo è il successivo, incentrato sul monachesimo, che, in quanto ritenuto la forma più perfetta di attuazione dello spirito cristiano, fece ampia presa su tutti gli strati sociali. Lo studioso, pur non tralasciando alcuni comportamenti discutibili, messi in luce anche da autori come Girolamo, sottolinea come esso rappresentò un forte elemento di novità nella società tardoantica, in cui i vecchi schemi esistenziali declinavano per far posto a un mondo del tutto diverso. Anche nel caso della scelta cenobitica, Ravegnani rileva i contatti con la politica, ricordando l'interesse dimostrato da Giustiniano con i suoi interventi legislativi al riguardo. Egli si sofferma soprattutto sull'impatto che l'iconoclastia ebbe sul monachesimo bizantino, dal momento che i monaci, essendo i maggiori produttori di icone, si schierarono decisamente contro il nuovo corso religioso, finendo col rimanere vittime di una vera e propria lotta senza quartiere. La successiva rinascenza monastica, una volta liquidata l'ondata iconoclasta, è presentata come l'età d'oro del monachesimo, e di questa si sottolinea il ruolo sempre più importante nella società. Ravegnani non trascura quelle che definisce «stravaganze ascetiche» evidenziando come la scelta di sottoporsi volontariamente a privazioni e sofferenze sfociasse talvolta in fenomeni che oggi difficilmente possono apparire comprensibili.

Il capitolo conclusivo, riservato all'istruzione e alla cultura, mette in luce il posto rilevante che la prima ebbe nel mondo bizantino, un mondo che, essendo fortemente burocratizzato, richiedeva ai cittadini il possesso di nozioni essenziali per orientarsi.

Il volume ha il pregio di presentare i nuclei tematici principali della storiografia bizantina rendendoli accessibili al grande pubblico. A tal fine, l'autore organizza con una consequenzialità logica molto forte i vari capitoli, al punto che ognuno di essi sembra originarsi dal precedente, rendendo agevole la lettura anche ai non addetti ai lavori. A ciò contribuisce l'apparato iconografico, attentamente disposto in modo da chiarire anche visivamente i punti salienti del discorso. Senza mai tralasciare il ricorso alle fonti, Ravegnani tratteggia un quadro preciso del mondo bizantino, colto negli aspetti essenziali e in una selezione narrativa efficace.



**M. MULLETT – S. ASHBROOK HARVEY (ed.), *Managing emotion in Byzantium: passions, affects and imaginings*,  
New York: Routledge, 2023, pp. 504,  
(*Studies in Byzantine Cultural History*), ISBN 9780203710661, 152 \$**

di *Olympia Nelson*

University of Sydney

The history of emotion as a field of scholarly interest began to gain traction in the late twentieth century. While emotions have always been a subject of study in various disciplines from philosophy to psychology, the specific focus on understanding the cultural history of emotion emerged relatively recently. Since Henry Maguire's visionary study *The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art* (1977), Byzantinists have been inspired by the unique aspects of Byzantine emotion. Once it was perceived that private emotions have a social or religious function, the corollary demands attention: namely how were these emotions regulated? Which emotions are to be cultivated and which are to be suppressed or cured or converted to a more acceptable or constructive variant? And so scholarship in the field has flourished, first figuring out which emotions Byzantine people spoke about and experienced; second, how these conceptions match our intuitions and expectations; third, what prescriptions or instructions are observable in Byzantine literature; and finally, how creative are these accounts of how to manage the necessarily chaotic emotional condition of individuals?

*Managing Emotion in Byzantium: Passions, Affects, and Imaginings*, edited by Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Margaret Mullett, is a remarkable and exciting addition not only to the history of emotion and Byzantine studies, but also art history, hymnography, hagiography, poetry, philosophy and gender studies. The project commenced in 2010, leading to an international colloquium held in December some four years later at Dumbarton Oaks. This volume emerged from

that colloquium and forms part of the *Studies in Byzantine Cultural History* series by Routledge. There are two main objectives at the forefront: (1) to understand the Byzantine perspective on emotion, and (2) to unravel how theoretical frameworks influenced their interpretation of the world. Both of these challenges involve a level of subjectivity that is largely foreign to older traditions of history as an objective record of realities; as Mullett says, it is not so much «about content, but about process: how the Byzantines perceived, felt, dreamed, imagined and remembered, and how they thought about these domains of experience» (p. 1).

The volume comprises a compilation of sixteen essays, each tackling compelling Byzantine themes, including gender, rhetoric, pride, power, fear and grief. Despite the significant number of contributors, the essays exhibit consistent depth and thoroughness in their very accessible treatments. The reader is not subjected to a disjointed or superficial treatment of these topics; instead, the essays maintain a cohesive and engaging narrative throughout, which tends to the philological. In pulling from a broad range of disciplines and seeking to create «a grid with as wide a span as possible» (p. 18), it successfully avoids excessive specificity as a study while still maintaining a satisfying level of detail in each individual chapter.

Before the reader encounters the essays, the introduction is already captivating. Acknowledging how difficult they might be to answer, two key questions are asked: “What are emotions? And why should we want to study emotion?” (*ibidem*). These questions resonate throughout the individual studies and provide ongoing grounds for contemplation.

Mullett draws on psychology and science, mentioning that over the past two decades, our understanding of the brain has evolved significantly. Contemporary endeavours to study the Byzantine understanding of emotion would entail a significantly distinct approach compared to previous scholarship. Such an undertaking would shift its focus from content-based analysis to an examination of the underlying processes underpinning the Byzantine perceptions and experiences, which are themselves enfolded in processes like liturgy or hagiography. According

to Mullett, the fundamental catalyst behind this transformation lies in the advancements of neuroscience and cognitive theory. The remarkable scientific breakthroughs achieved during the latter half of the twentieth century have rendered the processes of the human brain more comprehensible, providing researchers with a deeper understanding of the mechanisms influencing emotions and cognitive functions. Departing from an outdated paradigm, the current approach encompasses a broader perspective, considering experience as an indispensable comprehensive category in which emotions must be located. This approach acknowledges the significance of how individuals conduct their lives, which had previously been a relatively overlooked aspect. The research now seeks to explore the varied circumstances in which people exist, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of Byzantine emotions and their contextual complexities.

The book is thoughtfully structured, which is already clear from the introduction with its sub-headers, «Byzantinists and emotion», «work so far», «this volume». The reader has an immediate sense of where the study of emotion in Byzantium has been until now, where it is at present, and where it could go. It leads into the book seamlessly with its subsection “The chapters” which outlines each chapter, and also manages to leave room for thought for its concluding chapter “The future”. The uncomplicated succinct sentences sustain the reader’s curiosity; and though many of the chapters tackle detailed technical material in ancient languages, the text throughout makes for a pleasurable reading experience.

The introduction positively recognizes the rapid expansion of the field and salutes the recent book by Andrew Mellas, *Liturgy and the Emotions in Byzantium: Compunction and Hymnody* (2020). Curiously, while not using the word, Mellas similarly outlines the ‘management’ of emotion in his study of compunction (κατάνυξις), noting that it is «an emotion that could not be felt unless it was earnestly sought» (p. 1). This dynamic of a feeling proactively being invoked by the pious subject would fit perfectly in the context of *Managing Emotions*. Like many of the authors in the larger collection, Mellas contributes to our understanding of performance as practical theology, making excellent use of Romanos and Andrew of Crete in their incantational rhythms that encourage active participation

and emotional engagement on the part of simple believers. Mellas' arguments match observations in *Managing Emotions* such as Georgia Frank's: «To sing along with the refrain renders the audience into suppliants with the preacher (the 'we' of the *prooimion*), to speak with divine self-understanding, to share in the mocking intimacy between a prophet and his God» (p. 131). The convergence in methods and conclusions that Mullett's introduction highlights in itself propitiates deeper and more comprehensive exploration of the emotional landscape of Byzantine culture. One notes the expansive nature of the field and the profound discoveries being made within it; and it is difficult not to share a sense of excitement as profound insights continue to emerge.

Each chapter in the book stands out for its unique exploration of a different kind of emotion, and many demonstrate extensive philological work to understand the Byzantine vocabulary associated with emotion. In her masterly chapter, Georgia Frank explores the various terms associated with pity (such as ἔλεος, οἶκτος, ἐλεημοσύνη, εὐσπλαγγνία and φιλανθρωπία) with a specific focus on how rhetoricians strategically elicit the desired response from their audience. She pays particular attention to tools of rhetorical proximity: *ethopoeia* or *prosopopoeia* (a rhetorical device in which the speaker or writer personifies a character) and *ekphrasis* (description) used by rhetoricians to evoke emotions, in particular pity. To add to this, she analyzes Romanos's kontakion "On Elijah" to explore how hymnography has a unique advantage where it can replicate the techniques of homiletic speeches while also embracing the potential for dialogue. Frank emphasizes that through these various techniques, the congregation is actively engaged, and a sense of pity is evoked within them.

Aglae Pizzone examines the historical development of two unconventional terms for sadness in Byzantine Greek, namely downcastness (κατήφεια), exploring the underlying metaphors and metonymies associated with these emotions, which she argues are also connected to aspects of shame, and applies a methodology rooted in classics and diachronic analysis to Byzantine texts. Her examination is fruitfully answered by Maria Doerfler's penetrating analysis of a perceived redundancy of grieving or mourning (πένθος), grieving and mourning, that the loss

of loved ones by natural causes is unremarkable in Byzantine thought and requires specifically theological grounds for expression. In doing so, she highlights the complex dynamics surrounding grief and the experience of loss, where emotion is valorized insofar as it is correctly socialized.

Martin Hinterberger focuses on the word envy (*φθόνος*), arguing for the importance of linguistic studies in exploring emotion concepts, using modern English usage as a comparison and reference point rather than adopting a universalist approach, and discusses the management of envy through its portrayal in mythology. After reading Hinterberger's chapter, one is left with a tantalizing dilemma of whether envy (or jealousy) is socially functional or intrinsically bad for the individual. I admire the effortless way Hinterberger draws upon modern language to enlarge our understanding:

«I would prefer to speak about *phthonos* when referring to the envious emotion of the Greek past. In German, there exists the beautiful word *Mißgunst*, but it is rarely used in everyday speech, if at all, and therefore quite artificial. Nevertheless, it expresses very well the essence of Greek *phthonos*, much more than *Neid* or 'envy'» (p. 67).

In English, we too have some difficulty using words that might translate *Mißgunst*, perhaps 'resentment' but better 'begrudging'.

In addition to offering robust philological perspectives on emotion, certain texts in the collection also analyse iconography associated with emotions. Annemarie Weyl Carr investigates the depiction of mercy or compassion (*ἔλεος*) in Byzantine images, particularly focusing on the representation of the Mother of God as *Eleousa*. This epithet, which appears on a wide range of Byzantine icons of Mary, is the earliest and most prevalent, found in various iconographic types, both with and without the presence of the Christ child. Through images and language, Weyl Carr's analysis honours the Byzantine voice that characterizes the whole collection. Her chapter is symbolically extended in a large and exceptional appendix with three Marian kanons by John Mauropous, John Therakas and Theodore II Laskaris in the original text with limpid translations facing.

There is a challenge inherent in all historical scholarship, namely that we tend to investigate phenomena as they turn up in learned documents and aesthetically valuable monuments. Scholars draw from patristics, hagiography, homilies, hymnography, parietal art and icons; and though their findings are immensely valuable in expressing both the range of emotions and their imagined use or the methods of control toward theological ends, the data tend to confine our grasp of Byzantine emotion to literary and artistic realms of experience. But assuredly Byzantine emotion had a wider orbit, as was observed by Margarita Poljakovskaja in the 1990s. Her book *Byzantium, Byzantines and Byzantinists* begins with a terrifying fanfare of “The emotional world of Byzantium”, where Poljakovskaja evokes the spectacles of the street and hippodrome that included hideous displays of torture and «sophisticated executions» (p. 11). Such enormities are beyond both our experience and powers of sympathy, because it is hard for us to contemplate that a public might be entertained by the spectacle of suffering.

To be sure, the current collection gives much attention to negative emotions like grief (Maria Doerfler and Henry Maguire) and envy (Hinterberger) or fear (Sergey Ivanov), but because our attention is drawn to emotions upon which writers induce a sense of control, we miss the uncontrolled emotions, especially since they deal with conditions that we in our century would find loathsome. But if we miss the odious emotions because they are beyond the scope of Byzantine authors, we are also likely to miss the beguiling ones. This is hardly a complaint but a sign of future possibilities: to discover the emotional underbelly of a society that is as wild as it is managed.

*Managing Emotion in Byzantium: Passions, Affects and Imaginings* is an exceptional volume that will captivate and hold immense appeal to researchers, scholars, and students alike. The essays within the book are exemplary and thought-provoking contributions affording readers invaluable insights that enrich our comprehension of emotions in Byzantium.

**A. ALEXAKIS – A.-F. STAMOULI, *Late Byzantine Hagiography. Writers and texts*, Kallipos – Open Academic Editions, 2023, pp. 430**

di *Alexia-Foteini Stamouli*

University of Patras

The work, written by Alexandros Alexakis (Professor at the University of Ioannina) and Alexia-Foteini Stamouli (Laboratory Teaching Staff Member at the University of Patras), deals with the hagiographical production of the late Byzantine period, from the Fall of Constantinople in 1204 to the last years of the Byzantine Empire.

An introduction with the most important events (political, military, economic, and ecclesiastical) of that period presents the volume's content. Emphasis is given on the importance of these years within the intellectual field (developments in Letters and Arts) and the reasons behind the development of hagiography. There are chapters dedicated to both the most important representatives of the hagiographical production of the period and the categories of texts. Each chapter begins with important facts about the life and work of the writers. Characteristic excerpts of at least one of their hagiographical works with informative facts about persons or events come next. They are followed by a paraphrase. The analysis of some passages is accompanied by a glossary and/or commentary.

It was of interest to highlight elements such as the characteristics of the persons who wrote hagiographical texts during this period (e.g. their social status, education...), the saints to whom the works are dedicated and the criteria for their selection, the reasons for writing the texts, their structure, language, and style features. Emphasis is given on issues such as the maintenance of the ancient Greek tradition, the connection with rhetoric, the distinction of cities and regions with religious significance, the possibility of utilizing hagiography as a historical and archaeological source, the gathering of evidence for the scientific knowledge of the

time. Comparisons are sometimes made with other related texts, earlier or contemporary. At the end of each author's study some conclusions are presented. The last chapter summarizes the conclusions of all the chapters.

The titles and summaries of the fourteen chapters are as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** The late Byzantine era and the Hagiography  
The most important events of the late Byzantine era. Hagiography and the causes of its development during the late Byzantine era.
- **Chapter 2:** Gregory of Cyprus – Theodora Kantakouzene Palaiologina Raoulaina: Intellectual circles in late Byzantium – Feminine presence in Hagiography  
Evidence about the life and work of Gregory of Cyprus and Theodora Raoulaina. The intellectual circles of the era. The causes of writing, reference to ecclesiastical and other events.
- **Chapter 3:** John Staurakios – Saints of Thessaloniki  
Evidence about the life and work of John Staurakios. Excerpts of his speeches dedicated to Saint Demetrius and Saint Theodosia. The causes of writing, the connection to the city of Thessaloniki.
- **Chapter 4:** Constantine Akropolites – Old saints  
Evidence about the life and work of Constantine Akropolites. Presentation of twenty of his texts dedicated to old saints. Reference to political, social, and ecclesiastical issues; the role of animals.
- **Chapter 5:** Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos – The city and the Churches  
Evidence about the life and work of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. Overview of his work related to the Church of the Life-Giving Spring of Constantinople: the collection of miracles. The *ekphraseis* dedicated to Constantinople, Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Life-Giving Spring.
- **Chapter 6:** Theodore Metochites – The motives of writing  
Evidence about the life and work of Theodore Metochites. The motives of the writing of hagiographical works. Connection with the art of the period.



- **Chapter 7:** Nikephoros Gregoras – Celebration of patron saint / The contemporary education  
Evidence about the life and work of Nikephoros Gregoras. Overview of his hagiographical works. The importance of the celebration of the patron Saint Demetrius in the city of Thessaloniki. The education of the era, according to the work dedicated to the writer’s uncle.
- **Chapter 8:** Theodore Hyrtakenos – Description of nature  
Evidence about the life and work of Theodore Hyrtakenos. The *ekphrasis* of Saint Anna’s garden – connection with the achievements of the era – comparisons with texts of other genres.
- **Chapter 9:** Joseph Kalothetos – The Holy Mountain  
Evidence about the life and work of Joseph Kalothetos. The hagiographical works of Joseph Kalothetos. The image of the Holy Mountain.
- **Chapter 10:** Joseph Lazaropoulos – Hagiography as a historical source  
Evidence about the life and work of Joseph Lazaropoulos. The worship of the patron saint of Trebizond, Saint Eugene – collection of miracles – historical witnesses.
- **Chapter 11:** Philotheos Kokkinos – Contemporary saints  
Evidence about the life and work of Philotheos Kokkinos. Works dedicated to non-contemporary saints. Works dedicated to saints of the writer’s era.
- **Chapter 12:** Symeon of Thessaloniki – History of Thessaloniki  
Evidence about the life and work of Symeon of Thessaloniki. Excerpts of his speech to Saint Demetrius, a historical source.
- **Chapter 13:** Makarios Makris: A saint writer – *Ekphraseis*  
Evidence about the life and work of Makarios Makris. Makarios Makris as a saint. Hagiographical works of Makris and dedicated to Makris. Analysis of the *ekphraseis*.
- **Chapter 14:** Conclusions

Brief reference to the main events of the late Byzantine period and its hagiographical production. Important writers of hagiographical works and their texts.

Constantine Akropolites dedicated texts to more saints than other writers, however the most extensive hagiographical works of the late Byzantine period are due to Philotheos Kokkinos. The completion of the treatment of the hagiographical texts of these two authors required two parts. It was considered important to present the content of the selected hagiographical texts of the various authors in their entirety, in addition to the more detailed paraphrasing of certain passages. Thus, the placement of a passage in the entire work becomes clear and the overall supervision of each work becomes possible. The presentation of the hagiographical texts of the late Byzantine period and their authors is necessarily selective. This is due both to the abundance of the hagiographical production during these years and to the limitations in the extent of the work. However, an effort was made for the presentation of the late Byzantine hagiography to be as representative as possible.

***The Byzantine reception of the image of the holy fool  
in the works of Olga Tuminskaya, doctor of art history***

di *Gaevskay Nadiezhda*

Russian Christian Humanitarian Academy – Saint Petersburg

In 2010, in St. Petersburg, the studies of Byzantine holy fool by Olga Tuminskaya, researcher at the Russian Museum, became known. Two years later, her first monographs “*Blessed and Foolish in the History, Life and fine Art of Ancient Russia*” and “*Perception of a medieval Icon*” were published, respectively, in the publishing house of the Pedagogical University of St. Petersburg and in that of the city of Dusseldorf in Germany. Much attention in the monograph is paid to the problem of the Byzantine region as a spatio-temporal localization of the region of veneration of the holy fools and the writing of images of the blessed. As shown in the work, the origin and spread of the memory of the local saint is explained by the interaction of two directions: educational, coming from the center, and ritual, preserved locally.

Olga Tuminskaya affirms the influence on the formation of the artistic image of the holy fool. The emergence of the pictorial embodiment of the phenomenon of foolishness was influenced by the Byzantine Christian tradition and the preceding ancient culture. Considering the formation of the iconography of foolishness, the author attracts a wide art historical context: sculptures of antiquity, the corpus of cultural heritage objects of the early Middle Ages of Christianity in Europe, including folk art of Western Europe, pictorial monuments of the Byzantine-Eastern world, medieval handwritten books with facial images (Psalms with French historicized initials, the Konigsberg list of the Radziwill primary Chronicle, the Facial Chronicle of Ivan the Terrible). According to the author, the images of Andrew of Constantinople and St. John the Baptist became the prototype for

creating the images of the Russian holy fools of the late fifteenth – sixteenth centuries.

One of the main problems in creating the iconographic canon «the image of the holy fool in Christ» is to determine the context from which a new work of art is formed. The pages of the monograph provide an overview of sources of various content, that could directly or indirectly influence the creation of a new work of art.

In historical and artistic terms, the study touches on the Russian period from 1493 (this is the date of the construction of the chapel in honor of the righteous Prokop of Ustyuzha on the Sukhona River) to 1646 (this year Patriarch Joseph announced a District charter prohibiting the presence of holy fools in churches). The list of “holy fools for Christ's sake” who became famous in the Middle Ages, whose iconography is devoted to Olga Tuminskaya's study, includes 22 names of saints of the Eastern Church: Isaac of Pechersk, Prokopy of Ustyuzhsky, Theodore of Novgorod, George Shenkursky, Jacob Borovichsky, Maxim of Moscow, Mikhail Klopsky, Isidore Tverdislov, John of Ustyuzhsky, Lavrenty of Kaluga, Vasily of Moscow, Nikolai of Pskov, John Vlasaty of Rostov, Simon Yurievetsky, John the Great Kolpak of Moscow, Cyprian of Suzdal, Prokopy of Vyatka, Maxim Totemsky, Andrey Totemsky, Simeon Verkhotursky, Kozma Verkhotursky, and Jonah Pesnoshsky.

In addition, in the monograph the author examines the Russian iconography of a number of Byzantine saints, the Venerable Alexis the Man of God and Mary of Egypt, the urban holy fools Andrew of Constantinople, Simeon of Emesa. Considering the problem of the phenomenology of the artistic image of the icon on the example of these saints, the author draws the reader's attention to how the iconography of this or that holy fool corresponds to the pictorial canon, iconographic originals, what variations of images are represented on his icons, what is the dynamics of the development of the iconography of the image.

In the monograph “*Die Wahrnehmung der mittelalterlichen Ikone*”, published by the Düsseldorf Publishing House in Germany, the author tells about the German reception of the image of the holy fool. The materials for the study were numerous

archival documents (including manuscripts, rare authentic editions and books), monuments of Christian art from the collections of museums in Russia and Germany.

At the same time, a number of German art monuments are being introduced into scientific circulation (the icon “Saints Procopius and John of Ustyuzha”, from the church of St. Mary in Lubeck, icons from the church of St. Procopius in Hamburg). The work is accompanied by a detailed description of a number of images of holy fools in works of fine art of the Middle Ages – on icons and miniatures of facial manuscripts. Tuminskaya reports that the largest Orthodox Church in Germany, St. Procopius Ustyuzhsky in Hamburg. Therefore, the main part of the materials contains information about him.

The author especially highlights the connection between the images of the Orthodox iconography of Byzantium and Germany. The description of the church in Lubeck, an ensemble of icons dedicated to the holy fools, allows us to conclude about the semantic and dogmatic connection of the content of the images. This connection is a manifestation of the tradition of creating Orthodox iconography.

In 2016, Olga Tuminskaya's monograph “*Icon of the Fool*” is a new study on the history of iconography of a unique type of holy fool. The theme of the book is the image of the fool in Christ in the visual arts of the late Middle Ages and Modern times. This is the first experience of a monographic description of the history of the formation of the iconography of the fools in Christ, confirming the hypothesis of the entry of the iconographic type of the holy fools as a “small genre” into the system of artistic images of the icon. It is especially important to introduce visual materials from numerous provincial small museums in Russia and materials from private collections of collectors in Russia and Europe into scientific circulation.

In the central part of the monograph, the author asserts that the phenomenon of foolishness has a Byzantine origin on the basis of refined and structured information from various hagiographic sources about the Church of Ordination in Blachernae, as well as the history and iconography of the Feast of the Intercession

of the Most Holy Theotokos, whose images confirm the sanctity of the holy fool, because he was lucky enough to see a miracle as a reward for faith.

The book provides excursions into the history of the phenomenon of foolishness (in Byzantium and in Russia). The religious phenomenon of stupidity is considered in a broad historical and cultural context. The author of the book pays great attention to the issues of terminology, distinguishing the concepts of “blessed”, “fool” and “holy fool for Christ's sake” and revealing the semantic features of the lexemes “buoy”, “obscenity” and “stigma” in the historical aspect. The article presents a typology of images of the blessed in art. In relation to the images of the holy fools, the author identifies the following iconographic genres: personal, hagiographic, festive, hymnographic, thaumaturgical, narrative and contemplative.

Of great scientific value is the Catalog of works compiled by the author with images of holy fools for Christ's sake. Important for a modern researcher of the phenomenon of foolishness, we believe the author's description of the preserved images of medieval holy fools of Byzantium. This is the Byzantine holy fool, the first to be known in Russia; this is Saint Andrew of Constantinople. The icon with his image, which is on display at the Russian Museum, is magnificent. (Icon “Andrew the Fool with the life”, beginning of the sixteenth century, Moscow, collection of N.P. Likhachev. GRM, inv. n. DRZH-2099).

A large icon with eighteen hagiographic border scenes arranged in accordance with the law of “readability” of the icon from left to right and from top to bottom, reflects the main moments of the saint's life in picturesque scenes in hagiographic border scenes along the edges of the icon and in the middle. The first hagiographic border scenes is the arrival of a fool in the city, where he learns to read and write, and then becomes a fool. But in order to fool around for many years of his life, a person needs patience and support, and he can only get them from Christ the Savior or His Mother Theotokos. Such meetings marked the path of Andrew.

On the edge in the right corner of the upper hagiographic border scenes of the icon, Jesus Christ on the throne instructs Andrew on the path of foolishness

(blessing is the motive of life). On the central hagiographic border scenes of the lower field, Andrew and his friend Epiphanius are in the Blachernae Church, contemplating a miracle. The Epiphany of the Theotokos in hagiographic border scenes is conveyed with pathos of admiration and trembling surprise. The lowest right hagiographic border scenes is a story about posthumous miracles, perpetuating the memory of the saint. A competent work that takes into account the iconographic laws of spectator perception and takes into account the hagiographic text related to the circle of Dionysius. But in the interpretation of figures and architectural backstage, the artist departs from the Dionysian traditions, preferring a subtle, purely graphic style of writing.

The subtle manner of the “lessirovochny” writing, and the flexible contour, and the soft pattern of the folds, and the tone of the transparent greenish-olive veil enveloping the figure of Andrew. This brings a lyrical beginning to the strict and detached image of the saint from the world. His gaze is piercing, his hands are in motion, his legs are turned so that we feel movement. But along with his inherent poverty and wandering, hunger and rejection, this saint, with his straight back and intelligent gaze, conveys the nobility of spirit and the aristocracy of his elevation. Involuntarily, you admire the courage and intelligence of the “madman” and “outcast”.

There is an opinion that the appearance of this icon in Russia in 1492 and until the first quarter of the sixteenth century is associated with the critical moods of the Russian, Moscow and Novgorod population with eschatological expectations of the end of the world. At crucial moments in the life of mankind, the holy fools always came to the rescue. In Byzantium, the life of Andrew the Fool was most popular in a similar situation – around 1000, when the prospects of the end of the world were also predicted.

The holy fools for Christ's sake are saints who perform a church feast, unique in form and ideological mood. It is impossible to give up the burden of holy stupidity. It becomes life itself when a person says goodbye to the usual way of his existence. Having taken on a heavy burden, he leaves his parents, relatives,

acquaintances – from the most mundane, raising his spirit to new heights. The transformation of the human essence is the meaning of the holy fool's influence on others, but it is achieved at the expense of his own transformation. External transformations take place in full view of everyone – social humiliation with all the accompanying changes in clothing, housing, and appearance. The inner transformation is invisible, it is the secret ascent of the holy fool's soul to the Image of the Lord. Most often, fools are laypeople; their lives were spent in full view of their fellow citizens or fellow villagers.

The holy fools connect with certain localities, with the places they walk through, with the temples in which they pray. They become intercessors and symbols of the city. So Andrew the fool from Constantinople began to guard his city, the capital of Byzantium, Constantinople. The hagiology of the holy fools gives us basic information about the real stay of these saints in the city and its surroundings. We receive a complex of information from material sources of a visual nature. Art historians point to the only surviving single image of St. Andrew the Fool of Constantinople in Ancient Russia. This, originating from the extant church of the Sitetsky Monastery in Novgorod, is a hagiographic icon “Andrew the Holy Fool with a life” of the sixteenth century from the collection of the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.

The image of the holy fool in literature and art became the object of close attention of researchers in the twentieth century. To date, the reflection of the phenomenon of foolishness in iconography and hagiography has received conceptual understanding in the context of the main processes of cultural development. A study with fundamental content and methodological novelty is Olga Tuminskaya's monograph “*The Image of the Fool in Word and image*” (2021). In the work, analytical coverage was given to the topic of perception by an iconographer, hagiographer and theologian of the image of the holy fool.

Olga Tuminskaya writes that in the general process of icon painting development, the appearance of the icon of the holy fool was not only one of the episodes, but an important stage. This stage determined the peculiarities of ascetic



iconography – a unique direction of sacred art. Visually, the holy fool was different from any other person of the icon. The perfect costume of a holy fool is nudity. According to Olga Tuminskaya, the naked holy fool – the image of Andrew of Constantinople, Simeon of Emesa –, is generated by the Byzantine cultural consciousness, the consciousness of the Romans. The origins of the artistic tradition of depicting the holy fools interested various researchers who noted the convergence of the Russian and Byzantine canons of the Paleologian era, whose guides were considered Greeks who worked in Moscow in the fourteenth century. Exploring the concept of “artistic image”, the author of the monograph defined and considered the definitions of the concept of foolishness as *terminus technicus*, denoting the whole set of cultural and artistic connotations, the specifics of reading and aesthetic processing of the image of a holy fool in culture.

In the monograph “*The Image of the Holy Fool in word and image*”, devoted to reflections on the permissibility of depicting the image of the fool in an icon, Olga Tuminskaya examines in detail the formation of the image of the holy fool in art, comprehends its place in the aesthetic system, in the worldview of Byzantium of the Middle Ages, highlighting the special characteristics of creative individuality in creating the image of the holy fool of Ancient Russia.

Speaking about the veneration of the fools, which, in particular, is confirmed by a large number of iconographic images, the author pays special attention to icons depicting the fools: “*Blessed Basil, the coming of the Mother of God with the baby*” (sixteenth century, from the cathedral; Solvychegod Historical and Art Museum), “*Holy Basil the Great and the Wonderworkers Basil the Blessed and Maxim the Blessed*” (late sixteenth – early seventeenth century; Pokrovsky Cathedral, Moscow), “*Prokopiyy Ustyuzhsky, the coming Virgin and Child*” (late sixteenth century, from the cathedral; Solvychegodsky Historical and Art Museum) and others. The articles of the monograph are devoted to them, representing various interpretations of the icon as an artistic work of the iconographic manner of regional pictorial styles.

Analyzing numerous iconographic samples, the art critic convincingly proves that both the canon and stylistic craft and artistic approaches in icon painting practice, as well as the narrative impressions of the iconographer, his direct participation in the awareness of the depicted played a decisive role in creating the image of the holy fool. To complete the spectrum of the picturesque series of images of the holy fools in Christ, the author invites the reader to pay attention to the specific features of the image of saints, recognizable by the iconographic canon in other types of art – toreutics, frescoes, miniatures, jewelry, sewing, wood carving and others.

Central to the monograph is the section on the perception of the icon, which examines the Byzantine reception and ancient origins. The author refers to Byzantine thought as the theological basis of aesthetic analysis, to the works of I. Damaskin, D. Furnoagrafiot, M. Confessor and rightly emphasizes the great role of the themes of Byzantine painting, traces the development of the medieval iconographer of the stylistics of iconography of early Christianity.

The general conclusion of the monograph: the artist's appeal to the creation of the icon was consistent and holistic. The author notes the allegorical meaning present in the images of the icon, which is the reception of ancient and Byzantine culture. The issues of types and typification of images are deeply explored in the third part of the monograph devoted to iconographic *topos* and topography of regions and pictorial schools. The author emphasizes prototypicity as the basis of the vision of the icon of the fool and a component of the general trend, which had its previous stages and a certain historical and cultural context, suggesting the transformation of the canon on local soil, which already had its own local traditions.

Tuminskaya argues that the emergence of one's own artistic tradition is impossible without the assimilation and creative processing of the historical principles of the Byzantine corpus of iconographic images. The analysis of the iconographic samples considered in the book is comprehensive, multidimensional in nature, involving historical data and information about the controversy of icon painters. According to its methodological specifics, the monograph is

interdisciplinary in nature, combining historical, art criticism, and anthropological approaches. The text of the book acquires the character of an apology for holy fool.

**C. ÜNAL – V. GURULEVA, *Coins of the Trebizond Empire*  
*at the Trabzon Museum, Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2022, pp. 83***

**ISBN: 9786258056280, € 39**

di *Kayahan Acar*

Manisa Celal Bayar University

In this study, Ceren Ünal and Vera Guruleva present the coins of the Trebizond Empire with examples from the Trabzon Museum. The book is based on the coins minted by the Empire of Trebizond, which emerged after the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Latins and claimed the throne of the Byzantine Empire.

The book is separated in two parts. In the first part of the book, Ceren Ünal presents a brief history of the Trebizond Empire and its coinage system. In the second part of the book, Vera Guruleva discusses the results of the research on the coinage system of the Trebizond Empire and future prospects. Both parts of the book are written in two different languages, Turkish and English. Bibliographical references are given at the end of both chapters. At the end of the book there is a catalogue of the 152 silver and copper coins examined in the Trabzon Museum. The catalogue is arranged chronologically according to the years of the emperors' reigns, with detailed descriptions of the obverse and reverse. In addition, the silver and copper coins have been categorised by analysing the symbols and details on them.

As mentioned, the book has two authors and contains two separate chapters according to their areas of specialisation. The first chapter written by author Ceren Ünal begins with a brief history of the Trebizond Empire and its coinage system. This section mentions the events that led to the establishment of the Empire and who its founders were. The founders of the Empire of Trebizond, who claimed the throne of the Byzantine Empire and saw themselves as its successors, are given genealogical and dynastic information, as well as the history of its foundation, and the geography and characteristics, economic, political and religious dimensions of

the Empire are examined. The coinage system of the Trebizond Empire is then explained in detail. In this section, information is given on the metals and units, mints, coin types and iconography used in the coins of the Trebizond Empire, in the light of research into the coins of the Trebizond Empire. The first studies and subsequent research are briefly presented, and the inadequacy of previous studies on the Trebizond coins and the fact that some groups of coins were included in the Byzantine coins are discussed, as well as the problems of classifying the Trebizond coins. The uncertainty of the mintages is also discussed in the light of previous studies. Coins and units are analysed in terms of style, design, content and weight, as well as the signs and symbols found on the coins. Finally, coin designs are examined from an iconographic point of view and the variety and diversity of coins within the Trebizond Empire is discussed.

The second chapter, written by author Vera Guruleva, provides information on the research into the coins of the Empire of Trebizond and the beginning of this research. Since the first publications, the coins of the Trebizond Empire have been analysed and the methods and techniques of coin classification have been studied. The increase in the number of studies on numismatics has paved the way for a more complete research of the incomplete or erroneous studies carried out since the first publications and has made it possible to compile the available information into a corpus. It has also made it possible to identify problems that are still missing or need to be corrected, and to put forward proposals that may offer solutions to these problems. This part of the book analyses the chronological order of the coinage of the Trebizond Empire and the impact of the iconographic similarities on the coins. In addition, the evolution and changes of the studies have been taken into account. The place of the coins minted by the Empire of Trebizond in the commercial life and the circulation of the coins in which regions and in which way have been studied. In the course of these studies, information is given on the results obtained from the study of mass finds and the results of multidimensional studies such as metrology, epigraphy and the study of metal components. In addition to the metrological studies of the coins struck by the Trebizond Empire, this chapter also discusses the iconographical research, looking for clues to establish a typology and

a chronology. The aim is therefore to identify the coins of the Trebizond Empire on the basis of detailed metrological, iconographic and epigraphic data.

The research topics covered in both parts of the book are presented in a simple and understandable way. The title of the book, its headings and the division into chapters are appropriate to the content of the book; the basic concepts and terms used in the book helps the reader to understand the integrity of the subject. In addition, the references and sources provided are instructive and enlightening for readers who wish to learn more about the subject. It is particularly suitable for readers working in or interested in the field of Byzantine numismatics. It is, however, a work that can be useful not only for academic studies, but also for all readers who wish to have a brief information about the Empire of Trebizond with its historical background. It presents the coinage system of an empire that was established after the invasion of the Capital in 1204, an interesting period in the history of the Byzantine Empire. It also shows the differences between the coins minted by the Byzantine Empire and those of the Trebizond Empire.

The book examines the first studies of the Trebizond Empire, from the first researches to the present day, and shows the state of research and publications. The book offers a perspective on what can be expected from future researches. An analysis of the book shows that there are questions that need to be answered. This can only be done by a good synthesis of the available information and by making future studies comprehensive. Data from excavations, a careful examination of the holdings of museums in the region, and the combination of this research with all the information will be useful for future studies. In addition, studies on the circulation of coins, not only within the region, but also in all regions where coins can reach, will undoubtedly provide a new perspective on the coinage system of the Trebizond Empire.

This study, which can contribute to the numismatic studies of the Trebizond Empire and its coinage system, can be analysed in terms of providing a perspective for future studies by showing the dimensions of research by mentioning the publications made from the first to the present day. An analysis of the book reveals

that many questions remain unanswered. In their search for answers to these questions and in order to express their views on the coins of the period, the authors present the information they have with examples from a group of coins in the museum's collection. The book seems to have achieved its aim of raising questions and expectations by carefully examining previous studies. In addition, it is a study that can contribute to the field by making the coins in the inventory of the museum in Trabzon, the capital of the empire, accessible to researchers who are considering to do research on the coins of the Trebizond Empire.

***A Bibliographic Report on Monographs and Translations  
in Byzantine Studies Published in Chinese (2019-2023)***

di *Jianchang Liu* e *Qiang Li*

IHAC, NENU – Changchun, China

***Introduction***

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, Byzantine studies has rapidly developed in China. This is reflected not only in the growing number of Chinese scholars and their frequent communications and collaborations with the international community, but also in publications.<sup>1</sup> Despite the epidemic situation in the last three years, Chinese scholars have produced many monographs on Byzantine political and military affairs and Sino-Byzantine relations. Meanwhile, Chinese scholars have also paid attention to developments in international research, and have published a number of translations of international works into Chinese. This article briefly summarizes the achievements of Byzantine studies in Chinese academia in the past five years. There have been more than fifteen books published in this period, which shows a great step of Chinese scholars' contribution to global Byzantine studies. We first present and briefly summarize monographs by Chinese scholars according to the year of publication, and then list the translations of international works by Chinese scholars.

---

<sup>1</sup> The typical case is the International Byzantine Seminar and its lecture series held yearly in Northeast Normal University (NENU), Changchun, China (since 2017). And two collected works related to Byzantine studies in English also were published by NENU: S. GÜNTHER – L. QIANG – L. YING – C. SODE (ed.), *Byzantine Gold Coins in the World of Late Antiquity. Papers Read at the International Conference in Changchun, China, 23–26 June 2017*, Changchun: IHAC, 2021; S. GÜNTHER – L. QIANG – C. SODE – S. WAHLGREN – Z. QIANG (ed.), *Byzantium in China: Studies in Honour of Professor Xu Jialing on the Occasion of Her Seventieth Birthday*, Changchun: IHAC, 2019. Since here our purpose is to introduce the publications in Chinese, and also the two are in English and purchasable, emphasis will be given to them.



## 1. Monographs

2019

*New Discussion of Ancient History: Highlights of Byzantine Studies* published by Prof. Chen Zhiqiang.<sup>2</sup> This monograph systematically summarizes his recent studies on *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, especially in environmental history, the history of the Palaiologan period, and historiography. He innovates on his previous studies, aiming to overcome the limitations of the traditional over-focus on institutional history and Byzantine history before Komnenian period. It offers a comprehensive summary of the recent development as well as reflections on the future development of Byzantine studies in China.

2020

*The Period of Transformation of Eastern Mediterranean World and Foundation of Byzantine Empire (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century)* published by Dr. Wu Peng.<sup>3</sup> This volume discusses the problems that arose during the transformation from the fourth to the sixth century, exploring the rise of Christianity, developments in the form of government, and the establishment of the new capital in Constantinople. The strength of the volume is its methodological interest in multiculturalism.

2021

Dr. Sun Lifang from Shandong University published her *Study on the Byzantine-Nicaea Empire Co-capital in the 13th Century*.<sup>4</sup> This is an excellent

---

<sup>2</sup> C. ZHIQIANG, *New Discussion of Ancient History: Highlights of Byzantine Studies* (古史新话：拜占庭学研究的亮点), Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2019. The English translations of books' titles are from the authors themselves and we keep it as it is.

<sup>3</sup> W. PENG, *The Period of Transformation of Eastern Mediterranean World and Foundation of Byzantine Empire (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century)* (东地中海世界的转变与拜占廷帝国的奠基时代 [4-6世纪]), Beijing: Peking University Press, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> S. LIFANG, *Study on the Byzantine-Nicaea Empire Co-capital in the 13th Century* (13世纪拜占庭-尼西亚帝国陪都研究), Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2021.

representative of Byzantine studies by using the comparative methodology in China. In this work, she creatively uses the concept of "co-capital" (陪都) in ancient China to study the special form of the capital of the Nicaean Empire in the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> By analysing the significance of Nymphaion (modern Kemalpaşa), the *de facto* co-capital of Nicaea Empire, she argues that Nymphaion had a great influence on the political plan of Nicaean Empire. Her arguments are based on an analysis of geographical conditions, the plan to recover Constantinople, and the defence system based on the records of Akropolites's *History*.

2022

Dr. Zhang Shuang and Dr. Xue Haibo from Nanjing Normal University co-author *The Relationships between Byzantium, the Intermediary Peoples and China: An Investigation from the Perspective of the Silk Road*.<sup>6</sup> This book is the revised version of Dr. Zhang Shuang's PhD thesis. The work focuses mainly on the city-states or the intermediary peoples between Byzantium and China along the Silk Road from the second to the sixth centuries AD. They argue that the trade along the Silk Road was principally driven by the political and military activities of Han Dynasty and the Roman-Byzantine Empire, and the intermediaries played an important role in the communications along the Silk Road.

Dr. Guo Yunyan from Hebei University released *The Roman-Byzantine Empire along the Silk Road: Based on the Coin Research*, which is the further

---

<sup>5</sup> In ancient China, the concept "co-capital" has many meanings such as “留都”(Liu Du)、 “别都”(Bie Du)、 “副都”(Fu Du)、 “次都”(Ci Du)、 “陪都”(Pei Du)、 “行都”(Xing Du) and so on, but in English they are generally translated as "temporary capital" or "provisional capital". See D. HAIBIN, "On the Multi-capitals in Ancient China" (《论中国古代的多京制》), *Social Science Front*, 2015, pp. 90-99.

<sup>6</sup> Z. SHUANG – X. HAIBO, *The Relationships between Byzantium, the Intermediaries and China* (丝路视域下拜占庭、中介民族与中国关系研究), Beijing: China Social Science Press, 2022.

extension of her doctoral research.<sup>7</sup> As the subtitle suggests, the defining feature of Guo's work is the comprehensive analysis of Byzantine coins found in China. Through this, she expounds Byzantium's influence on the Silk Road and its interactions with the East. This is also the first comprehensive work on the Byzantine coins with rich illustrations in China.

*Study of The History of Theophylact Simocatta*,<sup>8</sup> by Dr. Su Cong from Guizhou Normal University, is another monograph based on revised doctoral research. In this work, Su discusses different issues of Byzantium in sixth-seventh centuries, replying on Theophylact Simocatta and his *History*, such as the genre of *History*, the reform of the Byzantine Empire in this period, wars, as well as the diplomatic movements in Maurice's period with Persians, Slavs, and Avars. He also devotes one chapter to discuss the sources related to ancient China.

*The History of Byzantine Literature* edited by Prof. Liu Wenxiao is the first handbook on Byzantine literature in China.<sup>9</sup> It divides Byzantine literature into four periods, offering an overview of Byzantine literature in terms of its social background, language, genre and also historical development. Its shortcomings, however, are some Chinese translations, which are too far-fetched comparisons with classical Chinese literature, and this may cause readers to misunderstand the Greek literature because they approached it in too-Chinese way.

Prof. Wang Xiangpeng from Hebei Normal University has devoted years of study to the first Crusade and its impact on the Mediterranean. The culmination of this effort, *The First Crusade: An Investigation from the Perspective of*

---

<sup>7</sup> G. YUNYAN, *The Roman-Byzantine Empire along the Silk Road: Based on the Coin Research* (罗马-拜占庭帝国嬗变与丝绸之路：以考古发现钱币为中心), Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> S. CONG, *Study of The History of Theophylact Simocatta* (西摩卡塔《历史》研究), Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> L. WENXIAO (ed.), *The History of Byzantine Literature* (拜占庭文学史), Beijing: Commercial Press, 2022.

*Mediterranean World*, also appeared in print this year.<sup>10</sup> This monograph analyses the first Crusade in a wider perspective, focusing on military and diplomatic communications among the Byzantine, Muslim, and Catholic rulers.

2023

*Research on the Political History of Byzantine Empire* is a collection of 20 published papers from Prof. Chen Zhiqiang.<sup>11</sup> In this volume he mainly focuses on the study of Byzantine emperors, policies in Constantinople and outside world, and diplomacy in the Palaiologan period.

## 2. Translations

2019

Timothy E. Gregory's *A History of Byzantium* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, second edition), which was translated by Liu Zhi.<sup>12</sup>

2020

Judith Herrin's *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Penguin Group, 2007), which was translated by Li Xiaoyang.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> W. XIANGPENG, *The First Crusade: An Investigation from the Perspective of Mediterranean World* (东西方视域下第一次十字军战争研究), Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> C. ZHIQIANG, *Research on the Political History of Byzantine Empire* (拜占庭帝国政治史论), Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> T.E. GREGORY, *A History of Byzantium*, trad. LIU ZHI, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> J. HERRIN, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, trad. LI XIAOYANG, Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2020.

Edwin Pears' *The Fall of Constantinople: Being the Story of the Fourth Crusade* (Kessinger Publishing, 2008, Paperback edition), which was translated by Jing Yuping and Li Fangzhou.<sup>14</sup>

Dionysios Stathakopoulos' *A Short History of the Byzantine Empire* (I.B.Tauris, 2014), which was translated by Chen Youxun (reprinted in 2023).<sup>15</sup>

2021

D.M. Nicol's *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c.1295-1383* (The Cambridge University Press, 2002), which was translated by Sun Lifang and Li Xuan.<sup>16</sup>

Charles Bayet's *Byzantine Art* (Parkstone Press, 2009), which was translated by Li Ning.<sup>17</sup>

2022

Peter Sarris et al., *Byzantium: A Very Short Introduction* (The Oxford University Press, 2015), which was translated by Liu Hongtao and Liu Yun.<sup>18</sup>

Charles Oman's *A History of Byzantine Empire: The Glory and Decline of the Millenium Empire* (Independently published, 2019), which was translated by Wang Chenhui.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> E. PEARS, *The Fall of Constantinople: Being the Story of the Fourth Crusade*, trad. JING YUPING e LI FANGZHOU, Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> D. STATHAKOPOULOS, *A Short History of the Byzantine Empire*, trad. CHEN YOUXUN, Beijing: Chemical Industry Press, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> D.M. NICOL, *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c.1295-1383*, trad. SUN LIFANG e LI XUAN, Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> CH. BAYET, *Byzantine Art*, trad. LI NING, Chongqing: Chongqing University Press, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> P. SARRIS et al., *Byzantium: A Very Short Introduction*, trad. LIU HONGTAO e LIU YUN, Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2022.

<sup>19</sup> CH. OMAN, *A History of Byzantine Empire: The Glory and Decline of the Millenium Empire*, trad. WANG CHENHUI, Beijing: Emergency Management Press, 2022.

## **Conclusions**

Byzantine studies started in 1980s in China, and now are a rapidly developing field. Two principal institutions in Byzantine studies locate at Northeast Normal University and Nankai University under the leadership of Professor Xu Jialing and Chen Zhiqiang respectively. In addition, there are 30 more scholars (mainly graduated from the above universities, while less than a dozen graduated from European universities) active in different universities in China devoting to the field. They regularly hold workshops and seminars in different levels and undertake research projects with the financial support from the National Social Science Fund of China. However, from the publications listed above and the increased international activities of Chinese scholars, we can be confident to say that the rest of the world will hear more about Byzantine studies in China in the future.

**ALEXIOS G.C. SAVVIDES, *Towards a new biographical dictionary  
of Byzantium, Introductory contribution. Volume I,***

**Athens: Papazissis, 2022, pp. 422 pages,**

**ISBN 9789600239683, 17 €**

*di Alexia-Foteini Stamouli*

University of Patras

In 2022, the work entitled *For a new biographical dictionary of Byzantium. Introductory contribution – Volume I* was released in Athens by Papazissis Publishers and authored by Alexios G.C. Savvides, Professor of Medieval and Byzantine History at the University of the Peloponnese (Kalamata) and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Pontic Studies in Athens. The work consists of two parts and is preceded by a prologue; at the end of each part, there are supplementary abbreviations and a summary in English. At the end of the book, there is a cumulative index of the entire *New Biographical Dictionary of Byzantium* and a detailed table of abbreviations. The first part has a more literary character, including learned emperors and patriarchs, historians and other writers and intellectual *literati*, while the second part includes emperors, generals, and other secular officials of the Byzantine state, as well as counterclaimants to the Byzantine throne. The edition is self-contained and can be used independently by scholars. A total of 61 entries are being published (34 in Part A and 27 in Part B), which consist of the initial section of the complete edition of the work, which is estimated to be completed in a series of volumes, with a total of more than 1100 entries. The entries included in Volume 1 are a sample of a lexicographical effort, in which other researchers will subsequently participate (from the second volume onwards), since the great specialization by field in Byzantine studies of our time often requires the preparation of collective works. The aim is for the Greek-language bibliography to acquire a bibliographically up-to-date lexicographical aid with the biographies/list

of works of the most important personalities of Byzantium, as well as with the bibliography related to them (primary sources and secondary works).

The contemporary bibliographical flourishing of Byzantine prosopography and genealogy since the late 1960s is evidenced not only by the existence of many monographs on Byzantine emperors, prominent secular or ecclesiastical officials, scholars, and other representatives of culture, but also by the existence of specialized collective lexicographic works of biographical entries for specific periods. It is also testified by the systematic and dense publication of individual thorough writings – monographs or extensive contributions to collective works – for specific Byzantine “Houses” or “Households” (gr. *oikoi*). During the last decades, this has been occurring more frequently with the valuable help of the findings of numismatics and sigillography regarding many Byzantine families. But this bibliographic “accumulation” now highlights the need for an overall practical tool for coding and recording the most important “protagonists” of these families. Thus, it would be useful to have a work as concise as possible, although necessarily multi-volume due to the multitude of selected entries through the infinite “funnel” of Byzantine prosopography.

This work will include the most important figures (secular and ecclesiastical) who were distinguished in the more than thousand-year Eastern Roman Empire of the "New Rome" (284/324-1453/1461 AD), with the citation of a relevant bibliography which is here as up to date as possible, with as representative citations as possible to the original sources.

Inevitably, this new work had to be selective in terms of the material included, since the most important, but also several among the other personalities for whom there is enough evidence to justify the recording of a well-documented biography, should be biographed. The period covered begins in some cases even before Constantine the Great (that is from Diocletian and the time of the Tetrarchy), while as for the final terminus, the lemmatography in some cases extends to the last decades of the fifteenth century. Almost all the emperors, the most important of the empresses and the most important of the Patriarchs, the main rebels, many military



and political officials on the one hand and personalities of culture – of historiography, letters, and sciences – on the other, as well as a selection of the most important people of art in the Byzantine Empire are lemmatized.

The included principal historiographers and chroniclers will have the most complete coverage, since with their works they mainly describe, among other things, the life of the lemmatized people, while they often play an important role themselves in the Empire's main events. Also included will be the most important geographers/travelers, the compilers of various manuals on law, administration, martial arts, the main poets, who with their work "outlined" their eras, and others. Especially regarding the lemmatized personalities of the letters, there is a provision to include in the new dictionary also authors of important sources of Cypriot history even after the period of its eventual separation from Byzantium during the Third Crusade (1191), since in parts of their work they refer to crucial events of earlier periods, examined alongside the Byzantine sources, which they sometimes supplement. Regarding the political-military personalities and secular or ecclesiastical scholars of medieval (Byzantine) Pontus (fourth century-1204 AD) and the state of the Great Komnenians of Trebizond (1204-1461), the main medieval Pontic prosopographical entries will be included.

The existing specialized, collective research tools cover at times, due to the enormous mass of material, specific timeframes, while the encyclopedic ones present reasonably expected selections of the most important figures of Byzantium but with their material dispersed over many volumes. The planned dictionary of Byzantine biography and prosopography attempts to address these practical problems, covering as equally as possible the eleven and a half centuries of Byzantine history. The careers of several personalities who would be justified to have a rightful place in the entries, due to the economy of space will occasionally be included in broader entries (where, however, their own historical contribution will be generally recorded) – the mentions of the names of these cases will be referenced alphabetically and will refer directly to the entries where they are mentioned. The special monographs and other contributions to the biographed personalities will be mentioned in the relevant bibliographies of the entries.

Recent bibliographies are usually given (where references to older works and studies are also included), while for practical reasons an analytical table of abbreviations of frequently referenced journals, encyclopedic dictionaries, collective works, broader and more specialized compositions is laid out at the end of the dictionary. Where necessary, additional parenthetical notes are given within the texts of the entries, quite frequent perhaps, but necessary, since they help the reader to resort to specific aspects of the life of the figures lemmatized. Also, special care is taken to record and depict dating problems as accurately as possible regarding specific events, periods of reigns/coregencies, etc. We hope that the compilation of this new biographical dictionary will augur well, continue, and be completed within a reasonable time span, filling a practical gap in the need for an existence of a bibliographically up-to-date biographical/prosopographical encyclopedia of Byzantium.

**A.V. ΝΙΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Η Διάπλαση του Αρχαίου Καθεστώτος του Αγίου Όρους, I: Η Βυζαντινή Περίοδος (8<sup>ος</sup> – αρχές 15<sup>ου</sup> αι.)*, Thessaloniki: Πατριαρχικόν Ίδρυμα Πατερικών Μελετών, 2021 (*Άγιορειτικά Ανάλεκτα*, 1), pp. 570, ISBN 9789608062368**

di *Giorgos Gousgouriotis*

Aristotle University and Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies – Thessaloniki

Prof. Nikopoulos' new study about Mount Athos inaugurates the new series of the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies in Thessaloniki, called "Άγιορειτικά Ανάλεκτα/Analecta Athonensia" and dedicated exclusively to monographs closely related to the history, the culture, the art, and the institutions of Agion Oros. The main theme of this monograph is the formation of the old status of Mount Athos in the Byzantine period, expanding from the eighth century until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Such contributions to the study of the Athonite legal status, either in Byzantine or in Post-Byzantine period, are always and by all means welcome, since this scientific field has not attracted yet the interest of modern researchers. The Byzantine legal documents preserved today in the Athonite libraries are surely the most extensive and valuable sources of documentation from the Byzantine Empire. They represent about half of the entire collection of extant archival documents, span more than five centuries (tenth-fifteenth centuries). Moreover, these Athonite documents provide us useful information about Byzantine society, economy, institutions and provincial administration, among other subjects.

Prof. Nikopoulos' monograph is divided in five parts. The first part (pp. 3-84) is devoted to the early days of Athonite monasticism (eight-ninth centuries), where the author focuses justifiably mainly on the important *Sigillion* of emperor Basileios I Macedonian from the year 883, since it «represents the first real constitution of Mount Athos [...] one century before the admission of the official constitution (the

so-called *Tragos*) of the emperor Ioannes Tzimiskes» (pp. 501-502). The second part (pp. 87-180) deals with the judicial system of Mount Athos in its early phase (tenth-eleventh centuries), where Nikopoulos discusses important contemporary legal documents, such as the *Typika* of St. Athanasios the Athonite, of the emperors Ioannis Tzimiskis and Constantine IX Monomachos, and various *Acts* of Mount Athos' Protoi. The author attaches importance on the study of unwritten customary law as a formative source for the Athonite legal system, and I am inclined to believe that his conclusions especially on this matter are of great importance. The third and the fourth parts of the monograph (pp. 183-338) are concerned with the changing dominions (Latin, Bulgarian, Serbian) on Mount Athos in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Of special worth is Nikopoulos' thorough analysis in chapter 4.2 on the *Horismos* of the year 1369 for the monastery of Vatopedi, «which displays the proof of title for monastery's possession of the see of Porou, which designates it as 'autourgion'» (p. 516).<sup>20</sup> The fifth and final part of the monograph (pp. 341-446) contains the institutional history of Mount Athos and its status from the middle of the fourteenth century to the end of the early Ottoman rule. The section 5.5.2 is notable mainly because Nikopoulos achieves to point out the legal significance of early Ottoman documents; the great amount of such documents today in Athonite libraries (ca. 25.000) makes more than obvious the need for their study by scholars interested in Byzantine and, in particular, Athonite history and culture. Furthermore, researchers interested in the administrative activities of the emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, who was an erudite author of his time, would find interesting the chapter 5.7, because there Nikopoulos examines Manuel's policy towards Agion Oros, and his *Typikon* from the year 1406.

Altogether, I consider Prof. Nikopoulos' monograph to be a well-rounded study on the formation of the Athonite status during the Byzantine period, filling a gap – if not a chasm – in the literature regarding this field. The author provides a brief but sufficient historical sketch of the Athonite monastic commonwealth for the same

---

<sup>20</sup> In the past, Nikopoulos wrote a separate paper concerning the same matter: A.V. ΝΙΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Η έννοια του αυτουργίου κατά το Β.Ρ. Δίκαιο και η ειδικότερη νομική σημασία της στον τίτλο της μονής Βατοπεδίου για την λίμνη της Πορούς*, *Αρμενόπουλος*, 34/2017-2018, pp. 11-17.

long-standing period, which is very helpful for all types of readers. Besides, the scholar is well-aware of all previous research regarding the institutions and the surviving legal documents of Mount Athos. Furthermore, Nikopoulos' profound knowledge of Byzantine law and his adequacy of Byzantine language enable him to discuss effectually all texts relevant to the monograph's subject, and to come generally to convincing conclusions. I suppose that one of the main merits of this monograph is its author's crucial choice not to remain pretty much restricted to Byzantine legal treatises and documents of Mount Athos, but to take many and various types of the extant literature's texts into account. A brief look at the bibliography (pp. 487-494) bears testament to my assumption; *Acts*, *Archives*, *Lives of saints*, *Letters*, *Chronicles*, and *Historical works* are listed among the works and the editions cited in the annotated bibliography.

I do not know the author's intentions for the future, but I think he should expand his research on Mount Athos' legal status on the subsequent periods of Ottoman rule. Prof. Nikopoulos' deep knowledge of the Athonite legal status during the Byzantine period will help him substantially in this direction. In any case, there is a great need for making rigorous examinations on the surviving Ottoman documents of Mount Athos, in order not only to learn the Athonite legal status of the Ottoman period, but also to assume whether similarities between Mount Athos' Byzantine legal status and that of the Ottoman period are to be found.

In this direction, I think that collaborations among philologists, historians, theologians, ottomanologists, and researchers specialized on Byzantine law, such as Prof. Nikopoulos, are more than essential.

**M.E. POMERO, *Propaganda politica, imperatori e iconografia  
monetale nel mondo bizantino (1204-1328)*,  
Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2022  
(*Quaderni della Rivista di Bizantinistica*, 23),  
ISBN 9788868093778, 70 €**

di *Lorenzo M. Ciolfi*

EHESS – Paris

Nonostante possa apparire come un dato scontato e incontrovertibile, il valore comunicativo della moneta antica è stato spesso sottovalutato nel corso dell'ultimo secolo – quando addirittura messo in dubbio o confutato! – e, come conseguenza di un simile presupposto, è stato banalizzato il ruolo della numismatica come disciplina in grado di contribuire alla ricerca nel novero delle fonti a disposizione dello storico. Il poderoso volume *Propaganda politica, imperatori e iconografia monetale nel mondo bizantino (1204-1328)* di Margherita Elena Pomerò, nato dalla ricerca dottorale dell'autrice presso l'Università di Bologna sotto la guida di A. Carile e poi raffinato nel corso di un decennio di approfondimenti e studi *a latere*, conferisce il giusto lustro alla moneta e ne rilancia l'importanza del messaggio convogliato, valorizzandone il contributo – sotto molteplici aspetti – nella ricostruzione del mondo medievale. Il risultato è un'opera originale, di piacevole lettura, grazie alla quale il dibattito della moderna bizantinistica potrà senz'altro trarre importanti conclusioni nonché trovare nuovi spunti di riflessione.

In tale ambito disciplinare, infatti, le ricerche numismatiche hanno pressoché sempre privilegiato la dimensione tecnica, economica e amministrativa, associata alla moneta, mentre non hanno dato seguito ai casi pionieristici di coloro che hanno provato ad associare i dati materiali ricavabili da questo oggetto archeologico – soprattutto per quello che riguarda l'iconografia e l'iconologia delle raffigurazioni

imprese sulle due facce del metallo – alle emergenze dell’ideologia politica e alla sua propaganda, nonché alla recupero e allo studio di specifici discorsi culturali.

Nel tentativo, riuscito, di colmare tale lacuna con uno studio su ampia scala, e dimostrare la fruttuosità di un simile approccio metodologico, la Pomero ha deciso di indagare il rapporto tra produzione monetale e ideologia politica nel secolo lungo che va dal 1204 (conquista latina di Costantinopoli) al 1328 (morte dell’imperatore Andronico II): sebbene tali termini cronologici possano sembrare limitanti per gli sviluppi della ricerca e la validità delle sue conclusioni, gli anni che hanno visto il passaggio tra la dinastia dei Comneni a quella dei Paleologi, segnati prima dal trauma della Quarta Crociata e poi dalla necessità di ricostruire una nuova società quando Costantinopoli ritornò sotto il controllo dei Bizantini, si dimostrano il terreno di indagine ideale per verificare se e come le monete abbiano seguito – o almeno provato a seguire – i repentini e talvolta drastici cambiamenti nella società e nella retorica del potere della Nuova Roma. «Se sotto il profilo della storia monetaria è più volte stato ribadito dagli studiosi che le conseguenze della Quarta crociata non influirono da subito sul sistema monetario romano-orientale, [...] proprio a partire dal XIII secolo l’iconografia numismatica bizantina mostra i segni di una discontinuità nella rappresentazione del potere», sottolinea infatti la studiosa nell’introduzione dello studio (pp. XIX-XX).

Il volume si articola in quattro capitoli, che anticipano delle succinte seppur efficaci conclusioni. Il tutto prende avvio dall’illustrazione dei principali momenti della storia politica e militare nei centoventiquattro anni presi in considerazione nella ricerca (cap. 1: “Lineamenti di storia politica dell’Impero”), per poi procedere con una presentazione delle caratteristiche e delle dinamiche evolutive dell’ideologia politica tardo-bizantina, elaborate questa volta a partire dalle fonti scritte di ambito aulico (cap. 2: “L’ideologia imperiale nelle fonti scritte”). Con il terzo capitolo (“Moneta e propaganda imperiale”) si entra nel vivo della ricerca e la moneta guadagna la scena, attraverso un censimento tipologico di un ampio campione riferibile alle categorie dell’“incoronazione divina del sovrano”, “il sovrano accompagnato da un santo” e “l’immagine del sovrano con i simboli del potere”: lo studio di tali tipi è contestualizzato nel capitolo successivo (cap. 4:

“L’iconografia imperiale: una selezione di casi di studio”), tenendo sempre come cartina di tornasole delle tesi avanzate le fonti letterarie, sigillografiche e monumentali contemporanee, e permette di evidenziare gli elementi di continuità e di discontinuità nell’evoluzione del pensiero politico e della relativa propaganda imperiale tardo-bizantina.

Completano il lavoro quattro ricche appendici inerenti alle classi e i tipi iconografici, nonché all’evoluzione delle immagini imperiali presenti sulle monete; dieci tavole mettono in parallelo i tipi monetali più significativi e alcune iconografie presenti sulle decorazioni parietali (a mosaico e/o in affresco) e in altre suppellettili; una dettagliata bibliografia e due puntuali indici (prosopografico e dei luoghi).

Meritoria l’impostazione dell’autrice che si impegna ad accompagnare il suo lettore attraverso ogni snodo della ricerca, provvedendo un puntuale inquadramento generale inerente alle congiunture storiche ovvero alle loro specifiche peculiarità (si veda, ad esempio, la storia delle zecche operanti tra l’Impero di Nicea, il Despotato d’Epiro e la Costantinopoli riconquistata) nonché fornendo spiegazioni per i termini tecnici impiegati (molto interessanti quelli inerenti alle differenti tipologie monetali del periodo, e alle loro caratteristiche intrinseche) e una buona bibliografia di riferimento, la cui conoscenza appare senza dubbio necessaria per una corretta comprensione delle conclusioni dello studio. Ciò rende tale lettura non solo interessante ma anche molto utile, per lo specialista e il profano della numismatica, che potranno trarne giovamento sia seguendo linearmente gli sviluppi della trattazione che puntando di volta in volta alle specifiche sezioni di cui questa si compone.

Così, nel leggere l’analisi della Pomero sull’originalità delle soluzioni figurative adottate nella produzione monetale, emerge in maniera chiara la strategia di rielaborazione delle forme del potere e della loro propaganda messa in campo dagli ambienti di corte tra l’inizio del XIII secolo e il primo quarto del XIV. Questa punta, con uguale insistenza, alla valorizzazione dei temi legati alla sfera militare (si consideri, ad esempio, il ricorso ai cosiddetti santi militari) e di quelli inerenti alle particolarità di carattere regionale (si pensi qui alla presenza dei santi patroni,



di lunga tradizione come San Demetrio per Tessalonica o di nuova concezione ovvero adattamento come San Michele arcangelo per Costantinopoli). In entrambi i casi, infatti, l'imperatore sembra investire su una aristocratizzazione del suo potere così da garantirsi il supporto delle nuove *élites* nei ranghi di comando, accettando una parziale limitazione della propria autorità. «La rilettura dell'iconografia monetale del XIII e l'inizio del XIV secolo permette, dunque, di contribuire ad ampliare le riflessioni del dibattito storiografico sulla questione del feudalesimo bizantino, nella misura in cui il termine feudale sia applicato essenzialmente alla mentalità tardo bizantina, ovvero alla sua civiltà e alle sue *élites*», conclude l'autrice (p. 347). Tuttavia, oltre che ad una visione di insieme, i risultati della ricerca consentono anche di integrare le nostre conoscenze su specifici argomenti.

Ed è così, ad esempio, per la figura dell'imperatore Giovanni III, caro agli interessi di chi scrive. Dalle pagine della Pomero troviamo conferma delle strategie di tale sovrano, ben presenti nelle opere storiche di Acropolita e di Pachimere nonché centrali nei loro commenti politici, che voleva ricongiungersi idealmente con la dinastia dei Comneni e più in particolare con Giovanni II, del quale Vatatzes prende in prestito lo schema figurativo degli *hyperpyra*; inoltre, l'imperatore niceno voleva mettere l'accento sul tema della *Restitutio imperii*, così come testimoniano le scelte iconografiche per la propria produzione monetale che privilegia la *Theotokos* patrona di Costantinopoli e il Cristo *Chalkites* (pp. 148-149 e 184-185). Ugualmente degna di nota la valorizzazione dell'aspetto marziale nella rappresentazione propagandistica del Vatatzes, che affianca con decisione le tradizionali virtù morali presenti nella letteratura eulogistica (p. 188).

Altri aspetti, invece, contribuiscono ad aprire altre piste di ricerca nei meandri dell'Impero di Nicea che, a nostro avviso, meritano di essere percorse negli anni a venire: si pensi alla promozione della figura di San Trifone, patrono della città di Nicea, che potrebbe da un lato testimoniare il tentativo di “nobilitare” il nuovo centro urbano di riferimento dell'impero in esilio e dall'altro essere il risultato delle tensioni locali e “popolari” tra le diverse “capitali” dei Lascaridi.

In conclusione, alla luce di quanto brevemente illustrato, *Propaganda politica, imperatori e iconografia monetale nel mondo bizantino (1204-1328)* risulta essere un volume imprescindibile per chi voglia ampliare, attraverso metodi e strumenti di una disciplina troppo spesso sottovalutata come la numismatica, i propri orizzonti su Bisanzio tra l'occupazione latina, il recupero di Costantinopoli e l'affermazione della nuova dinastia al potere.

**T. BRACCINI – L. SILVANO, *La nave di Caronte.***  
***Immagini dell'aldilà a Bisanzio, Torino: Einaudi, 2022***  
***(I Maverick)*, pp. 280, ISBN 9788806251543, 22 €**

di *Giovanni U. Cavallera*

Centro Interuniversitario di Bioetica e Diritti Umani – Università del Salento

Il tema della morte e dell'aldilà è una delle riflessioni più presenti nella storia dell'umanità e le risposte che da questa scaturiscono dipendono dalla fede che si possiede. Significative, sotto tale aspetto, le immagini dell'aldilà che appaiono nei testi bizantini a noi pervenuti e che gli Autori con accortezza hanno raccolto e distribuito in sezioni tematiche precedute da precise presentazioni, necessarie per introdurre le opere – alcune delle quali tradotte per la prima volta in italiano o in una lingua moderna – al lettore non informato. L'immagine che se ne ricava è quella di una civiltà polimorfa, ben lontana dalla visione monolitica di un mondo immutabile e immutabilmente ortodosso, come presentato nei vecchi manuali e ancora ricorrente nella *vulgata*. Il retaggio pagano e la fede cristiana, l'erudizione classica e le superstizioni popolari si intrecciano nei brani scelti in questa antologia. È opportuno rammentare che per l'uomo bizantino, in quanto «uomo del medioevo, la vita in questo mondo è dilaniata dal conflitto incessante tra le invisibili forze del bene e del male» (p. 12). E poiché la natura umana è considerata facile preda del male nulla poteva essere di più utile mostrare come nell'aldilà le pene per i malvagi fossero severissime, sì da impedire il peccare in questo mondo. «Non è un caso che in molte chiese bizantine fossero affrescate gallerie di peccatori orrendamente mutilati e torturati proprio sulle pareti degli ambienti destinati alla confessione dei parrocchiani, ad altezza d'uomo, in modo che i confitenti non potessero evitare di posarvi lo sguardo e abbandonassero così ogni reticenza e ogni indugio alla conversione» (pp. 12-13).

Naturalmente tutto questo portava a chiedersi come fosse l'altro mondo. In epoca tardo-antica, rilevano gli Autori, si ebbe un sistema di credenze secondo il quale, «subito dopo il trapasso, ciascun individuo viene sottoposto a un giudizio particolare, ben presto raffigurato come una sorta di processo che si articola in una serie di soste obbligate attraverso stazioni situate a mezz'aria, preposte ciascuna all'esame di determinati peccati. È la ben nota dottrina delle dogane celesti (*telónia*)» (p. 17). Dopo tal giudizio le anime erano destinate, in attesa del Giudizio universale, al paradiso o all'Ade. Sul modo di concepire l'altro mondo molto era determinato da un'apocalittica cristiana per lo più perduta (Esdra, Pietro, Baruc e Paolo). Vi era poi il retaggio dell'antichità classica, testimoniato dal recupero della figura di Caronte, «un Caronte, tuttavia, lontanissimo dal suo ruolo canonico di nocchiero del fiume infernale, che si rivela invece un demone della morte, uno spietato predone di anime che percorre il mondo sul suo destriero nero» (p. 37). Di fatto «le più antiche rappresentazioni pittoriche dell'inferno superstiti in area bizantina sono alcuni affreschi in due chiese rurali della Cappadocia (odierna Turchia): la Yilanli Kilise (“Chiesa del Serpente”, così detta dagli animali che tormentano quattro peccatrici in uno dei riquadri del monumentale Giudizio universale [...]) e la Pürenli Seki Kilise (che ospita anch'essa un Giudizio universale risalente al X sec.)» (p. 30).

Dopo una *Ouverture* che raccoglie la *Lamentevole rima sull'amaro e insaziabile Ade*, un poemetto attribuito a Ioannis Pikatóros (fine XV secolo), non privo di echi danteschi, segue la parte prima che tratta delle dogane celesti, ed è in questa sede da ricordare il viaggio e la sosta nelle varie dogane di Teodora. Nella parte seconda sono raccolti apoftegmi, apologhi, raccontini. Come si spiega, «con sintesi spesso ammirevole, gli autori di queste opere propongono in poche righe un *exemplum* illuminante o un pronunciamento chiarificatore su una data questione, fanno il punto su una credenza, offrono una risposta al quesito su una determinata pratica culturale» (p. 84). La parte terza illustra dei giri dell'inferno e del paradiso. Assai ampie sono le trattazioni che riguardano *il viaggio agli inferi della Theotókos*, pare ispirato all'*Apocalisse* di Paolo, e *monaca Anastasia tra cielo e inferno*, che risale al tardo secolo X e che è pervenuto in diverse redazioni. La parte quarta tratta

di anime sospese tra inferno e paradiso e ciò o per spiegare «un problema teologico spinoso» (p. 147) o per creare un effetto di *suspence*. La parte quinta comprende le satire sull'aldilà, tipologia il cui “padre tutelare” nel mondo bizantino è Luciano di Samosata e destinata ad avere echi profondi nella modernità, si pensi ai *Sueños y discursos* di Francisco de Quevedo. La parte sesta si sofferma su morti irrequieti (che erano in particolare gli insepolti, gli assassinati e deceduti prematuramente), scomunicati, vampiri («l'insistenza ecclesiastica sul potere della scomunica e la credenza che alcuni cadaveri di peccatori potessero rianimarsi, specie con la cooperazione del diavolo, per tormentare i vivi s'intrecciano, a partire dal tardo Medioevo, e nei Balcani e nell'Europa orientale danno vita alla pervicace e ben nota credenza nei vampiri» [p. 188]). La parte settima raccoglie dei canti popolari sull'Aldilà e Caronte. Il volume termina con un *Congedo* che presenta l'*Apókopos* del cretese Bergadís, che è il primo testo in greco volgare ad essere stampato, nel 1509. Segue la bibliografia finale.

Si tratta di un volume complesso poiché tutte le narrazioni scelte hanno un intento morale e formativo, mentre al tempo stesso sono sostenute da una notevole forza immaginativa. La figura di Caronte è sempre minacciosa e tragica da danza macabra: «Ho visto Caronte che percorreva a cavallo la piana; tira i giovani per i capelli e i vecchi per le mani, e porta anche i bambini piccoli affastellati sulla sella» (p. 225). L'immagine che emerge è quella omerica del rimpianto per la vita terrena: «Il mondo di sotto è brutto, perché non viene giorno, perché non canta il gallo, né gorgheggia l'usignolo. Là non hanno acqua e non indossano vesti, cucinano solo fumo e cenano al buio» (p. 226). Ben diversa è comunque la luce del paradiso. Così è visto il paradiso da un bambino: «Vi si trovano uomini, donne, bambini, tutti abbigliati di bianco, che mangiavano di quei frutti [melograne, datteri ecc.] ed erano felici. Vide poi suo nonno, tra le piante, assiso su un trono d'oro tempestato di smeraldi e altre pietre preziose» (p. 106). Si insiste non poco ad esortare alla retta vita. Come accade in tutte le narrazioni sull'altro mondo si intrecciano i temi dell'orrore per le torture che colpiscono i dannati e della gioia che pervade gli asceti al cielo. L'intento è quello di convincere a seguire una vita illuminata dai precetti religiosi e dal rispetto dei comandamenti. Vi è la consapevolezza della

responsabilità personale della colpa e quindi l'invito a non cadere nel peccato. Il tutto nella chiarezza della distinzione tra bene e male, una distinzione che forse troppi uomini del XXI secolo hanno ufficialmente dimenticato.

In conclusione il volume ha il merito di introdurre una dimensione del mondo greco medievale assolutamente ignota al vasto pubblico dei lettori interessati alla storia della letteratura, alla storia del folklore, ma non specialisti della civiltà bizantina.

**R. HILLENBRAND, *The Great Mongol Shahnama*,  
New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022,  
pp. 504, ISBN 9781898113836, 175 £**

di *Krisztina Ilko*

University of Oxford

Robert Hillenbrand's monograph is truly a great book about Great Mongol *Shahnama*, which befits its title not only for its outstanding content but also for its gargantuan size. This beautiful volume reproduces in colour all known surviving paintings of the Great Mongol *Shahnama* for the first time. While that would be an immensely beneficial resource already on its own, no reader should mistake this with a coffee table book. Robert Hillenbrand is a leading scholar on the Great Mongol *Shahnama* and this beautifully produced and written volume is a worthy distillation of his expertise on the topic, which not only offers insight into the extent of his previous work but also presents a rich springboard of new ideas and approaches.

The *Shahnama*, the monumental epic narrating the history of the Persians from the birth of mankind to the fall of the Sasanians, the last Persian dynasty, was composed by the poet Firdawsi at the turn of the first millennium. As a cornerstone of Persian culture, it became an immensely popular text that survives in five hundred illustrated copies and thousands of unillustrated ones. While the earliest surviving copy from 1217 is only illuminated, from the first half of the fourteenth century no fewer than nine illustrated manuscripts survive. These are typically of modest format with only a thin strip of painting characterised by reduced landscapes, economic compositions of action, and figures conforming to "stock styles". In contrast, the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, probably produced around 1320-1336, was originally planned as a large-format, two-volume work with more than two hundred illustrations of unprecedented scale, size, and creativity. The

involvement with more than two dozen painters embraced a variety of styles and the extraordinary length of the cycles challenged the artists to devise new scenes and pictorial solutions. However, thanks to Georges Demotte, the “archvillain” of the story of the *Shahnama*, this unique work was cut into pieces in early twentieth-century Paris. Consequently, the Great Mongol *Shahnama* can only be studied from mere remnants, with the current canon comprising fifty-eight images, scattered across more than twenty collections and tarnished with nineteenth-century overpainting.

The primary goal of Hillenbrand’s book is to do justice to this extraordinary work and to «point to ways of expanding and changing the debate about Persian painting». The second point is significant because it can be rightly acknowledged that the current state of the art of the field is still dominated by debates concerning date, provenance, and patronage. Therefore, the concern to shift the attention to the paintings themselves and their complex and ambitious narrative is a welcome approach.

To achieve this goal, the Great Mongol *Shahnama* is examined in this book from a variety of approaches in fourteen chapters. These comprise an in-depth engagement with the visual narrative, which organically follows up and expands on the ground work laid down in *Epic Images and Contemporary History: Illustrations of the Great Mongol “Shahnama”* by Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair (1980), as well as further threads by Abolala Soudavar and Eric Schroeder, to mention a few key scholars with whom Hillenbrand engages in depth.

The first two chapters of Hillenbrand’s book introduce the context, importance, and storytelling of the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. The careful attention to the complex historic processes and the confrontation between the dominant Islamic culture and Persian nostalgic sentiment towards a distant past, which underlay the production of the *Shahnama* and its illustrations, is one of the key strengths of the book. It surfaces throughout the work but is especially important in the beginning when the historical context and the strategies of storytelling are discussed. After these, the third chapter, “The Lost Art of the Ilkhanids” turns



towards the *Shahnama* as a source of information about the material culture of the Ilkhanid era. These broadly introductory sections then set the scene for the more in-depth and narrative-centric analysis of the themes in the subsequent chapters. Chapter four focuses broadly on “Kings and Heroes”, while the next two chapters engage with the Alexander Romance and the Sasanians, followed by chapter seven on “The Pomp of Kingship”. This on-going interest with the imagery of kingship is not an accidental theme for the *Shahnama*. The succession of monarchs is «the glue that holds the epic together», which presents the history of Persia through fifty kings belonging to three dynasties. At the same time, these also foster an engagement with patterns and internal cycles within the epic, but which have been relatively neglected aspects of scholarship on the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. But besides the narrative, investigating the royal themes can also elaborate on a topic introduced in chapter three on material culture, such as the representation of thrones, or how the idea of royal majesty can be expressed by the act of enthronement. As a matter of fact, two later chapters, namely “Death and Burial” and “War”, also interact with the theme of monarchs and the visual devices used to epitomise their succession.

In contrast, the ninth and tenth chapters are underpinned by a comparative approach. First, Hillenbrand explores the extent of the impact of European artists on the *Shahnama* paintings. This entails pairing *Shahnama* episodes with Christological scenes, such as Alexander on a donkey with the Entry to Jerusalem. Moreover, the next chapter investigates Chinese connections. On the one hand, this section is dominated by a fascination with the landscape, be it foliage, rocks, clouds, or how it can express emotion through adopting the Chinese tradition of pathetic fallacy. On the other hand, the representation of Chinese lacquer, textiles, and ceramics is also considered. Other aspects, like fantastic creatures and dragons are briefly mentioned, but perhaps this could have been expanded in more detail to give justice to the significance of these creatures, which seems to be greater than what is skimmed over here. Nonetheless, by suggesting that both European and Chinese features were incorporated into the *Shahnama* with the intent to be recognised as “foreign” and thus signal the world-wide extent of Mongol domination the author also highlights the importance of these elements within the broader political climate

of the work. These two chapters on foreign influences lay down important ground work, which helps the reader to grasp the intermingled artistic influences that played a part in the creation of the Great Mongol *Shahnama* and will hopefully inspire much-needed further forays into this topic.

Touching on more stylistic grounds, chapter twelve focusses on the multivalent roles of colour in the paintings. This is not a simple acknowledgement of the extraordinarily wide range of its palette, but rather how the painters deliberately employed these colours to create moods and influence the perception of the compositions. After this, the last two chapters turn first towards the orphan leaves and then towards the legacy of the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. Importantly, these not only pin down some of the key contributions of the book and what is worth knowing about this extraordinary epic, but also shed light onto the key gaps in current scholarship concerning the Great Mongol *Shahnama*.

Despite the monumental length and size of Hillenbrand's epic, these fourteen chapters work seamlessly together. There is no aspiration to overwhelm the reader with useless facts or an attempt to discuss everything for the sake of thoroughness. Quite the contrary: this book is a pleasant, enjoyable read, which handles the material with mastery and selectiveness while also communicating a coherent and digestible narrative. This book will no doubt remain *the* authoritative work on the Great Mongol *Shahnama* for a long time, which will be of interest to specialists, students, and teachers alike, as well as practically anybody with an appetite for beautiful things. Nonetheless, it is rare for such a top-quality scholarly piece of work as this one to be also so well written. It is easy to recognise though from the very beginning that *The Great Mongol Shahnama* was a labour of love and, consequently, this highly informative book is also a joy to read.

**D. MARJANOVIĆ, *Creating Memories in Late 8th-century  
Byzantium: The Short History of Nikephoros of Constantinople,*  
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018  
(*Central European medieval studies*, 2), pp. 250,  
ISBN 9789462980396, 99 €**

di *Lucas McMahon*

University of Ottawa

This book is a revision of Dragoljub Marjanović's doctoral dissertation and examines iconoclasm and patriarchal politics through the *Short History* of Nikephoros I, patriarch of Constantinople (806-815). Noting that the *Short History* tends to receive a lot less attention than its contemporary, the *Chronographia* of Theophanes Confessor, Marjanović aims to provide a complete re-evaluation of Nikephoros's text. Marjanović succeeds in this task, demonstrating convincingly that the *Short History* is both complete and is a much more subtle and sophisticated commentary on iconoclasm and imperial-patriarchal relations than has previously been supposed.

The first chapter outlines what can be known about Nikephoros' life. Marjanović does not shrink from a very difficult task, and acknowledges the often-significant gaps in the record. What can be certain is that Nikephoros's father was high up in the administration and that Nikephoros himself was in imperial and patriarchal circles by the late 780s. His activity in the 790s is unclear, but perhaps he was out of Constantinople after a falling out with Eirene. Returning under emperor Nikephoros I as a manager of a poorhouse, Marjanović identifies this moment of his career as between sacred and secular. Despite the chapter's title, nearly some twenty pages are devoted to Nikephoros as patriarch, covering his dispute with the Stoudites, relations with Rome, and Nikephoros's role in the regime changes of Michael I and Leo V.

The second chapter opens with the question of how to position the *Short History* in the corpus of Byzantine historical writing. Marjanović asks how Nikephoros sought to present the work to his contemporaries. He notes that Nikephoros picks up with Theophylact Simocatta, probably as part of the theme of restoration being connected to the restoration of orthodoxy. The chapter then takes a brief look at the emperors of the seventh and eighth centuries after Herakleios and their presentation in the text. The general theme that Marjanović identifies is one of *taxis* being connected to religious issues, with the culmination of peace and *taxis* under Eirene. Marjanović argues that Justinian II gets so much attention because he introduced a period without *taxis* that resulted in iconoclasm. A subsection deals with the question of the brief account of Constans II's reign, which Marjanović argues is not a case of a lack of sources or lost folios, but rather that legitimacy came from Herakleios's first wife and not Martina, and that Pyrrhos was forced to abdicate, and thus peace was not established. Things are put back together in the following chapter of the *Short History* when everyone gets their due and the patriarch Paul is elected. Nikephoros conveniently skips his Monothelitism. The chapter then ends with a short and inconclusive section on when Nikephoros wrote the *Short History*. Marjanović cannot give a precise date, but asserts that it was definitely complete upon his accession to the patriarchate in 806.

A third lengthy chapter is concerned with Herakleios, whose portrayal in the *Short History* Marjanović argues is essential for understanding the text. Herakleios is established as a model ruler. The oration on imperial virtue that Nikephoros puts in the mouth of the Persian general Shahin sets out what traits he has established as desirable, and Herakleios then fulfills them. Patriarch and emperor have a certain spiritual brotherhood, Marjanović opines, and while the patriarch supports the emperor religiously, it is also his job to enforce proper behaviour upon emperors. Nikephoros explains Herakleios's failures against the Arabs as his refusal to listen to the patriarch of Egypt. This thread continues in the next, shorter chapter on Nikephoros's image of the other emperors in the *Short History*. This chapter is occasionally vague and difficult to follow, particularly the material on Constantine IV and Traianos Patrikios.

The fifth chapter deals with the iconoclast emperors. Marjanović notes that Nikephoros has a surprisingly subtle take on Leo III and Constantine V. Leo III is made distant from the victory at Constantinople over the Arabs in 717, and his iconoclasm is a matter of emperor and church rather than merely impiety. Criticism for iconoclasm is mainly reserved for Constantine V, yet Nikephoros has no problem acknowledging his military victories. Marjanović argues that this is because the emperor can destroy one sort of peace and still be successful, and that Nikephoros includes negative natural portents. Thus, Constantine falls short of being a model emperor. The book then concludes with some thoughts on whether Constantine VI and Eirene are alluded to in the *Short History*.

Unfortunately, Marjanović's important contributions are often shrouded in convoluted prose and lengthy sentences. The frequent misuse of the apostrophe mars the text but does not usually result in any difficulty in comprehension. The overall organization of the book is often confusing, although this is alleviated somewhat by numerous sub-chapters which appear in the table of contents and which have clear titles. For example, the introductory chapter entitled "Nikephoros the Layman" spends most of its length on patriarchal politics and spans Nikephoros's entire career. Similarly, in the second chapter Marjanović jumps into a case study about the absence of Constans II in the *Short History* before making a jarring turn to the text's dating. None of these issues detracts from the intellectual quality of the book that Marjanović has written, but they do make it rather difficult to get through. Some judicious editing by the publisher could have cleaned up the prose and some of the minor difficulties with the English, and perhaps structured the book more effectively.

Marjanović's close study of Nikephoros is a major contribution. His close reading of the text and the arguments that come from it will likely generate further discussion. The core point that this historical text was neither unfinished nor cobbled together has major implications for the history of the seventh and eighth century Near East, Byzantine historical writing, and relations between emperor and patriarch.

**A. CASTRORAO BARBA – G. CASTIGLIA (ed.), *Perspectives on Byzantine Archaeology. From Justinian to the Abbasid Age (6th–9th Centuries AD)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2022  
(*Archaeology of the Mediterranean world*, 2),  
pp. 251, ISBN 2503596843, 85 €**

di *Lucas McMahon*

University of Ottawa

*Perspectives on Byzantine Archaeology* is made up of thirteen papers, all in English, plus an introduction. The introduction, by Angelo Castrorao Barba and Gabriele Castiglia, sets out the stakes for the volume and give a summary of the articles. The editors note that they wish to define Byzantine very loosely here, and aim to compare parts of the world that are rarely compared. Given the time period under consideration, most of the papers deal with areas distant from the imperial heartland. Some involve places that were never lost to the empire (Thessaloniki), while others look at places that fell out of imperial control (central Italy, Spain), and one deals with an area never under Roman administration (the Horn of Africa).

The first three papers are grouped under the heading “cities”. Konstantinos T. Raptis provides a history of the architecture of Thessaloniki between the sixth and ninth centuries. Raptis notes that the city received significant imperial patronage under Anastasius I, but then under Justinian the only ecclesiastical monument of note is the small burial church now known as Hosios David. Imperial patronage returned in the 620s following a series of earthquakes and the walls were rebuilt, but the damage from these earthquakes seems to have seriously affected the city plan although it remained active centre of economic life throughout the period under discussion and beyond. An ongoing theme for Raptis is imperial control: he attributes the Anastasian building works in the context of competition between the sees of Constantinople and Rome, and the Isaurian patronage of Hagia Sophia in

Thessaloniki was an architectural means to express Constantinopolitan control after seizing jurisdiction from the popes over Illyrikon.

The second “cities” paper is by Lucrezia Spera and looks at the evolution of Rome’s defenses and what they say about how the city changed. She argues that a number of small religious foundations from the sixth and seventh century in the vicinity of the Aurelian walls were associated with elements of the Byzantine military. This is based on their placement in areas that were on occasion deserted, and the churches’ dedication to eastern military saints, especially St. Theodore. The third and final paper in this section is Enrico Cirelli’s on Ravenna. Cirelli summarizes effectively the vast archaeological output from Ravenna by focusing on long-distance connections, building materials, and the cityscape. Like many late antique cities, Ravenna underwent abandonment and new structures were built from reused materials, but the archaeological record also reveals a clear change in the eighth century, no doubt related to the political and military situation that resulted in the city falling to the Langobardi.

The second section focuses on landscapes. The first paper is by Basema Hamarneh and queries what happened to the provinces of Arabia and Palestina Tertia under the reign of Justinian. Hamarneh in particular queries to what extent the plague was responsible for long-term change in the region, and concludes that its effects were ultimately chronologically limited and that change needs to be considered alongside a host of other factors. In the following paper, Carmelo Pappalardo takes a close and rewarding look at one site, Umm al-Rasas/Kastron Mefa’a in Jordan through the lens of resilience theory and traces adaptation from its time as a legionary fortress on the *Limes Arabicus* to its eventual abandonment in the late eighth century. Pappalardo convincingly argues that investment in hydraulic infrastructure and the care shown in the destruction and replacement of figural mosaics is evidence of a community adapting to changing circumstances under Islamic rule. Repairs following the earthquake in 749 demonstrate ongoing resilience, but the shift of the caliphate to Baghdad and potential climatic changes ultimately sealed the site’s fate.

Priscilla Ralli looks at late antique settlement patterns in the Peloponnese between the fourth and sixth centuries, notes many difficulties in drawing general conclusions, and includes a useful table comparing site names in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and Hierokles' *Synekdemos*. Ivan Gargano then queries the extent to which we can trust Procopius' *Buildings* on provincial organization in Dacia and concludes that Procopius is too inconsistent in terminology to be trusted. The model that saw the lower Danube evolving into an administration based on cities rather than provincial structures should be discarded, he opines. Paul Arthur then offers a rather useful state of the field of Byzantine archaeology in southern Italy. He introduces "*The Byzantine Heritage of Southern Italy*" project, a collaboration between four universities in southern Italy that aims to answer the question on what effect Byzantine rule had in Italy. Arthur poses and number of important questions that need to be answered and some of the problems in getting there. Who lived in Byzantine southern Italy? The texts point to substantial population movement, but the archaeology remains inconclusive. Are sunken-feature buildings an import from Macedonia, or a local development? What can research into genetics tell us? Some slight indications point to an improved diet, but is this true more generally? How to convince archaeologists to excavate cemeteries when there is little hope of recovering grave goods, and is it a good idea to continue to excavate when so many excavations remain unpublished? Arthur's candid article provides much food for thought.

Giuseppe Cacciaguerra and Angelo Castrorao Barba then look at settlement dynamics in Sicily, noting that Byzantine archaeology does not exist there, even though there is classical, Islamic, and Norman archaeology. They draw conclusions carefully, noting that more archaeology is required and important indicators like ceramic typologies are often insufficient. In general, western Sicily remains broadly classical from the material perspective well into the seventh century, although the general "decline of comfort" can also be seen here as larger residential structures such as at Piazza Armerina were divided into smaller units of living spaces and workshops. Intriguingly, the authors identify what looks like a centrally planned fortification programme in the ninth century that has strong echoes of similar



activities in eastern Anatolia, in which hilltop fortifications were built as places of refuge rather than as residential centres.

Gabriele Castiglia and Philippe Pergola turn their attention beyond the empire's borders to the Horn of Africa to look at the roots of Christianity in Aksum between the fourth and sixth centuries. They note that only from the sixth century can we see a notable increase in the number of church buildings, mainly at major sites, and which share some similarities with Justinianic churches. The authors also see a lack of archaeological evidence for Christianity in Aksum before the sixth century, suggesting that it was initially a limited, elite phenomenon.

The final section is on material culture and comprises three papers. The first, by Flavia Marani, is a wide-ranging study of distribution of coin finds from the Rome and Naples mints between the sixth and eighth centuries. The results of this are particularly important since it adds a great deal to what we know about where and how people and things moved about in the Exarchate. Marani is cautious about drawing broader conclusions but nonetheless presents a series of compelling maps that give a sense of routes and connections in the politically fragmented landscape of sixth through eighth-century central Italy. The following paper is by María de Los Ángeles Utrero Agudo, which complicates previous efforts to understand what is Byzantine in church architecture in Spain by noting high degrees of variability. The final paper is by Joanita Vroom and looks at the distribution Late Roman amphora 2/13 from the sixth century to the tenth. She suggests that this ceramic type might have been connected to the *annona* since finds on Kos have control stamps, but those made on Ephesos have church graffiti. Even more interesting is that LRA 2/13 seems to have been made outside of the Byzantine world. Some of these are local imitations made in southern Italy and Sicily, demonstrating an intriguing effort to adhere to state standards imposed upon workshops in the Aegean. Others, however, were manufactured in Lebanon and Egypt, which has enormous implications for "Dark Age" cross-border exchange between Byzantium and the caliphate. Do local workshops imitate Aegean standards? Were artisans deported in raids and then resumed their crafts elsewhere? Can we separate state, church, and market manufacture? The answers are not clear but the questions raised

here by Vroom have a great deal to say about Mediterranean connectivity in the long late antiquity.

Readers should note that *Perspectives* is very much a collection of perspectives of varying intent. Some, like the contributions of Raptis, Cirelli, and Arthur, offer a sort of “state of the field” snapshot, while others, particularly Marani and Vroom, present significant new arguments and data. Gathering such a collection under a title that includes the term *Byzantine* invites further reflection on the relationship between empire and material culture. The volume has no pretense of being comprehensive, so there is little point bemoaning what is not here: North Africa and Liguria are absent, as are the Caucasus and the entire Black Sea region. Some of the strongest papers focus on Italy, which is finally starting to enjoy more attention from Anglophone Byzantinists. The book has no general conclusion, which is actually rather fitting for a volume intending to provide a work-in-progress update on a wide swath of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine world of the first millennium. The English is generally good and the authors and editors should be commended for their efforts. The volume is filled with many useful images, maps, and figures that are generally reproduced well. Regional specialists may find a few papers to be of interest, but the real value of this volume lies in its treatment of areas outside of what Byzantinists usually focus on.

**V. RAPTİ – E. GORDON (ed.), *Ludics: play as humanistic inquiry*,  
Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021,  
pp. 470, ISBN 9811574359, 104 €**

di *Nicola Bergamo*

EHESS – Paris

Trattare i temi legati al mondo del “gioco” in ambito bizantino è davvero difficile. I sussidi dello storico risultano davvero carenti, non solamente per quello che riguarda la bibliografia scientifica ma anche per lo stato delle fonti contemporanee. Inoltre, parlare di giochi a Bisanzio è sostanzialmente un tabu. Pochi hanno raccolto la sfida; se escludiamo i celeberrimi lavori di Cameron sulle corse con le bighe o quelli di Vespignani sull’ippodromo di Costantinopoli, rimane davvero ben poco da analizzare. Qualche ricerca è stata prodotta a carattere amatoriale, trovando tuttavia risibile spazio nell’attuale dibattito storiografico. A colmare tale lacuna, per nostra fortuna, è intervenuto il CISAM che nel 2017 ha dato vita ad un interessantissimo dibattito su “Il gioco nella società e nella cultura dell’alto Medioevo”. All’intero del corposo volume di atti che sono scaturiti dal convegno, figurano i contributi di Carile, Vespignani, Ortalli, e di molti altri che hanno tratteggiato un quadro chiaro su cosa significasse giocare nell’alto medioevo.

Purtroppo poco è stato detto sul mondo bizantino. Nel dibattito internazionale, oltre alla miscellanea *Becoming byzantine* edita da *Dumbarton Oaks*, dove l’argomento del gioco è trattato solamente dal punto di vista infantile e della prima gioventù, sembra che l’attività ludica a Bisanzio non riscontri grande interesse. Per questo motivo la pubblicazione di *Ludics: play as humanistic inquiry* aveva creato, fin dal suo annuncio, grandi aspettative tra gli specialisti. Di certo il prezzo di copertina non invoglia l’acquisto, ma i ventitré contributi coprono un ampio spettro di variazioni sul tema.

Il primo, scritto da Miguel Sicart professore associato al centro “Computer Games” dell’Università IT di Copenhagen, “Toward an Ethics of Homo ludens”, riguarda l’analisi dei videogiochi moderni e, partendo dalla celeberrima definizione di Huizinga, mostra come gli aspetti etici e sociali coinvolgano le persone che giocano a questi nuovi videogames. Il secondo contributo è ad opera di Louis A. Ruprecht, “Sport Matters: on Art, Social Artifice, and the Rules of the Game, or, the Politics of Sport”: l’autore è un filosofo, già direttore degli *Hellenic Studies* presso la Georgia State University, e tocca aspetti più etici e religiosi dei giochi, portando il gioco e gli aspetti ludici sull’aspetto più morale e mostrandone l’importanza. Il contributo di Doris Sommer, direttrice del “Cultural Agents Initiative” presso la Harvard University e studiosa delle lingue africane e afro-americane, si concentra più sull’aspetto dell’empatia e del paradosso del gioco, mostrando attraverso il titolo “Pre-texts: Press Play to Teach Anything” l’evoluzione linguistica legata all’aspetto ludico. Nel suo “Work, Play, and Civic Engagement”, Peter Levine, di formazione filosofica, si occupa della differenza sostanziale tra lavoro e gioco, partendo dalla concezione che di questi si aveva nella Grecia Classica e arrivando ai giorni nostri. L’intervento di Zenovia Toloudi, architetto degli spazi museali, analizza le tecniche di esposizione e la loro relazione con gli aspetti tecnologici, con un occhio di riguardo rispetto agli spazi dove i giochi venivano praticati. Il contributo di Eric Gordon e di Gabriel Mugar si occupa dei rapporti tra i media e il gioco, con una attenzione specifica per gli spazi sociali. Particolare interesse per gli autori è lo studio, sulla scia di Caillois, della felicità in quanto espressione massima e libera dell’atto ludico. L’articolo di Many J. Yossi, classicista e professoressa ad Atene, spiega l’importanza del canto e della risata nel gioco secondo la poesia classica greca; dello stesso tenore è il contributo successivo, di Timoty Moore, che si occupa della musica e dei suoi aspetti ludici nel teatro greco e romano. Il contributo di C. Stamoulis si concentra sul concetto della risata, prendendo spunto dalle tematiche del celeberrimo romanzo di Umberto Eco *Il nome della rosa*. L’autore riporta anche parte del pensiero di uno dei dottori della Chiesa, Giovanni Crisostomo, anch’egli coinvolto nella diatriba sul riso nel IV secolo dopo Cristo. L’articolo di J. Robinson si occupa del balletto, arte da

sempre collegata – assieme alla musica e allo spettacolo – al gioco, specie in ambito greco e romano. L'autore indaga con maggiore attenzione la parte fisica e gestuale, contestualizzandone il concetto, fino a spingersi in improbabili paragoni con le tecniche del Tai-chi moderno. In un articolo dedicato ai giocattoli, con una particolare attenzione alla attività della gioventù a Bisanzio, Pitarakis cattura l'interesse dei bizantinisti. Sebbene l'articolo sia del tutto simile a quello pubblicato per *Dumbarton Oaks* nel 2009, esso non deve essere sottovalutato: infatti, lo studio si basa sull'aspetto materiale e sui ritrovamenti archeologici risalenti al lungo millennio bizantino, come le bambole, i diversi giocattoli o delle piccole imbarcazioni; ci sono anche diversi riferimenti al gioco come prodromo all'età adulta e altri esempi che ricordano i divertimenti di pura fantasia o il *roleplaying game*. Il contributo di Sarah Green della St. Cloud University scrive nel suo "How to Catch a Falling knife" della poetica come pratica legata all'evocazione di atmosfere negative, mostrando diversi esempi di poesie che trattano il gioco da una prospettiva ansiogena e contraria agli scopi del bisogno ludico primario. L'articolo di Danuta Fjellestad dell'Università di Uppsala spiega l'impulso ludico nella *fiction* post-moderna, riferendosi al manifesto di Eric Zimmerman "The Gameful World: approaches, Issues, Applications": basandosi su tredici punti fondamentali e tentando così di andare oltre a Huizinga e Caillois, l'autrice ripercorre le caratteristiche del gioco più affini al periodo contemporaneo. Il contributo di Nicole Nolette dell'Università di Waterloo si rifà ai giochi nel teatro francofono, tentando di individuare ulteriori definizioni del gioco nel periodo contemporaneo. L'articolo di Yiorgos Anagnostou dell'Università dell'Ohio tratta l'uso di terminologie legate al gioco e ai giochi derivate dagli immigrati, specialmente i Greci-Americani. Il contributo di Pierre Taminiaux della Georgetown University tratta lo spinoso rapporto tra gioco e trasgressione, parlando di surrealismo, di assurdo e di patafisica. Gli ultimi tre contributi, sebbene interessanti da altri punti di vista, trattano argomenti che con il gioco hanno una relazione davvero debolissima. Pare che gli autori e le autrici abbiano utilizzato la parola "ludico" per parlare sostanzialmente di tutto, allontanando il lettore dalle ragioni che lo hanno spinto all'acquisto del libro.

In conclusione, sebbene certi contributi siano affrontati in maniera superficiale o talvolta troppo specifica sfumando così la tematica al cuore del volume, questo resta il libro giusto per chi vuole cercare qualcosa di davvero innovativo sul gioco; in particolare, i bizantinisti che si avvicinano a *Ludics: play as humanistic inquiry* troveranno interessante solamente un contributo, quello di Pitarakis, per altro già pubblicato in altra sede molti anni prima. Questo risulta davvero desolante, perché su ventitré articoli, solo uno ha coinvolto il millennio bizantino, relegandolo, ancora una volta, ad un ruolo secondario, a storia poco interessante.

Questo compendio può tornare utile se uno studioso vuole rapportarsi con la modernità, con qualche lingua locale o con le nuove tecnologie, pur senza tralasciare le origini del gioco, che si rifanno, specie nell'arte drammatica e teatrale, alla tradizione greca e romana. La volontà di riunire diverse forme e approcci metodologici all'arte ludica è chiara ma alle volte il tema centrale, ossia l'arte ludica, risulta sottostimata o trattata in forma troppo distante da quanto un non esperto si possa aspettare..