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Edited by

Liz James

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would display, all the better to serve an illiterate audience for whom visual signs worked better than verbal clues (Gerstel forthcoming). In traditional art history, style is considered to be an expression of the artist, whereas, at least in Byzantium, it may be more useful to see it as operating in the field of the consumer, nearer, in short, to the domain conventionally described as iconography. The desire to discover artists' identities led originally to the belief that the ligatures (for Demetrios, Theodore, Michael and so on) found on glazed pots of the fourteenth century represented the names of their painters. Now it is understood that these abbreviations are more likely to refer to saints put there at the client's request, or at least bought because these letters evoked the names of favorite holy protectors (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999: 22 with figures 6, 7).

Whether we characterize the impulse that led to these inscriptions as one generated by a social or, more narrowly, a visual community, the driving force lies always in the second part of the term (Cutler 2002). Once in place, that is, in use, a work of art in a notable situation could serve as a call for emulation. Observed by the attentive, its characteristics would be heeded and might become prescriptive. In these cases its use points as much to social practice as to religious devotion.

This is no less true of the style of an image than of other aspects of its being. We have seen that for the Byzantines this style was always one of realism, a theological as much as an aesthetic concept and one that effaced concern with its originality. In the medieval West, on the other hand, this latter category on occasion came to the fore. Interpreting Suger's building activity, Panofsky suggested that the abbot of Saint-Denis was acutely conscious of the stylistic distance between the existing Carolingian basilica and the new or "modern" structures that he added (Panofsky 1979: 36–7). Whether or not Suger was in fact aware of this difference, I know of no parallel attitude expressed by a Byzantine patron or later commentator with regard to a building or other object. More interesting than the precise date of an artifact, the identity of its maker or sponsor, and even its "source" or "model," is the question of why this should be.

FURTHER READING

On makers, see Cutler 1994. Cormack 1999 discusses artists; see also the entry in *ODB*, "Artists." On users, Nelson 1989 and 1999. On viewers and viewing Byzantine art, Nelson 2000.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Limits of Byzantine Art

Antony Eastmond

In 1997 and 2004, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York presented two major exhibitions devoted to the art of the Byzantine world. Following on from the *Age of Spirituality* (New York, 1977; Weitzmann 1977), which had looked at late antiquity, *The Glory of Byzantium* (New York 1997; Evans and Wixom, 1997) was devoted to the Middle Byzantine period (843–1261). The second exhibition, *Byzantium: Faith and Power* (New York, 2004; Evans 2004), concentrated on the empire's final centuries (1261–1453, although the exhibition also looked at the empire's legacy in Europe down to 1557). Both exhibitions have come to be seen as landmarks in the study of Byzantine art, their catalogs as key surveys of the state of knowledge of the art of the empire across these two periods. These catalogs both opened with maps showing the geographical scope of the loans to the exhibitions and the cultural sway of the empire in the periods covered by each exhibition. These maps provide two different ways of conceptualizing the nature of art on the fringes of the Byzantine world, and its relationship to art produced at the heart of the empire.

The two maps bear the same title, *Byzantium and its neighbors*, and both cover approximately the same geographical area, stretching from Spain in the west to Russia in the north, from Iran in the east to Egypt in the south (but extending to Ethiopia in the earlier map). However, they were conceived very differently. That for the *Glory of Byzantium* emblazons "BYZANTIUM" across the center of the map, locating the empire over a swath of territory from the heel of Italy to eastern Anatolia, and surrounds it with a hierarchy of lesser demarcations of space: two areas are marked out in an intermediate-sized font: "Latin West" over western Europe, and "Islam" over the Middle East, and around these, other areas are labeled in a still smaller font: Scandinavia, Bulgaria, and Kievan Rus' to the north, Georgia and Armenia to the east; and Cyprus, Syria, and Egypt to the south. These various labels are difficult to classify. The two larger areas to east and west are blanket terms that are easy to understand, but very hard to define. Both "Latin West" and "Islam" cover a bewildering variety of changing dynasties, states, and fiefdoms, with many languages,

histories, rivalries, and traditions; they are united only by approximate ties of common heritage or religion. The inclusiveness and vagaries of the labels hint at distinct alternative cultural traditions that lie beyond the remit of an exhibition of Byzantine art. The other eight smaller labels are equally complex, lying somewhere between geographical, political, religious, and ethnic signifiers, but their size suggests a dependence on the empire around which they lie. If nothing else, the map demonstrates the difficulties inherent in trying to summarize any relationship between people and geographical space in the historic past.

Perhaps in reaction to the problems posed by the first map, that for the later exhibition, *Byzantium: Faith and Power,* omitted these labels completely; it placed no divisions or other labels between the cities noted on the map, from Granada, London, and Belozersk in the west and north to Ardabil, Shiraz, and Tripoli in the south and east, leaving the reader to estimate the true extent of the empire, and the relationship of these cities to it.

The reasons for these changes in cartographic practice are many. At least in part they were determined by the problems of showing the fluctuating frontiers of the empire on a single map, and the uneasy relationship between the modern idea of nation states and the medieval reality of fuzzy frontiers and dispersed populations. However, it is likely that modern political arguments between nation states about their historic size and relationship to the Byzantine empire also played a part: the label for Armenia in the first map, for example, is placed approximately over the territory of the modern state, although in medieval times its population was spread over a much wider area (compare Hewsen 2001, fig. 1). Moreover, any such map must make decisions about what labels to include or to exclude (why, some pointed out, was Serbia not marked on the earlier map, even though many of its monuments were pinpointed?).

As well as raising important questions about the nature of the Byzantine empire, the two maps also ask us to question what we understand Byzantine art to be. The earlier map, acknowledging the political diversity of the empire, implies a series of distinct ethnic or geographical blocks whose artistic interaction with the Byzantine state at their center could be analyzed (although the centering of the map on "Byzantium," and the employment of varying font sizes already implicitly suggests a hierarchical relationship). The latter map promotes the idea of a Byzantine *oikoumene* (Christian commonwealth) in which barriers are not significant, and implies that the common artistic trends that can be found across the region are more important than the political, ethnic, or other boundaries that divide.

Both maps ask us how we wish to define Byzantine art. Is Byzantine art coterminous with the frontiers of the empire (assuming we can work out where those are at any one time)? Is it art made by Byzantine artists, whether at home or abroad? Or does Byzantine art require a very different definition? Given that the majority of the art that survives is religious, should we define it in theological terms: art produced by those states that formed part of the theological communion of the Orthodox world (this then includes the states of the Balkans, Russia, and Georgia, but suggests a more awkward relationship with the non-Chalcedonian churches of Armenia, Syria, and Coptic Egypt)? Or is it vaguer still: a more embracing concept that includes all

art produced under the general cultural sway of the empire and its religious world view? Of course, as the definition becomes broader, we have to wonder what is left of the term "Byzantine art" that is in any sense meaningful. As we move away from the heartlands of the empire, and in particular away from Constantinople, and look towards the frontiers of the empire, these questions become more pressing: at what point does Byzantine art stop being "Byzantine" and become "Georgian" or "Russian" or "Coptic" instead? Does the use of a different script or language on images with a common iconography mark a clear enough division to exclude these works of art from Byzantium? Or do the various (and varying) common iconographic, stylistic, or functional features of the art produced in all of these regions at different periods tie them in to a common history with Byzantine art?

These questions are important for the ways in which we conceive artistic production in the Byzantine world. Each decision to include or exclude works of art from the canon of Byzantine art changes our overall conception of what Byzantine art is, and of how it can be studied and understood. In what follows I consider some of the consequences for the decisions about inclusion and exclusion that art historians have made on the ways in which Byzantine art has been studied. It is worth stating at the outset that I would argue that we should use as broad a definition of Byzantine art as possible, so as to include all the art produced around the edges of the empire (as well as those made across the widely spread and often divergent provinces within it), but I acknowledge that this has a cost in terms of the coherence of any one narrative of Byzantine art.

Byzantine Art, Nationalism, and Theology

Attempts to study Byzantine art in ways that do not rely on simple (and often simplistic) definitions that center on the geographic frontiers of the empire, or on the identification of Byzantine artists, seem to be more inherently sympathetic to the nature of the empire and its art. Studies that allow for the inclusion of Sicilian or Serbian art, or that of Kievan Rus' or the states of the Caucasus suggest the permeability of all the cultures that surrounded Byzantium. They underline the political, cultural, and spiritual weight that the empire bore throughout its lifetime, and the degree to which it established the artistic agenda that its neighbors followed, adapted, or, more rarely, avoided. It is clear, for example, that if the mosaics set up in the 1040s in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Kiev (Logvin 1971) are viewed alongside those produced at the same time within the empire, as at Nea Mone on Chios (Mouriki 1985), then the programmatic, iconographic, and stylistic debt of the Kievans to the Byzantines is very apparent. However, working on an assumption that all the neighbors of the empire shared essential artistic principles raises a different set of issues that need to be considered. These are most apparent in each neighbor's own tradition of art historical scholarship, which often seeks to emphasize the differences between Byzantine and locally produced art. Sometimes this is determined by a nationalistic agenda: attempts to use the art of the past to promote a distinct national present. Given that most of the Christian neighbors of the empire are in ex-communist or former Soviet states, the historic

legacy of their political situation in the twentieth century is evident. Both under communism and post-independence, there is a clear trend towards identifying difference, whether to replicate the political divide of the Iron Curtain before 1989, or to accentuate the historical roots of the fractures between the Orthodox peoples of the ex-Soviet world after the collapse of the USSR. Armenia, for example, lent to neither of the Metropolitan Museum exhibitions, although they have been very generous donors to foreign exhibitions devoted specifically (and solely) to Armenian art (London, 2001; Paris, 2007; see Nersessian 2001; Durand 2007). And Georgia, which lent to the *Glory of Byzantium*, did not lend to its successor in 2004. We can only speculate about the reasons for these decisions not to lend, as so many factors are involved, varying from museological concerns, including the condition of the objects and the wish lists presented by the exhibition curators, to broader cultural and political issues, such as the Russian attacks on Georgia in August 2008, which prevented loans travelling from Tbilisi to the Royal Academy exhibition *Byzantium 330–1453*, after the completion of the catalog (London, 2008; Cormack and Vassilaki 2008). Nevertheless, decisions not to lend do also fit in with more general political concerns and changes in both Caucasian countries, in which a desire to assert an independent artistic identity that is not dependent on a central Byzantine reference point is evident. In contrast, the generous loans from Serbia to the London exhibition in 2008 suggest a very different desire to be seen to be part of a major European artistic and cultural tradition after years of political isolation.

The absence of any art from Armenia in the two New York exhibitions may also have been influenced by theology. The Armenian Church never signed up to the canons of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held at Chalcedon in 451, and so has not been in communion with the Greek and other Orthodox Churches for more than 1,500 years (although, of course, the Armenians regard their own church as "Orthodox"—see Finneran in this volume). If the Churches are theologically separate, then it becomes a legitimate question to ask whether the art should also be considered separately. This equally concerns the other non-Chalcedonian Churches of the eastern Mediterranean, notably the Syriacs and Copts. Most superficial formal comparisons of Byzantine and Armenian works of art, if placed side by side, suggest to the art historian that there are many common iconographic and other traits that the two Churches' art share, but it is equally possible to argue that the historic antagonism between the Churches, and their different interpretations of the meaning and function of art in worship mean that each can only be satisfactorily studied in isolation from the other. In some cases, it is clear that the theological divide did result in a clear artistic division as well. In the early tenth century, Armenian rulers were politically dominated by the Islamic caliphs in Baghdad rather than their Christian Byzantine neighbors to the west, and this affected the forms of art that were produced, most evident in the Islamic influences visible in the decoration of the church of Aghtamar on an island in Lake Van (now in Eastern Turkey), which was built for the Armenian king Gagik of Vaspurakan (915–21) (Jones 2007). But even at times of greater rapprochement, the Armenians maintained particular local artistic traditions, such as the erection of khatchkars (commemorative stones carved with crosses) that find no comparison in Byzantium (Azarian 1973).

Filling Gaps

To apply the most basic, reductionist interpretation to Byzantium itself, it would be possible to define Byzantine art as, simply, the art produced within the frontiers of the empire, an area that changed enormously over the millennium of the empire. However, this approach, while producing a clearly delimited and defined corpus, would have some important consequences for our understanding of Byzantine art. It would mean that for many periods we would have a considerably reduced array of objects and materials to study. Indeed, for reasons of historical survival it has long been clear that art historians have to look beyond the frontiers of Byzantium to tell the story of the empire and its art. It would now be unthinkable to exclude the mosaics of Sicily or Venice in accounts of the art of the twelfth century (Demus 1948; Demus 1984). Mosaic has long been considered the pre-eminent Byzantine artistic medium, and the monuments around Venice and Palermo constitute the largest, most expensive, and finest ensembles of figural mosaic anywhere in the Mediterranean. On those grounds, these churches appear in all the recent surveys of Byzantine art as a means of demonstrating the nature of monumental mosaic decoration in the twelfth century. If excluded, we would be limited to the mosaics of Daphni and a few other isolated panels and fragments for the history of this crucial century. The inclusion of the Italian mosaics, then, allows for a more continuous narrative of monumental art to be produced; but at what cost? One important danger is that the insertion of these monuments may distort our picture of Byzantine art. This was, after all, art produced outside the political frontiers of the empire, indeed by enemies and rivals of the empire, and so may represent a different direction of development of the art from that of the lost monuments of the empire. How, then, can this art be dealt with? Recent surveys of Byzantine art have produced different solutions. Robin Cormack in his *Byzantine Art* (Cormack 2000: 182) included the Italian monuments by suggesting that they can be seen as a Western "response" to Byzantine art; whereas John Lowden in his *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Lowden 1997: 314) presented them as a "puzzling" adaption of the art of Constantinople. In each case, however, there is an implicit idea that it is possible to see beyond the Venetian or Sicilian mosaics in order to recreate or re-imagine the now lost Byzantine original works of art to which they are seen to respond or adapt. Their inclusion is as intermediaries that allow access to the prototypes (an interesting analogy to the way in which Byzantine icons themselves are seen to function to give access to the original through copies). Such ideas raise many methodological problems about how the "distorting mirror" of the intermediary can be overcome: can we ever be sure that the postulated picture of Byzantine art that emerges from these lavish Italian reflections is a true one?

A similar situation occurs in histories of the thirteenth century, which turn from Italy to Serbia to provide a narrative for the development of monumental art. Now, in the continuing absence of large-scale works from Constantinople, art historical surveys turn to the churches of the newly created Serbian monarchy, such as Studenica (1208), Žiča (1230s) and Sopoćani (1260s) (Djurić 1967). The thriving

Serbian state and the churches its rulers built were only possible because of the collapse of Byzantine political control after the fall of Constantinople to the Fourth Crusade in 1204, and these churches are often presented as the "missing link" between the late Komnenian period and the birth of Palaiologan art at the end of the thirteenth century. Art historians have made a compelling case for tracing the stylistic thread that links the twelfth century to the fourteenth through Serbia; but it is only achieved by viewing the monuments selectively. The architecture of the buildings that contain these paintings owes much more to Romanesque building in Italy than to Byzantium, but this is less often noted. The inclusion of the Serbian churches depends on a divorce between the differing elements that make up the churches as a whole. The relationship to Byzantium is a necessarily selective one.

In all these cases, the "Byzantine" element that has been highlighted is one of style. It centers entirely on the formal appearance of the works of art, the nuances of dress, pose, and gesture, the development of drapery folds, the representations of space, and the continuation of particular iconographic models. In contrast, elements that concern the overall programs of the paintings and the ways in which they fit in to the architecture of the buildings, their iconographic peculiarities, and the functions of art within the buildings, are given less emphasis. In particular, the political uses made of Byzantine art by these different foreign rulers must be minimized. The justification for this approach is that in all these cases it has been argued that the monuments were created by Byzantine artists. Nevertheless, through this categorization of the monuments, historians have chosen to prioritize a particular version of art history, which concentrates on the origins of the iconographies, styles, or artists involved. It is an art history that is more concerned with creation than reception.

It was this approach to art history with its interest in the origins of artists that allowed Otto Demus to proclaim that Monreale, the great cathedral built on the hills above Palermo by William II between 1174 and 1182 is "not so much a Sicilian as a Byzantine monument." (Demus 1948: xix). Thus, the presence of what he concluded to be Greek artists took precedence over the location of the art in a Latin-rite Benedictine abbey-cum-cathedral in a Norman Romanesque basilica, and over its patronage—it was paid for by William II in the same years that he launched waves of attacks on Byzantine coastal territories and set his eyes on the conquest of Constantinople itself. It was also more important than its function: the clergy who worshipped in the cathedral did not share the Orthodox interpretation of the efficacy of images of their Byzantine counterparts. The discussion of all the Italian and Serbian churches mentioned above shares the same distinction between creation on the one hand and function and meaning on the other.

The disjunction exactly parallels a division in the study of art produced within the empire itself. In the 1960s, a series of articles and books (notably Beckwith 1961; Demus 1964) promoted a definition of Byzantine art as "the art of Constantinople." These have had a continuing impact on the study of Byzantine art, in which art produced outside the capital is frequently dismissed as provincial or archaizing, both implicit critiques measured against a metropolitan art seen as progressive (see also Holmes in this volume). This has been most evident in the study of the church known as Tokalı Kilise in Cappadocia, a Byzantine province in central Anatolia, some 500 km

east of Constantinople. This rock-cut church was excavated and painted at the start of the tenth century, but then massively extended and given new paintings in the 930s. The style of the paintings in the two parts of the church is radically different: that in the old church is strongly linear, with bold outlines to the figures, a style used in many other churches in the region; whereas that in the new church employs much more subtle modeling, and its figures, although very tall, are more naturalistically rendered. This style finds its closest comparison in work carried out by highly accomplished manuscript painters, working for senior court officials in the imperial capital. There is a clear disparity between the two parts of the church, and that in the new church has been hailed as rare evidence of "metropolitan" monumental art of the tenth century (Epstein 1986). Such an epithet for the paintings necessarily downplays the iconographic content of the new church's decorative program which remains rooted in local Cappadocian traditions. The emphasis of art historians has firmly been on the stylistic rather than iconographic or other aspects.

It is evident that the historical weight of art historical discourse on Byzantine art has been primarily concerned with the creation of works of art, and with their formal appearance. This derives from an interest in artists, the predominant concern of "mainstream" Western art history from Vasari onwards. This might appear an odd priority in the Byzantine world since we know so little about artists. Very few are named in sources, fewer have left their names on what they created, and none have careers that can be traced (although for a recent attempt to create such a biography, see Cormack 2007: 69–81). Where attempts have been made to identify artists on the basis of stylistic analysis, there have been many disagreements: this is particularly the case for objects made on the edges of the empire, where different communities have co-existed. It has been most apparent in the Crusader kingdoms of the thirteenth century. One icon in the collection of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in Egypt, showing St Sergios and Bakchos, has been variously ascribed by different scholars in the fifty years since it was first published to the Knights Templar (Weitzmann 1966), an Apulian artist working in the Levant (Weitzmann 1984: 148–9), a Cypriot artist (Mouriki 1985–6: 69), a Syrian artist working on Cyprus (Mouriki 1990: 119), a Cilician Armenian artist working for Antioch (Piatnitsky et al. 2000: 252–4), or a Crusader artist working in Acre (New York 2004: 374–5). Art historians have tended to seek the "origins" of the artist as a means of understanding the work of art, rather than consider how these icons could have functioned for the different communities that may have seen them.

Art historians have also substituted patrons for artists, and used them to discover the intentions and meanings of works of art. Thus, for Monreale, art historians have looked to William II to discern the political and dynastic meaning of the cathedral, and to his Cluniac Benedictine monks to understand the theological messages and arrangement of images throughout the building (Dittelbach 2003; Borsook 1990: 51–79). This further problematizes the inclusion of art beyond Byzantium's political frontiers within the canon of Byzantine art, since it places the meaning of the art ever further away from the artists, and ever closer to rulers, aristocrats, and clergymen who did not regard themselves as "Byzantines" or "Romans," even if they sought to usurp Byzantium's political authority.

This raises questions about the whole process of the creation of Byzantine art: how much weight should be placed on patrons, and how much on the artists who actually executed the works? If more emphasis is given to those who commissioned, rather than created, works of art, then the argument in favor of including these monuments as part of the history of Byzantine art must be weakened: the (Byzantine) artists merely execute their (non-Byzantine) masters' commands. Of course, the interaction between patrons and artists is usually more complex than this: artists interpret the commissions they are given and seek to express them through the artistic forms that they have been trained to use. Moreover, if patrons abroad did seek out Byzantine artists and craftsmen, the reasons for that choice must also be taken into consideration.

Portable Art

So far, this discussion has concentrated on monumental art, art in a fixed location. However, a second problem with defining the limits of Byzantine art occurs when we turn to smaller-scale, portable objects. There are a number of groups of small-scale objects for which we have little information about provenance, production, or use. Whole classes of objects can, as a result, be moved in or out of the category of Byzantine art, depending on how art historians choose to classify them. One key case here concerns Middle Byzantine ivories. Of the two hundred or so surviving medieval Byzantine ivories made in the tenth and eleventh centuries and cataloged by Adolf Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1934), about 30 have long been seen as problematic. Although they broadly follow the model of ivories known to have been made in Constantinople, concerns about their style, technique, iconography, and quality have raised doubts about whether they should really be counted as Byzantine works of art at all. This dubious status has been given a geographical expression: it has been argued that they must have been made on the fringes of the empire, with southern Italy proposed as the most likely site; hence they are known as Italo-Byzantine ivories (Keck 1930). Standing outside the mainstream of Byzantium, they are often excluded from studies of Byzantine ivories (Cutler 1994).

The exclusion of these probably Italian ivories runs counter to the inclusion of the Italian monumental mosaics we have already encountered, even though both were made in a similar cultural ambit. Just as the mosaics were included because of their exceptional quality, so the ivories are excluded because of their perceived inadequacies. This has served Byzantine art history in a number of ways: it has promoted a vision of Byzantine ivories as a more homogeneous group (suggesting a simpler narrative for the development of the craft, with workers and patrons all sharing common aesthetic and functional goals), but also as a uniformly high-quality craft. Byzantium emerges as the center for good art, with poorer products consigned to the periphery. Low-quality art has here been physically removed from the heartlands of the empire. To reintegrate such ivories back into the mainstream of consideration would require

a reformulation of our expectations of what Byzantine art is: more diverse and more heterogeneous.

A similar argument has been constructed around the production of Byzantine enamels, with variations in quality being explained in geographical terms. Low-quality enamels are explained either as being made in the provenances of the empire (or in foreign centers such as Georgia), or as being made in Constantinople but destined to be given as diplomatic gifts to unimportant neighbors of the empire (Redford 1990; Wessel 1969: 115–16). Gradations of quality have led to a bewildering variety of distinctions: the twelfth-century Ezstergom reliquary, which surrounds its fragment of the True Cross with enamel scenes from the Passion, has been portrayed as showing an "advanced provinciality of style" (Beckwith 1961: 111).

Recent discussion has sought to move away from the question of provenance to consider art with shared meanings across the Mediterranean (Hoffman 2001) or art produced in multiple locations (Redford 2004). These discussions have sought decisively to move debate on to questions of reception and away from creation.

Conclusion

So far, this essay has tended to concentrate on all the reasons why, perhaps, we should produce a narrow definition of Byzantine art. It has noted the need to consider the local circumstances behind the production of every work of art—that it is more effective to judge Sicilian art in terms of its place in Sicilian society than to see it is a reflection of Byzantine art. Equally, it has noted that attempts to identify the origins of artists, and to use artists as a means to define art, can be a complex and not necessarily helpful way of viewing the works of art produced in the eastern Mediterranean. Despite this, however, I would argue that it is essential that as broad a definition of Byzantine art as possible is employed by art historians, one that includes the empire's non-Chalcedonian and Latin neighbors, and that seeks to integrate art of lower quality, or of provincial origin. Admittedly such a policy works against the production of a single narrative history of Byzantine art, but it allows a much more dynamic vision of the working of art to be produced.

A broader approach allows us to see how central core ideas about the nature and value of art in Orthodox societies could be developed and change in different parts of that wider Orthodox world. This then allows as much emphasis on what 20 years ago would be dismissed as "archaic" or derivative art as on the modern and progressive. Bringing all the outside art in also allows for the art at the center to be better understood; to understand the core values of art in Byzantium, the saints, and media it chose to support, as well as those which it neglected. It is less homogeneous and more dynamic, versatile, and complex.

A wider approach also brings to the fore some of the strengths of Byzantine art. This is most apparent in the fourteenth century, when the different regions of the eastern Mediterranean were more politically divided than ever before. Yet at exactly the same time, they were more closely tied artistically than ever before. The

volumetric, angular Palaiologan style that emerged in Constantinople and the Balkans in the late thirteenth century spread over the following century so that it can be found everywhere from Genoa in the west (Nelson 1985) to monasteries in Georgia in the east (Amiranashvili 1980). In no two places is it exactly the same, but its widespread dissemination speaks to the enormous spiritual power of Byzantine art forms and reveals the real power of the Byzantine *oecumene*. The danger remains in such a globalizing approach of homogenizing all the art and underplaying regional differences. It also smacks of an imperialist, colonialist view of art, in which the outlying regions copy the center, suggesting a one-way route of artistic transmission. Nevertheless, there is much to be gained from considering the flexibility and adaptability of Byzantine art: an attempt to provide visual access to the divine that could be exploited and appreciated by such a diverse range of cultures, political societies and variations of Christian beliefs.

FURTHER READING

It is the recent exhibitions in New York and London that have most effectively sought to explore the relationships betweem the art of Byzantium and that of its neighbors: *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era,* AD *843–1261*, eds. H. C. Evans, and W. D. Wixom (New York, 1997); *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans (New York, 2004); *Byzantium*, eds. R. Cormack and M. Vassilaki (London, 2008). For narrative histories of Byzantine art that exploit the art of the empire's neighbors in different ways, compare the treatments in Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 2000), John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London, 1997) and Thomas F. Mathews, *The Art of Byzantium: between Antiquity and the Renaissance* (London, 1998).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Icons and Iconomachy

Leslie Brubaker

More than the word "Byzantine" itself, "iconoclasm" and the related "iconoclast" are widely encountered in modern English usage: even beer mats celebrate the "iconoclast" antics of the free-thinkers who patronize a well-known brand of lager. More's the pity, then, that the Byzantines themselves rarely used the words: "iconoclast" is occasionally found as a pejorative from the early eighth century onwards, but "iconoclasm," which is a Greek compound meaning "image (icon) breaking (clasm)," is a sixteenth-century invention that has only become firmly attached to the Byzantine image debates since the 1950s (Bremmer 2008: 13–14). What modern scholars call the period of Iconoclasm, the years between c.720 and 843 when the role of religious imagery was debated by members of the Orthodox Church, the Byzantines referred to as iconomachy—the image struggle. As we shall see, their terminology is far more accurate than ours.

The beginnings of Iconomachy

The image debate apparently began in the 720s. We first hear about in three letters of the patriarch Germanos (715–30) concerning two churchmen, Constantine of Nakoleia and Thomas of Klaudioupolis. The letters date to the 720s and, perhaps, the early 730s after Germanos had retired (Ostrogorsky 1930: 238; Speck 1981: 267–81).

In the earliest two letters (Mansi xiii, 100A11–105A3, 105B7–E11; *PG* 98: 156B12–161C5, 161D6–164C10; Stein 1980: 5–30), both concerning the bishop of Nakoleia (a city in Phrygia, roughly 300 km southeast of Constantinople), Germanos expressed his annoyance at Constantine's unexpected behavior. The first letter, addressed to Constantine's superior John, bishop of Synada, treated the issue primarily as a disciplinary case. According to Germanos, Constantine had refused to honor images by performing *proskynesis*, a gesture of suppliance or reverence, in front of them. Constantine apparently reasoned that such honor was due only to God, and