Abstracts

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BYZANTINE STUDIES CONFERENCE

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Session 1A

Writing and Ideology

The Martyrdom of Pagan Philosophers at Antioch in Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* 14 and 29

Sergio Carlos Tamez (Ohio State University)

The fourth-century Latin historian Ammianus Marcellinus defines martyrs as those who "when urged to abandon their religion, endured terrible tortures, even going so far as to meet a glorious death with unsullied faith" (*Res Gestae* 22.11.10, trans. John C. Rolfe). According to T.D. Barnes, Ammianus, the conservative, pagan, and self-described *miles quondam et Graecus* faithfully adopts the apostate Emperor Julian's propaganda that there were there were both no Christian martyrs during Julian's reign and that any Christian condemned to death was done so justly. Indeed, Ammianus' famous definition of a martyr follows his account of the "martyrdom" of the Christian bishop of Alexandria George of Cappadocia in *Res Gestae* 22.11, an unsympathetic account of the bishop's death.

In contrast, Ammianus does narrate the martyrdoms of four *pagan* philosophers at the hands of tyrannical Christian rulers. In the extant books of the *Res Gestae*, Ammianus describes two treason trials at Antioch under two eastern Roman rulers, the Caesar Gallus and emperor Valens, each of which concludes with two parallel accounts of pagan philosophers executed by the Roman regime. Recent scholarship on Ammianus has interpreted the martyrdom of these philosophers in the *Res Gestae* as part of Ammianus' polemic against an ascendant Christianity and a conscious effort on the part of the Late Roman historian to claim the heroic conduct of Christian martyrs for the pagan cause while also denying the existence of any Christian martyrs under Julian's reign. Considering the hostile reception that Julian experienced by the Antiochenes in 363 before his Persian campaign and later claims that Julian executed Christian martyrs at Antioch, Ammianus' localization of anti-pagan persecutions at Antioch represents a novel pagan application of martyrdom narratives in defense of Julian and against tyrannical eastern Christian rulers.

This paper presents a close reading of the philosopher-martyr accounts in *Res Gestae* 14.9.3–6 and 29.1.37–42 and shows that both passages of the *Res Gestae* are mirror-images of each other, sharing the same narrative structure and thematic elements. Special attention is given to Ammianus' characterization of each of the philosopher-martyr pairs in *Res Gestae* 14 and 29, especially in light of his allusions to the famous deaths of the pagan philosophers Zeno of Elea and Peregrinus Proteus as *comparanda* for his executed philosophers. Both exemplary philosophers fail to comport in the manner of early Christian martyrs as described in contemporary martyr literature.

Upon close investigation, Ammianus' account of these executed philosophers undermines his own definition of a martyr, calling into question whether Ammianus was sincere about the alleged heroism of martyrs at all. I argue that Ammianus' philosopher-martyr narratives are laced with irony and demonstrate a cynical deployment of the discursive power of Christian martyrdom and persecution to the classical *topos* of the "suffering sage" in a new cultural moment. For his attentive pagan readers, however, Ammianus still advocates a traditional Roman religious outlook that is skeptical of both Neoplatonism and Christianity.

The Use of Language in Early Byzantine Missions: Instrument and Ideology

Yuliya Minets (University of Alabama)

There has been an increasing interest in Byzantine and Eastern Christian missions, as manifested, e.g., in the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium on "Byzantine Missions" (2022). This paper seeks to continue these efforts and focus on the use of language in real and fictional missionary enterprises taking place in the Byzantine cultural space broadly defined, from the fourth to seventh centuries. This topic, as many other practical aspects of Byzantine missionary activities, has never been systematically studied. Yet, language is tremendously important in the missionary

context. If conversion to Christianity happens, it happens in language, through language, and by means of language.

The paper explores the patterns of language interaction attested in a variety of historical situations and literary contexts in which the conversion of individuals and communities to Christianity was mediated by a missionary figure. The focus is on the ways in which these scenarios are reflected in narrative sources — specifically, four groups of texts. First, I discuss apocryphal Acts of apostles and hagiography; these overly fictional tales are often crucial for the understanding of the cultural sensitivies and anxieties related to languages and Christianization. Second, I focus on missionary accounts from the *Ecclesiastical Histories* by Rufinus of Aquileia, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and a few other texts — the grand historical narratives about imperial Christianity written on behalf of the Christian empire. Third, I explore conversion narratives preserved in the Armenian and Georgian traditions to counterbalance the imperial perspective with visions from the frontier cultures on the receiving end of Christianization. Finally, there is a special case of Syriac literature that represents an ancient self-aware tradition of Semitic Christianity; while Hellenistic influences increased over time, the culture as a whole remained tangential to the imperial agenda. This approach allows one to have a comprehensive picture taken from a variety of angles and to decentralize the vision of Byzantine and eastern Christian missions.

I argue that although the practical dimension of language use in missionary activities is somewhat detached from its narrative representations, late antique Christianity in Byzantium and beyond developed flexible ways to speak about foreign languages, their speakers, and forms of cross-linguistic interaction that had a long-lasting influence on Byzantine culture. The use of language in the missionary context was never simply about conveying a theological message about the redemptive sacrifice of Christ or encouraging one's conversion to the new religion. The ways languages were employed communicated underlying cultural presuppositions, ideological convictions, biases, and expectations. In missionizing "barbarians" who by default were speakers of *other* languages, in Byzantium and the Christian East, the language of a missionary habitually

communicated power, orthodoxy, civilization, and normativity. Other languages were rarely acknowledged, and their speakers were often paternalized. Yet, many factors contributed to the actual power dynamics, and the attitudes were not always that simplistic. In the texts about Christianization and conversion, these language-related remarks can be strategically utilized for various rhetorical and ideological purposes of their authors.

Washing them White: "Ethiopians" in Byzantine Literature

Dane Smith (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

The topic of race in the Middle Ages has been discussed for some time, focusing on a range of concepts from religious race to 'genealogical' origins to modern racism. While questions of identity have seen considerable exploration in the Byzantine context, namely concerning self-identification, perception of the Other remains relatively unexplored. This largely a result of a relative dearth of source material directly related to the matter beyond the 7th century; unlike in later Western medieval sources, there are no travelogues or fantastical depictions of black skinned Saracens miraculously turning white upon their baptisms in Byzantine literature. However, a wide range of literary sources from Byzantium demonstrate an acute awareness of dark skin as a character trait with a negative stereotypical perception. In particular, the use of the Greek word '*Aἰθίοψ*' in Byzantine literature is examined closely to tease out a general sense of anti-black colorism in middle Byzantium.

First, *Aἰθίοψ* refers to both dark skinned Africans and Indians, with associated stereotypes certainly applying to both groups. Such peoples were known to Byzantium and had some presence there as referenced in the works of Michael Psellos, John Kinnamos, and Robert of Clari. Dark skinned peoples were also trafficked in the Mediterranean slave trade; though these, alongside pilgrims,

merchants, and diplomats, were a relative rarity in Byzantium. Regardless of their rarity, such people were a visible representation of Otherness and inferiority.

Standards of beauty within Byzantium held dark skin as categorically worse than the ideal pale white skin. Generally, deficiencies in physical beauty were linked to character flaws, ugly people were seen as lesser. Most notably for this study, dark skin is linked to moral failings as in John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories*, and the term *Αἰθίοψ* is often used to describe demons and their allies such as in the *Life of St. Andrew the Fool*. The common proverbs of 'washing an Ethiopian white' or other variations are also examined here. Lastly, a particular instance of apparent self-consciousness around skin color in Michael Choniates' *Annals* and Eustathios of Thessaloniki's funeral oration to Manuel Komnenos is analyzed to demonstrate an intersection between Byzantine and Western colorism.

The last principal area to examine is the Hippocratic-Galenic medical tradition present in both Byzantium and in Western Europe. The influence of geographical determinism and humorism on the perception of Others have been explored in the Western context, notably figures like Peter Abelard and Albertus Magnus. Given a shared corpus of medical knowledge in Byzantium, analyses of Western medieval medical knowledge as it related to geography and skin color can serve as an effective starting point for analyzing instances of climatic determinism in Byzantine texts. This paper hopes to tease out a general Byzantine perspective on the *Αἰθίοψ* as one that is broadly, though not universally, negative. This perspective remains simple colorism and stereotypes rather than a systematized or structural racism. Roman identity remained permeable for outsiders through acculturation, almost certainly including black-skinned peoples.

The Prosperous, Holy Islandscape of Early Byzantine Cyprus

Young Richard Kim (University of Illinois at Chicago)

Cypriot hagiography flourished beginning in the fifth century with the *Life of Epiphanios*, written about the island's most infamous saint who personally elevated the status of the church of Cyprus in the oft tumultuous ecclesiastical political scene of early Byzantium. A significant struggle the Cypriots faced was over their autonomy, especially against the claims of the archbishops of Antioch, and this dispute was only resolved by the miraculous discovery of the relics of a native son, Barnabas, who by virtue of his apostolic pedigree, granted to the island a newfound authority that was as old and as venerable as that of any other see. The (invented) Barnabas tradition demonstrated the potential in writing about saints' lives to augment ecclesiastical and political power, both locally and abroad, and to deepen devotion to holy figures, whose cults were often under the careful control of church officials. Although these hagiographies often (and strategically) depicted their figures of devotion operating in the first-century world of the apostles, they reflected the material realities of the later times in which they were composed.

The subsequent proliferation of *vitae* about Cypriot saints during the fifth through seventh centuries occurred at the same time as a period of prosperity on the island, both in the cities situated in a ring along the coastline but also in the rural landscape, often described as a "busy countryside." The archaeology of Cyprus for this period has uncovered ample evidence of its denizens living well and participating in a vivacious trade and exchange network, crisscrossing both the island and the eastern Mediterranean, which facilitated the movement of goods, grown and manufactured. But not only were the people of Cyprus manufacturing goods and cultivating crops, they were also building, sometimes monumentally, often practically, and in particular, they dedicated significant time and resources to constructing churches and cult sites.

Scholars often engage with these two source types, hagiography and archaeology, as evidence of two different phenomena: the former reflecting religious and devotional beliefs and practices, and the latter daily life on the ground. But the overlap of a hagiographical boom and a busy countryside in early Byzantine Cyprus was not mere coincidence, but rather mutually reinforcing signs of an island experiencing a golden age. Too often, scholars treat saints' lives as more fictitious than factual. But hagiographies reflect what their authors thought was possible, and this paper argues that the *vitae* of the saints of Cyprus provide snapshots of this prosperous islandscape, hinting at the material realities of the time when they were composed, and that the archaeological evidence supports the literary picture of the imagined worlds of these holy figures.

Session 1B

Byzantine Things

Received Materiality and the Kyrenia Girdle: The Weight of Adornment Under the Reign of Maurice Tiberius

Serena D'Alessandro (Florida State University)

The Kyrenia girdle, a sixth-century belt comprised of genuine Constantinopolitan currency and weighing nearly a pound of solid gold, is recognized in Byzantine scholarship as an exceptional case of numismatic regalia. It consists of thirteen coins, with eight of the solidi and all four of the consular medallions originating from the last emperor of the Justinian dynasty, Maurice Tiberius (582–602). The remaining solidi come from the reign of Theodosius II (408–450), Justin II (565–578), Tiberius II (574–582), and the joint rule of Justin I and Justinian (527). Scholars such as Philip Grierson and Ormond Dalton have discussed the girdle's provenance and rarity of its included currency; however, its reception and materiality have not been addressed. I offer a reading of the received materiality of the belt, examining its visual, geological, and historical associations.

My analysis hinges on the interplay between the wearer, audience, and their varying receptions of gold within the context of ceremonial and military triumphs. I begin with an overview of gold's received materiality to emphasize its cultural and symbolic eminence in Byzantium. I then draw on primary textual sources including Theophylact Simocatta's *Histories*, and visual comparanda such as the Arch of Constantine's Siege of Verona, the Tetrarchs, and depictions of Byzantine military saints. I consider *who* wore gold, who wore the *most* gold, and who sought to *project* an image of the empire through their adornment. In doing so, I demonstrate the Kyrenia girdle's received materiality aided its wearer in embodying an image of wealth, power, and military prestige, thereby enhancing the performance of adornment to create a rich, sensory-based spectacle that reinforced Byzantine authority and grandeur. This scholarship strengthens our understanding of ceremonial regalia's historical, cultural, and visual associations, ultimately contributing to our knowledge of Byzantium's reception of gold as material — and as mediator between body and empire.

Weaving Empire, Exchange, and Identity: The Microhistory of a Late Antique Silk Roundel

Clara Pinchbeck (Case Western Reserve University)

The Late Antique Mediterranean can be pictured as a tapestry, weaving together colorful threads of religions, empires, materials, tastes, and identities. Due to its central position in trade and its record of conquest, Egypt was home to a particularly diverse and multicultural population. Previously a part of the Ptolemaic Kingdom (305–30 BCE), the Sasanians invaded the Roman Province of Aegyptus (30 BCE–641 CE) in 618 CE and occupied it until 628 CE. While the Persian dynasty controlled Egypt for a relatively short time, scholars have maintained that the close, and often contentious, relationship between the late Roman Empire and the Sasanian Empire should be visualized in the textiles and clothing styles coming out of and being exchanged between the two court cultures. Unfortunately, many textiles discovered in Egypt at the turn of the century were organized into iconographically-based chronologies that remain largely undisputed and obscure the broader cultural and political histories of their weaving.

This paper contends that Egyptian textiles should be placed in historically-grounded dialogues with regional imperial powers, Mediterranean trade routes, and expressions of individual identity. Although scaling these networks presents a challenge, employing microhistory as a method of analysis offers an innovative solution by focusing on a specific object whose construction connects it to greater histories. Approaching a Late Antique textile roundel with two nude dancers in the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection through the lens of microhistory provides a way to assess and explore individual, local, and global narratives.

This virtually unstudied textile is made of a traditional Chinese material, silk, and combines Roman, Egyptian, and Sasanian decorations and motifs. Examining its visual and technical elements in relation to contemporaneous literary sources and

visual comparanda illuminates previously unexplored histories of cultural exchange and local identity. The Cleveland silk, I argue, is a microcosm of the political and religious tensions present in the Late Antique world. Discovered in a Christian burial context in Akhmim, Egypt, the silk's unique samite weave structure connects it to weaving traditions in Roman Egypt and Syria as well as Tang Dynasty China. It incorporates a Sasanian ornamental format with Roman and Sasanian Dionysian motifs encircled in an Egyptian lotus pattern. As the product of material exchange, it gave its owner a tool to define themselves within their own society and the wider, global visual culture of power. The purple-dyed silk identified the wearer's place among the Roman elite, and the integration of the Persian luxury textile pattern shows that they participated in the global system of aristocratic distinction. Placing the silk in dialogue with contemporaneous comparanda suggests that it was part of a larger robe with Dionysiac imagery, whose subject matter indicates a rich culture of paideia present in Roman Egyptian. Late Antique purple-dyed silk robes were garments specifically for women that elite individuals could use for clothing or gift-giving. The Cleveland silk thus weaves together the Late Antique Mediterranean world, threading broad warps of empire and religion with local wefts of identity and gender.

Constantine's Chi-rho: Visual Expression of Power in the Imperial Roman Tradition

Sonia Dixon (Florida State University)

I situate the chi-rho in the context of the Late Antique period, underscoring the significance of visions as an imperial Roman tradition. Eusebius's Vita Constantini features the well-known account of Constantine's vision prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Scholarship focuses on the Vita to discuss this vision, the chi-rho, and Constantine as the first Christian emperor. Lactantius and Eusebius's Church History record accounts of this vision, but are less studied. Together, these sources vary in the retelling of the event, but all conclude that the vision featured a sign, generally accepted to be the chi-rho. Catherine Ware has demonstrated that visions legitimate emperors. Her examination includes Constantine's previously recorded vision of Apollo at Gaul in 310.

Scholars use a Christian lens to investigate Constantine. Raymond Van Dam has demonstrated that Constantine remained a northern ruler and "interloper" in Rome even after his defeat of Maxentius. I suggest that the chi-rho, while Christian, served a greater audience, both pagan and Christian. The chi-rho appears on various objects including the well-known Ticinum medallion. I revisit this medallion, dated to 321, featuring a bust of the emperor wearing a helmet adorned with the chi-rho on the obverse. I argue that Constantine utilized the chi-rho to serve as a sign of the vision.

The Greek Gospel Lectionaries in the Libraries of Sultan Mehmed II and Malatesta Novello

Robert S. Nelson (Yale University emeritus)

Two Greek lectionaries in Istanbul (Topkapi Sarai Lib. gr. 21) and Cesena (Bibl. Malat. Cod. D. XXVIII.4) have contents and decoration so similar to make them twins, a seldom studied category of deluxe lectionaries but observable since the tenth century. Written in a calligraphic script dating to the later eleventh century, they have ornament executed by one of the principal workshops in Constantinople. Both entered their respective libraries at approximately the same time: after 1453 for Topkapi 21 and before the death of Malatesta Novello in 1465 for the Cesena manuscript. The two manuscripts are first examined individually and as a pair to elucidate the serial production of deluxe lectionaries during the period of its greatest achievements. Then the fate of both books are compared. One remained in Constantinople and can be traced back to Mehmed II; the other reached Italy and was purchased there for a princely library. Both libraries still exist. Today the Cesena lectionary remains chained to its original reading bench in the best-preserved Italian Renaissance library, while the Topkapi lectionary belongs to the small collection of non-Islamic texts in the library of the Ottoman Sultans. Neither patron of these libraries could read their Greek manuscripts, which raises the question of why they were acquired.

Session 2A

Medieval Contact Zones: Literary Encounters
Around the Greek-Speaking World

Education as Contact: Causes, Strategies, and Effects of New Teaching Methods, 10th–11th Centuries

Ugo Mondini (University of Oxford)

Education in Byzantium was the crucial passage through which the youth could earn a position in society. Various schools and private teachers were active in every region of the empire. Despite competition, all these schools shared the same objective: to provide students with Greek paideia through a curriculum that was substantially stable since late antiquity. In other words, education followed a precise agenda to preserve the system of social power and to ensure cultural prestige. Through education, students were virtually enabled to reach the heights of rhetorical training and become part of the learned élite; or they could settle for a level of literacy adequate to simpler administrative offices. If foreigners, they could be assimilated or reinforce connections between Byzantium and their homelands.

However, continuity in curriculum did not mean tenacious rigidity against change. My paper deals with the period between the tenth and the eleventh century when major changes in education practices are attested; the focus is on three details reported by contemporary sources: 1. the increased number of teachers for the first and second levels of instruction; 2. the development of new teaching methods (schedography; didactic poetry); 3. students of increasingly diverse geographic provenience and ethnic background.

I propose to interpret these phenomena by entering a Byzantine classroom, like the one that Anna Komnene (1083–c. 1153) describes for the eleventh-century schedographical teaching; and to tackle this study by conceiving the class as a social space of contact. I substantiate my presentation through contemporary sources (historical texts, school textbooks, visual art), which are analyzed through the lens of socio-historical linguistic and cultural history.

In the first part of the paper, I focus on the contents and the methods of teaching to show how orthography and syntax were crucial issues to Byzantine education and which strategies teachers developed to train students in Atticized Medieval Greek. Therefore, I comment on three sets of synoptic passages from schedographical texts, didactic poems, and other grammatical treatises to showcase negotiations of linguistic norms and their cause. The aim is to understand the students' needs. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, an increasing number of Greek and non-Greek speakers became interested in accessing education. Spelling or syntactic mistakes were still not allowed to a cultured *Rhomaios*, but teachers had to understand how to face the new classroom reality. Through the previous linguistic scrutiny, I offer considerations on 1. which tools of grammar teaching were devised to successfully acculturate students; 2. to what extent contact and negotiation of norms triggered long-term effects both within the Greek language and in high-standard registers of other languages.

Education is a social process. If this process ended long ago, as for Byzantine education, we have the chance to reflect on the causes of change and its long-term effects. This paper aims to reinforce a new trajectory in understanding Byzantine education, placing Byzantium in its broader historical and linguistical context.

Love in the Contact Zone

Michael Cooperson (UCLA)

This paper brings the Greek romance *Digenis Akritas* into conversation with an Arabic frontier text: the tenth-century *Siyar al-thughur* (*Tales of the frontier*), by al-Qadi al-Tarsusi. It seeks to demonstrate that, despite their differences, the two texts stake out similar positions with respect to the disruptive emotions of erotic and parental love.

The first part of *Digenis Akritis*, the Emir renounces Islam and embraces Christianity. Eventually, he persuades his mother to join him. In both cases, the poem describes the side-switching as motivated by love: in the Emir's case, love for Eirene; and in his mother's case, her love for her son. There is, however, a difference between *erotas* and *agape*: the object of the first may be replaced, while the object of the second may not. When the Emir's mother reproaches him for converting to Christianity, she begins by reminding him of the beautiful women on the Muslim side. The presumption is that there is nothing special about the Roman girl; any other will do just as well. In the end, the mother accepts Christianity too, but (in the Escorial recension, at least), seems to do it for her son's sake, knowing she has doomed herself to Hell: "Alas," she cries, "what have you done to me?"

In *Siyar al-thughur*, we find a hyperbolically eroticized description of a Roman woman. "Stop talking about her," the poet tells himself at the end, "and take instead a woman who is permitted!" As per Akritic convention, the beauty *d'en face* is irresistable; but here, as in *Digenis*, the hero is called upon to find a substitute for her. The love of a mother for her son, however, cannot be commuted or transferred. This is evident from a report where a woman gives a frontier warrior a lock of her hair and tells him to tie it to the reins of his horse. As we learn, this affixation of a bodily token allows her to send herself symbolically into the fight as a substitute for her son, who has run away to join the *jihad*. Yet, if his martyrdom is glorious, as she will later assert, why try to save him by sending herself in his stead?

Both *Digenis* and the *Siyar* find sexual attraction and parental love dangerous because those feelings subvert, destabilize, or overwhelm normative ideas of borders, religion, and war. Our texts respond to the threat using a shared language of assertiveness and evasion. In the gaps between normative discourses of identity and the things that characters actually say and do in both Arabic and Greek, we seem to glimpse memories of the affective dimensions of life in the contact zone.

Power and Legitimacy in Context: John Kantakouzenos' Rhetoric of Power Addressed to the Pope, the People of Constantinople, and the Mamluk Sultan

Andrea Cuomo (Ghent University)

John Kantakouzenos became Emperor in his own right in 1347. However, the battle for him was not over. The long civil war left perplexity and discontent both internally — among the Byzantine notables and the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church — and outside the borders of the Empire. Despite having achieved the power *de iure*, Kantakouzenos still had to acquire it *de facto*. Hence, a strong diplomatic campaign of legitimation toward the neighbor institutions became compelling. The beginning of Book 4 of Kantakouzenos' *Histories* bears witness to the diplomatic feat of John VI. In my contribution, I dwell on four moments of this very rich, linguistically interesting, and yet neglected texts: (1) How Kantakouzenos addresses the accusation of usurpation; (2) His position(s) toward the Union of the Church explained to the Pope and the Orthodox hierarchy respectively; (3) His domestic (4) and foreign policy, and the reaction to it.

Given their historical relevance, these documents have been the object of individual investigations by scholars of Western Medieval Europe, the Byzantine Empire, and the Islamic World — e.g., Canard's 1937 study of the letter of the Mamluk Sultan to Kantakouzenos. Despite the soundness of these studies, this approach prevents us to fully grasp Kantakouzenos' strategy in foreign and domestic policy, and its construction within official documents. Diplomacy is based on dialogue, and dialogue is only possible if different outlooks are considered and put in contact. My paper shows that the key to understanding Kantakouzenos' diplomatic sources is placing them in a comparative perspective that takes into account (i) the language and rhetorical strategies of each document; (ii) the respective contexts of production and reception; (iii) their role within the Histories.

Consequently, I present passages in which different measures of deploying language and rhetoric according to the addressees and their culture are showcased.

The focus is on the dialogue between worldviews, and ideologies. The complex cultural, ethnic, and linguistic context of the late-Medieval World was on the agenda of any Byzantine of any epoch, but above all of a late-Byzantine Emperor seeking internal and external recognition. This left relevant traces within the preserved texts which are to be analyzed through the lens of linguistics and literary criticism. Beyond proving the effectiveness of this methodological approach, I highlight duplicities and ambiguities in Kantakouzenos' foreign policy and in his legitimization of power.

Kantakouzenos' texts are an ideal case study to illustrate that Medieval Greek texts are to be placed within a much wider context than the ever-shrinking borders of the Byzantine Empire. The tendency to break the mold of the Greek-centered scholarship on Byzantium has found acceptance and application in historical studies; it has not been fully exploited by linguists and scholars of rhetoric yet.

My ultimate goal is thus to emphasize that placing the Byzantine Empire within the multicultural and multiethnic globalized Medieval World also improves our understanding of Medieval Greek text production.

Byzantium in Muscovy: A Global Age of Absolutism

Alexandra Vukovich (King's College London)

The Kormchaia Kniga of Ustiug was a key document compiling Byzantine political ideas in Muscovite Rus. Interpolating Justinian's Novellae, it features many elements of Byzantine political thought, such as Title VI, which provides the definition of one of most basic tenets of Byzantine political thought: the divine origin of the imperium and sacerdotium and the emperor's role in establishing a harmony between the spiritual and temporal powers and his duty to watch over the Church and Orthodoxy. The translation of this and other late antique Byzantine texts would form the basis for the theory of the Muscovite

state, in absence of other sources of political theory. Agapetus' treatise to Justinian would equally reflect this theory of the state, one that would shape ideas about nature of the Muscovite state for centuries. Konstantin Leontiev (1831–1891), a blue-blooded Russian aristocrat, Panslavist, diplomat to the Ottoman Empire, and prolific essayist, saw Byzantinism as the principle of imperial autocracy. Yet, he viewed Byzantinism positively as the ideological alternative to Western bourgeois liberalism, defining it as the body of religious, political, philosophical, and aesthetic ideas that made Russia unique. This paper both explores and queries the textual basis for notions of Russian autocracy and absolutism anchored in its Byzantine inheritance. In reality, Byzantine political notions influenced a range of court cultures, including that of France under Louis XII. And yet, the Russian Empire has often been depicted as the heir of Byzantium, despite its myriad other influences, including that of the more recent period of Mongol suzerainty. This paper will explore the construction of Russian Byzantinism, through translation and the literary shaping of the Muscovite state, to the exclusion of other political forms.

Session 2B

Studies in Iconography

From Monumental to Miniature: Networks of Meaning across Macro and Micro Mosaic Icons of Christ in Late Byzantium

Lindsay Corbett (McGill University)

In his seminal study on mosaic icons, Otto Demus proposed that "as befits the small scale of these icons, they do not represent the 'great,' 'public,' or monumental themes…" but instead derive their imagery from portable painted icons (Demus, 1991). While modern scholars have been attentive to the fact that micromosaic icons must have functioned similarly to portable icons, they have been more reluctant to accept that micromosaic icons were at the same time related to their monumental counterparts. The extant corpus of micromosaic icons preserves several examples of iconic imagery that was popularly depicted in personal devotional panels. But of the variety of holy figures depicted on micromosaic icons, the most popular image to survive is a solitary full-length representation of Christ standing on a *suppedion*. Four examples of this iconography in micromosaic still exist (at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos; the Monastery of Esphigmenou, Mount Athos; Santa Maria in Campitelli, Rome; and the Church of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Galatina). While full-figured solitary representations of Christ in heavenly majesty were popular in both monumental decorative programs and imperial imagery, this iconography was rarely used for the personal devotional arts of Byzantium. This paper revisits the idea that micromosaic icons related exclusively to personal devotional imagery in Byzantium, instead arguing that they derived their potency through combining the status of monumental themes with the sense of intimacy facilitated by private piety.

To do so, it examines how the production of standing figures of Christ in micromosaic coincided with the revival of several key icons in monumental mosaic programs throughout late Byzantine Constantinople, such as the Christ Chalkites. Elaborating on the significance of this relationship, the paper draws on theories of intervisuality to better understand possible associative connections between monumental mosaics of Christ and their miniature counterparts (Nelson,

1999). As such, this research expands upon existing scholarship surrounding inter-monumental relationships between mosaics in late Byzantine Constantinople by considering the possibility that such visual networks were also mobilized through the production of this imagery in a portable micromosaic format.

What's In a Name: An Unlabeled Iconography on a Group of Middle Byzantine Amulets

Caitlin Mims (Florida State University)

A disembodied face surrounded on all sides by radiating serpents is depicted exclusively on a group of middle Byzantine amulets. Surviving in a variety of media — silver, lead, cloisonné enamel — and multiple forms, these amulets were worn across the Empire. Since first appearing in scholarship in the seventeenth century, the iconography has been identified in multiple ways: as the head of a gorgon, a demon(ess), or a representation of the female womb. Each of these identifications is based on a straightforward matching of image to textual description. I take a different approach; instead of looking at what is present, I consider what is omitted. In each of the 96 extant examples, the image is unlabeled.

I argue that the absence of a naming inscription resolves the ambiguity of the iconography. Prior to Iconoclasm, images could remain unlabeled in order to increase their potential meanings. These amulets, however, were produced after Iconoclasm, when intentional multivalence was restricted. Iconophile image theory established labels in order to restrict an image's reference to the intended protype. The function of these labels helps explain why certain images were unlabeled. By omitting a name, the artist/maker withholds power. I suggest the image from the amulets is unnamed because it is a depiction of a demon.

By considering names and their absence, I provide new evidence for the identification of the iconography as the demoness Obizuth. This identification directly affects the ways we understand the amulets' function. As there are no textual references to the group, scholars disagree whether they were worn by any gender, and whether they could be used for any abdominal ailment. Those who suggest the amulets were worn only by women disagree on whether they were used for any uterine issue, or functioned only in relation to pregnancy. In the pseudepigraphal magical text, the *Testament of Solomon*, Obizuth claims that she does not sleep; instead, she wanders the world visiting women in childbirth and attempting to strangle their child. I suggest these amulets functioned to protect the wearer against the threat of Obizuth. By firmly identifying the iconography, I thus provide evidence that these amulets were both gendered and specifically related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Flowers in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art

Amy Gillette (The Barnes Foundation)

This paper explores the depiction of flowers in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art, inclusive of the various object types where they survive either materially or in textual records. I extend the attention already given to flower images in Western medieval and modern art, and build on scholarship especially by Henry Maguire, the book *Byzantine Tree Life*, and the Plant Humanities Initiative at Dumbarton Oaks. Moreover, I employ Iris Murdoch's aesthetic philosophy (from *The Sovereignty of Good*, 1970) to conceptualize some ways in which flowers images potentially impacted their Byzantine and Post-Byzantine viewers.

On one level, I investigate the iconography of a set of Early, Middle, Late, and Post-Byzantine portrayals of flowers. Early Byzantine art was famously florid, but a few monuments still need identification and interpretation. For instance, gilded lilies crowned ciboria at Hagia Sophia (Constantinople) and St. Demetrios

(Thessaloniki), evidently to symbolize resurrection and the restoration of innocence. In the painted sanctuary of the Red Monastery near Sohag, Egypt, fields of lilies and roses surround angels, Evangelists, stags and peacocks, and a bejeweled cross, to summon the Song of Songs and other scriptural verses. A rare Middle Byzantine depiction appears at St. Neophytos, Cyprus, where St. Andrew the Fool holds a stylized sprig of blossoms, apparently referring to an episode in his *Life* where an angel struck him in the face with a "golden branch round which dewy lilies and roses were entwined, not at all resembling those of this world." For Late Byzantine art, the Chora Monastery (Constantinople) is a vital exemplar. Its patron, Theodore Metochites, wrote of the refectory: "The joyful construction [is] adorned with diverse and multiform flowers most pleasing in their colors…wherefrom the monks…derive delectation as soothing to the heart as food to the body." A phenomenon needing basic explanation is flowers' reflorescence in Post-Byzantine art: e.g., angels wear floral robes at the Philotheou Monastery, Mt. Athos; in Bulgaria, the revivalist painter Zahari Zograf festooned the Rila and Troyan monasteries with bouquets of roses, daisies, forget-me-nots, and more.

To dig deeper, I consider some practical and interpretive aspects of these case-studies. In depicting flowers, for example, did artists look to actual plants, manuscripts such as the *De materia medica*, models from Roman, Islamic, or Gothic art (depending on time and place), and/or copy books or painters' manuals? In addition, Murdoch's fusion of art, attention, and ethics brings focus to meanings and effects of flower images beyond their immediate source texts. One is their implementation of virtue, which indeed Byzantine texts such as the *Philokalia* often illustrated in floral terms: e.g., "Once [physical passions] are dead, the virtues come into flower and bear the fruit of the Spirit." Another, as Metochites expressed, is the power of flowers as consolation.

Reassessing the Iconographies of Constantine and Helena

Lynn Jones (Florida State University)

The importance of Constantine and Helena in, and to, the Byzantine Empire is evident in their celebration on two days in the Church calendar, in the multiple legends recounting the Christian origins of the Empire, and in their many depictions. In the middle Byzantine period (843–1204) we see the characterization of the ruling emperor and empress as a 'New Constantine' and 'New Helena.' The legends of Constantine and Helena became combined in art by the late 9th century, and it is also during this period that representations of Constantine and Helena flanking the Cross became regularly featured in church decorative programs.

In Cappadocia, we find twenty-eight depictions of Constantine and Helena in twenty-seven rock- cut churches. I focus on two distinct iconographic types. One is Constantine and Helena flanking the Cross; the second is that featuring Constantine and Helena with a Cross between and above them.

Scholarly discussion of these two image types focuses on form, particularly that of the Cross. Depictions of Constantine and Helena flanking the Cross has received the lion's share of attention, as it is found on art produced outside of Cappadocia and survives in a variety of media. Depictions of Constantine and Helena with a Cross above them have been viewed as a step in an iconographic evolution that emerges in the tenth and eleventh centuries and matures in the eleventh and twelfth centuries into depictions of Constantine and Helena flanking a Cross. Evidence demonstrates that the two iconographic types were coeval, I argue that meaning in all Cappadocian depictions of Constantine, Helena, and a Cross is conveyed not by the form of the Cross or by any one compositional arrangement, but by the ways in which Constantine and Helena do, or do not, physically interact with it. The two image types convey different messages and were used in painted church programs in different ways.

In all of these images it is the variables that dominate. While there are replications of the poses of Constantine and Helena, of their dress and accoutrements, and of the forms of the Cross, no single image replicates another in all aspects. Recognition of these iconographic variables allows us to better contextualize their individual meanings, rather than ascribe a single meaning to all. All such iconography has layers of meaning that could have been accessed in different ways, according to the desires and needs of a viewer.

Session 3A

New Approaches to Religion in Byzantium 1

Icon Theory, Icon Practice: A Ritual Studies Approach to Middle Byzantine Worship with Images

Derek Krueger (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

While Byzantinists have focused on theological justifications for the use of icons in Orthodox Christian worship, the study of practices with respect to icons has received more description than analysis. In the middle Byzantine period, veneration with icons came to be a hallmark of Orthodoxy. Practices included prayer and prostration before images (often described in texts with forms of προσπίπτω) and the veneration and greeting of images with a kiss (usually προσκύνησις and ἀσπασμός). Icons responded, assisted repentance, and effected miracles. Icon theory emerged in the Iconoclastic Controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries, combining classical image theories with Christian doctrines regarding the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus and the creation of humans in God's image. When middle Byzantine saints' vitae describe icon practices, however, they rarely invoke the theological explanations found in theological treatises. How do such accounts encode indigenous Byzantine ideas about icons and their efficacy? Ritual theory and ritual practice would seem poorly coordinated both in textual representation of Christian practice *and* in modern scholars' descriptions of the behaviors of humans and icons in each other's presence.

The dichotomy between belief and practice recapitulates a long-standing division in the academic study of religion. In 1912, Emile Durkheim defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things." For much of the twentieth century, the students of comparative religion maintained a binary distinction between not only between belief and practice, but theory and ritual; religious thought and religious behavior. As a corrective, in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992), Catherine Bell observed that these dichotomies depended on Enlightenment constructions of a division between mind and body. She encouraged scholars to regard thinking as a form of embodied practice and ritual practice as strategy. By this logic, acts of Byzantine theological reasoning and the

thinking and maintenance of Orthodox thoughts could thus figure as religious activities, not opposed to embodied ritual, but a species of it.

To demonstrate the difference that reuniting thought and action in icon veneration could make, this paper offers as examples two episodes from middle Byzantine saints' lives. In the tenth-century — and fictive — *Life of Nephon of Constantia*, the hero experiences a conversion to self-control before an icon of the Theotokos in a Constantinopolitan church. Nephon's reliance on Mary's presence transcends doctrines of iconic representation to engage a theory of an icon's agency. At the climax of Niketas Stethatos's *Life of Symeon the New Theologian*, composed after 1052, Symeon is put on trial for his devotion to his spiritual father. In a moment of great drama, Symeon engages in remarkably ordinary Orthodox behavior by venerating and kissing his mentor's icon. Niketas supplies a speech in which Symeon justifies his behavior — a religious act in itself. He both adheres to and expands beyond a statement of conventional ritual theory. When we see icon theory — whether implicit or explicit — as a form of icon practice, we gain new insight into the relationship between Byzantines and their icons.

Idol/Icon

Alicia Walker (Bryn Mawr College)

Christian commentators — from the Early Church Fathers to medieval Iconophile advocates — argued for distinctions between the objects and images of polytheistic worship versus those of Christian veneration. The Christian icon (εἰκών) arose in contrast to the pagan idol (εἴδωλον), establishing a standard dichotomy in definitions of Byzantine orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Such formulations typically emphasized differences in the relationship between images and their prototypes. The icon was considered separate from but connected to its prototype, offering access to holy people but not embodying them. One communicated with a holy person through — not in — the icon. In contrast, idols

were understood to be inhabited by demonic forces, providing access in an unmediated way; actions directed toward an idol — whether in veneration or attack — were understood to bear directly on its demonic inhabitant.

This distinction between icons and idols cohered so long as their differences were localized in assessment of the image's relationship to its prototype. However, when analysis shifted to the other side of the equation, focusing on the relationship of a *viewer* to a "pagan" versus Christian image, the icon-idol contrast lost clarity. In recent decades, fuller attention to viewer reception of Byzantine art has prompted scholars to explore how theories of vision can inform understanding of the ways icons shaped devotees' spiritual selves. Less consideration has been accorded to how "pagan" imagery contributed to the subject formation of Byzantine viewers.

Access to non-Christian imagery was a problem for the Christian viewer because of vision's capacity to shape a person through the mimetic force of the thing seen. The imitative potential of looking could be harnessed for good (e.g., devotional reflection on a saint's icon to shape oneself in their image), but it could lead to corruption if the wrong kinds of images directed the viewer's behavior or belief (e.g., lascivious images of "pagan" deities inciting lust). Resemblance, therefore, was an issue not only of the image to the prototype but also of the viewer to the image. Because both the icon and the idol could be seen, both could be emulated in the viewer's mind, heart, and soul; as a result, distinctions between the operations of Christian versus pagan images became blurred.

Surveying commentary from the Early Christian to the Middle Byzantine era, this paper traces how Byzantine image theory accounted for slippage between the categories of "icon" and "idol." Particular attention is accorded to the ethical dimension of looking (i.e., the need for viewers to exercise judgment in what they looked at and how they looked at it), a topic that has received less attention in the study of Byzantine image theory to date. I propose that in distinguishing not only between icons and idols, but also more generally between morally and spiritually beneficial images on the one hand, and images that were morally and spiritually

misleading and corrupting on the other, Byzantine commentators endorsed the possibility that images other than Christian icons — including images that might be classified as "pagan" — held potential ethical, perhaps even spiritual value.

Being is out of Joint: Maximos' Unstable Ontology and its Significance for Contemporary Essentialisms

Luis Josué Salés (Scripps College)

Maximos the Confessor (580–662) has become the most authoritative premodern Greek Christian intellectual in Orthodox Christian circles. Debates about contemporary issues (e.g., gender/sexuality, environment, etc.) often consult him for theological guidance. Predictably, this scholarship is situated under the aegis of "theology" and its methodologies. Conversely, the "separate" field of "religious studies" has developed its own approaches, which are often aimed at similar material as theology, but with different ideological commitments and equally differing results. Surprisingly, Maximos has remained almost exclusively the subject of theologians.

Tellingly, this strict dichotomy is faint in the scholarship by religionists and theologians on Patristic figures centuries before Maximos. In other words, if we consider Patristics/Early Christian Studies, we see far more collaboration and cross-pollination and a different attitude in handling the materials than we do in "Byzantine" Studies. Why this discrepancy? I suggest that this dynamic results from the self-insulation of both subdisciplines in "Byzantine" Studies. For example, a historian of religion in "Byzantine" Studies might retrieve and exposit the historical, cultural, sociological dimensions of Maximos' thought, but would hesitate to promote a constructive theological project for the present based on his writings. Conversely, Maximian theologians often remain oblivious to broader trends in religious studies on the presumption that they are "historians, not theologians"; in practice, this gives them license to interpret Maximos in

ahistorical abstraction. The result is the structural impoverishment of both subdisciplines.

As a corrective, this paper troubles the clean distinction between these two subdisciplines by considering how Maximos' ontology is not simply a historical discursive relic but a contemporary artifact employed in normative discourses surrounding gender and identity in Orthodox Christian communities. In other words, as Dunning has argued (*Specters of Paul*), a clean distinction between the two temporal registers is untenable. The present remains "haunted" by the discursive effects of the past. So, contemporary heteroessentializing discourses can be troubled, precisely, by recourse to the past-as-present, here, concretely, Maximos' ontology. Accordingly, I argue that Maximos' ontology is "unstable," and thus an inadequate locus for contemporary Orthodox gender essentializing discourse. I make my case through a close, deconstructive reading of Maximos' structure of being in *Ambiguum* 7.11–15, through which I object to essentializing readings of his ontology (e.g., Törönnen, Dimitrova, Lollar, Thunberg, etc.). The insufficiency of being was Maximos' decisive objection to Neo-Origenism (cf. Hausherr, Sherwood), and one of his greatest intellectual achievements conveniently overlooked by contemporary advocates of essentialist discourse. For Maximos, being is incomplete, qualified (πῶς εἶναι), unsaturated, thus plagued by Derrida's "metaphysics of absence." Indeed, it is this very structure that allows for personal freedom of expression, the mode of being (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως) that constitutes individual identity.

In sum, the upshot is a reconsideration of how Maximos is both historically interpreted and contemporarily deployed, as well as a broader interrogation of the usefulness in categorically reifying differences between "theology" and "religious studies."

Constructing Monastic Faith: How Archaeologists Misshaped the Material Religion of Monasticism

Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom (Brandeis University)

In *The Thing About Religion* (2021), David Morgan traces how scholars have "dematerialized" religion. In the case of early monasticism, archaeologists primarily focused on monumental architecture, such as churches and refectories, as an indicator of monastic life. In the process, many religious *things* disappeared from the physical record through purposeful removal or the tidying of spaces during excavations. While some objects were considered religious in nature, such as silver utensils, manuscripts, and wall paintings, other items were discarded. For example, very little attention was given to the fiber crafts produced by thousands of monks as an essential component of religious life. As a scholar of material religion, Morgan provides effective models for how Byzantinists may restore materials back to monastic life and enrich our understanding of monastic religion. By recovering how the past study of monasticism muted things by making religious objects passive, we can trace how archaeologists and historians diminished the religious life of monks and the objects that supported them. Instead of casting objects such as rope, mats, and baskets as mundane monastic crafts of little scholarly value, scholars of material religion now view such items as essential participants in religious life.

This paper explores the theoretical concepts of material religion and its applicability to the study of monastic archaeology. Monastic objects are not merely the representations or reflections of their monastic makers but active agents of monastic religion. I examine monastic objects to explore Morgan's claim that the "stuff of religious life — the material character of the look and smell and sound that make a religion what it is in the daily lives of its adherents" is an effective model for Byzantine monastic archaeology. The degree to which monastic things, for example, appear as side characters in monastic literature is worth noting. In turning our focus to the mundane monastic things, we can recover a wide array of behaviors and relationships not previously studied. The

disciplinary "reading over" of material religion is most evident in the archival archaeology at the Egyptian monastic sites of Wadi Sarga, Bawit, Saqqara, and Western Thebes. I illustrate how an attention to monastic things serves as a corrective to past readings of monastic history to expand our understanding of how organic materials, such as reeds, fibers, and twigs, participated in defining monastic life. By adopting Morgan's framework to "rematerialize" religion, this paper demonstrates how the material turn expands our knowledge of lived religion within monastic communities.

Session 3B

History, Memory, and Prophecy
in the Twelfth Century

Prophecy, Apocalypse and Salvation in the Margins of John Zonaras, Niketas Choniates and George Akropolites

Julián Bértola (Princeton University)

Byzantine historiography is known to refer to predictions, oracles and other apocalyptic texts. The frequency and extent of these allusions, on the one hand, attest to the popularity of divinatory practices and superstitious beliefs among the Byzantines, as well as to their anxieties regarding the succession of emperors and the end of history. On the other hand, prophetic texts and apocalyptic motifs function well in the narratives of historical accounts, as they are concerned with turns of events and the perception of the passing of time. This paper considers this phenomenon in the context of the reception of Byzantine historians. It investigates the occurrence of prophetic and apocalyptic texts in the marginalia and paratextual apparatus of historiography in Byzantine manuscripts. Later readers annotated and commented on the text of Byzantine historians with oracles and their exegeses, with visions of the Last Judgement and their hopes of salvation. In particular, the present study focuses on paratexts written in verse, such as book epigrams and verse scholia. Therefore, it aims to contribute to our understanding of the habits of reading in Byzantium, often accompanied by creative writing in the margins of manuscripts.

I analyze five poems on three Byzantine historians. Niketas Choniates quotes numerous versified prophecies, notably from the ones wrongly attributed to Leo the Wise. In Vat. gr. 163, a book epigram elaborates on the oracular imagery around Andronikos I Komnenos' death, with a message of retribution. In other manuscripts (e.g. Vat. gr. 168 and Vindob. Hist. gr. 53), a verse scholium attributed to Ephraim of Ainos essays a typological interpretation of the oracles quoted on the occasion of John II Komnenos' death through the biblical episode of Noah and the deluge. Another book epigram, copied in the folios between the *Histories* of Niketas Choniates and George Akropolites in Marc. gr. Z. 403, describes the calamities of time and evokes Moses, Daniel, Phinehas and the antichrist. In this same manuscript, in the lower margin of the last folio of

Akropolites, an obscure oracle in octosyllables casts an ominous shadow on the recovery of Constantinople. In Marc. gr. Z. 403 only 10 verses are visible, but a longer version of this oracle is preserved in manuscript ΓΕ 34870 of the Benaki Museum. Finally, codex 84 of the Library of the Hellenic Parliament contains an unedited book epigram on John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories*. The poem dwells on the instability and vanity of human affairs, and advises the readers to care only about their salvation.

This contribution explores the apocalyptic features of these poems, such as the use of the Old Testament, the emphasis in divine justice and moral edification, and the influence of political circumstances. It studies how the poems reflect on the nature of time and express conceptions of history. This marginal poetry embodies the benefits of reading history for the Byzantine representations of the past and their expectations about the future.

Ekphrasis, Narrative, and Memory in the *Chronike Diegesis* of Niketas Choniates

Ethan Schmidt (Simon Fraser University)

The *Chronike Diegesis* of Niketas Choniates is a complex and multivalent work which scholars have explored from a plethora of angles. This paper interprets the famous text as a uniquely ekphrastic history, which did not simply seek to relate events, but rather sought to evoke, even resurrect, the lost world of Komnenian Constantinople. Such an effect was accomplished not only though the formidable set-pieces of description which constitute the famous *De Signis*, but also through a host of other ekphrases, including those which have not been conventionally identified as such, but which, nonetheless, act comparably upon the audience and serve an analogous function.

In approaching the *Chronike Diegesis*, this piece takes the broad view of ekphrasis advocated by Ruth Webb. Here, ekphrasis is identified as a protean technique that imparts qualities of vividness to a text, rather than solely as a genre of descriptions of art and architecture, though these indeed partake in ekphrastic qualities and represent some of the most sophisticated examples of the mode. If we consider the phenomenon from this angle, it becomes plain that, throughout the history, Choniates embraces an ekphrastic sensibility which encompasses and exceeds those passages typically deemed ekphrastic, including a level of detail which goes well beyond that necessary to situate the reader in terms of the events at hand, and evinces a consistent desire to provide details of the urban landscape and metropolitan life of Constantinople before the Fourth Crusade as part of a strategy of memory expressive of historical pathos and personal tragedy.

Such a line of inquiry allows us not only to identify a far broader range of ekphrastic passages, but also to more effectively contextualize those descriptions of buildings and artworks which render Choniates' text, as one scholar aptly said, a literal *monumentum aere perennius*. Indeed, it may be argued that the *Chronike Diegesis* uses ekphrasis to play with notions of temporality, in the sense that, though set amid a history which ostensibly concerns the inexorable movement of events towards a tragic and ruinous conclusion, it utilizes ekphrasis to preserve and fix an object or a moment in time as an artifact of memory. Taken together, this strategy serves to memorialize an entire city, indeed, an entire culture, while also encoding within itself those aspects of Constantinopolitan life which Choniates felt to be most important, whether for personal reasons or because such preoccupations were more broadly shared in the exilic court of Nicaea. Given the importance attached to the text throughout its subsequent history as a source for reconstructing the realities of medieval Constantinople, Choniates, seemingly, has proved at least partially successful in his endeavor.

Seeing in the Mind's Eye: Theories of Consciousness from Aristotle to Bachelard by Way of Byzantium

Christina Christoforatou (Baruch College, City University of New York)

> The poet lives a daydream that is awake, but above all his daydream remains in the world, facing worldly things. It gathers the universe together and in an object.
>
> —Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958)

In his novel *Hysmine and Hysminias*, twelfth-century Constantinopolitan author Eustathios Makrembolites (*fl*. c. 1150–1200) considers the unique position assigned to the reader as explorer of new sensibilities, spaces, and temporalities inspired by Aristotle's study of the senses in *The Poetics* (IV, ll. 5–20), *On the Soul* (iii 3, 414b33–415a3) and *On Memory* (1, 449b31–450a1). Literary creation initially takes place in the poet's mind; it is then performed on the matter of descriptive discourse (*ekphrasis*) and in the context of affective narration, *diegesis*. The spaces and temporalities narrated in Makrembolites' novel become elements of aesthetic continuity that evoke an imagined or idealized past. Sometimes playful, sometimes dreamy or melancholy, the *ekphrases* that capture the artistry and craft of narration exalt the powers of imagination and serve as catalysts for the hero's emotional and political awakening. As such, they become an exploration of imagination (*phantasia*) and the nature of storytelling itself. Narrated images transcend the representational aspect of metaphorical discourse and produce a powerful meditation on the power of forms and the workings of the imagination.

More than seven hundred years later, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) brings earlier theories of consciousness into modernity by way of Makrembolites' novel, and in so doing inspires new ways of seeing and reading. Bachelard embraces Makrembolites' approach to literary creation as discovery and recollection and gives emotions and memories a philosophical habitat. In *The Poetics of Space*, the author-philosopher guides the reader through an imagined home and muses on its comforts and mysteries. The idea of the mental image in

the text is connected to the practice of reading as an entry into a private space. Descriptions of tangible and intangible spaces weave into a contained narrative multiple stories, segments of which echo each other through analogies, interplay, and variation.

Makrembolites' *ekphrases* similarly guide the reader's interpretive efforts by animating landscapes and states of consciousness that are brought into focus in a place and at a time undefined except by the limits of the reader's daydreams, longings, and memories. Following Makrembolites' practices, Bachelard guides the reader back to childhood by placing the miniature against the immense and by underscoring the connection between emotions and space. This approach to narration recalls Aristotle's perception of description as discovery and recollection (*psychagogia*), and as a practice where creation is presented as the product of observation and imitation.

This presentation addresses the influence the writings of Eustathios Makrembolites had on subsequent authors and theories of consciousness culminating with their impact on phenomenology and twentieth-century aesthetics.

An Oath of Fidelity in Cyprus: The 1191 Conquest in Mediterranean Political Cultures

Daniel Berardino (University of California, Berkeley)

On an April day in 1191, the self-proclaimed emperor of Cyprus, Isaak Doukas Komnenos, knelt before the crusader king, Richard I of England. The Byzantine magnate swore an oath of fidelity, did homage for the island of Cyprus as his fief, and promised to personally accompany Richard to Jerusalem with a company of knights. The king of England rewarded Isaak for his fidelity by returning his imperial tents and granting him a bodyguard. Mysteriously, Isaak fled the scene in

the night, abandoning his tents and rallying his forces to mount a doomed resistance. His capture and subsequent imprisonment in reputed silver chains marked the beginning of Latin rule in Cyprus. This episode is the climax of the most detailed of the narratives of the conquest of Cyprus — those produced by members of Richard's Angevin entourage — but it does not appear in any of the other near-contemporary accounts. Sources produced in the Latin East tell us of a peace conference and Isaak's escape, but no oaths. Byzantine accounts only report that Richard captured Isaak and put him in chains. This paper begins with this discrepancy, seeking to explore the implications of the oath of fidelity itself and its subsequent representations for our understanding of the political cultures of the Angevin domains, the Latin East, and Byzantium.

While others have discussed the conquest of Cyprus, the implications of Isaak's oath of fidelity to Richard the Lionheart for understanding the interaction between Mediterranean political cultures have not been fully explored. There are two primary ways in which an oath of fidelity meant. The first is the affective power that such an oath had over its participants and observers. The second is in the legal significance that oaths had in the three primary, Christian political cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean. For the Angevin domains and the Latin East, while scholars debate the particularities of certain types of oaths and the extent to which such rituals constituted a "feudal system," oaths are understood to be an essential part of their political cultures. For Byzantium, however, scholars have unevenly treated oaths of fidelity. Many acknowledge that oaths increased in prominence in the period following the Fourth Crusade, but for earlier periods, because oaths are viewed as being overly "Western" and antithetical to the Byzantine Roman law system, their role in Byzantine political culture has been underappreciated. Drawing on Byzantine legal, historiographical, and ceremonial sources, this paper shows that, despite their silence about Isaak Komnenos' oath in Cyprus, Byzantine chroniclers understood oaths to be an essential part of their political culture. The case of Cyprus raises larger questions about how we discuss the differences between Byzantine political culture and those of its neighbors, and how we understand cultural change in Byzantine history.

Session 4A

New Approaches to Religion in Byzantium 2

Rethinking Imperial Religion in Byzantium

George E. Demacopoulos (Fordham University)

This paper interrogates a pair of common contemporary conceits about imperial religious dynamics in Byzantium that surprisingly have a great deal in common even though they circulate in very different communities and have little support in Byzantine sources.

The first is the Western scholarly caricature of the Byzantine Church/State relationship as "Caesaro-Papist." Even though this particular term is now largely eschewed in scholarship, the treatment of Byzantine religion often continues to interpret imperial intervention in religious matters through hermeneutical frameworks that are either derivative of Protestant/Catholic religious polemics or outdated secularist presuppositions regarding the irrationality of religious faith (presuppositions that typically presume an eventual disappearance of religion in enlightened societies).

The second conceit that this paper engages is the wide-spread view among modern Orthodox Christian communities that Byzantium benefitted from faithful emperors (Constantine, Justinian, Marcian, etc.,) who not only guided the state in accordance with Christian teaching but who were widely regarded by the Byzantines as saints. While it is true that a dozen or so Byzantine emperors are listed in modern *Synaxaria*, there is no evidence of saint cults for emperors in liturgical *Typika*, *Synaxaria*, or hymnography that date to the Byzantine period. The lone, possible exception is the emperor Constantine, but even his case is ambiguous. In other words, the modern presumption that the Orthodox Church regards Byzantine emperors as saints is precisely that — modern.

Thus, whether one views the church/state dynamic in Byzantium as a problem (Caesaro-Papism) or as an ideal (Holy Empire), both positions make similar mistakes in their characterization of Byzantine religion by ascribing extraordinary agency to imperial actors in the shaping of Byzantine religious practice. More

importantly, these modern narratives are driven by contemporary concerns regarding the proper role of religion in society and are easily undone by a careful analysis of Byzantine sources. But more than anything, these false narratives point to a larger problem in Byzantine Studies as a whole, which is the fundamental lack of methodological reflection regarding best practices in the study of religion in pre-modern societies.

Using these two conceits as a point of reference, this paper reconsiders the role of the emperor in Byzantine religion in an effort to think more constructively about Byzantine religious practice as a whole. Rather than seek to understand the dynamics of imperial involvement in Byzantine religion through the lens of theocracy or saint cult, this paper proposes that we should think of imperial religion in Byzantium within the broader frameworks of Roman civic religion and emperor cult. Not only will this focus our attention on the continuity of religious practice by the people who called themselves Romans, but it also helps us to dispel socio-political binaries of the modern world, such as Church/State and Sacred/Secular, that historians all-too-casually apply to the Byzantine period.

"The Young Woman Neither Died nor Delivered": Reading Difficult Labor as Religious Punishment in Early Byzantine Literature

Candace L. Buckner (Virginia Tech)

Throughout Byzantine hagiographic literature, difficult labor appears as a common trope for dealing with erstwhile women. Specifically, these texts often imagine laboring women as suffering in childbirth as a result of their duplicity until they linger on the verge of death. Previously, these sorts of tales have been explored for their discussions of sexual sin and their use as pedagogical tools for monks. I do not deny these texts' educative purpose, but I am interested in the construction of difficult labor and possible perinatal death as an acceptable punishment for transgressive women. Such stories give rise to several questions:

How does reading childbirth as punishment impact the perception of woman's bodies? What does it mean for a biological process to be interpreted as a punishment or especially conducive for chastisement? Why do such texts take for granted that childbirth pains should be an appropriate punishment for misbehavior, especially mendacity?

Scholars of religion (Crislip "I Have Chosen Sickness" 2006, *Thorns in the Flesh* 2012; Glucklich *Sacred Pain* 2001; Miller *The Corporeal Imagination* 2009; Perkins *The Suffering Self* 1995) have long recognized the importance of understanding suffering as playing a role in the cultivation of holiness. After all, Byzantine monks were encouraged to understand suffering and patience in suffering as allotting them special status and future reward in the afterlife. However, the punitive suffering in these anecdotes does not appear redemptive. Birth pangs seem to offer a physical reprimand in the face of conflicts with little recourse for other resolutions. As such, this *topos* offers a moment for analyzing the intersection of gender, medicine, and suffering in Byzantine texts.

Two examples from early Byzantine literature — *Lausiac History* (*LH*) 70, a fifth-century account composed by Palladius, and Macarius 1 (PG 65.260) in the alphabetical collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*AP*), compiled in the sixth century — illustrate this phenomenon. In both cases, a young woman under pressure names a devout man, a church reader and an ascetic monk, respectively, as her impregnator, and, in both, the woman experiences difficult labor that only ceases once she has confessed her lie. In the former case, the text makes it explicit that the reader has a hand in the punishment, "the persistency of his [the reader's] prayer was strong enough both to reveal the false accusation and to chastise the false accuser" (*LH* 70.5). In the latter, the text sets aside the monk's role in the punishment, but it makes clear that the woman's suffering results directly from her actions: "the virgin could not give birth until she had said, 'The anchorite had nothing to do with it, but I have lied about him'" (*AP* Macarius). For these women, the texts imagine suffering and potential perinatal mortality emerge as fitting outcomes for deceitful women. Using *LH* 70 and *AP* Macarius 1, this paper examines the construction of a biological process, childbirth, into one of punitive

suffering. By doing so, we can garner insight into the place of women and their bodies in early Byzantine thought.

"Lived Religion" and Palm Sunday in Early Byzantium

Georgia Frank (Colgate University)

Lived religion, as historian of American religion Robert Orsi it is "how particular people, in particular places and times, live in, with, through, and against the religious idioms available to them in culture." Unlike concepts like "popular religion," which tends to demarcate practices opposed by religious experts, lived religion focuses on creative, embodied, material, affective, and interpersonal dynamics of those who engage in religious practices. Putting greater emphasis on embodied and collective *praxis*, historians of lived religion tend to examine bodies more so than strictly beliefs. In other words, they explore how clothing, objects, images, food, home shrines, storytelling, and music may enact religious identity.

This essay explores how the study of Byzantine Christian ritual might be reconceived through methodologies of lived religion. The first part of the essay compares and contrasts two conceptions of lived religion — by scholars of contemporary American religion Nancy Tatom Ammerman and Robert Orsi and by European historians of ancient Mediterranean religion in the Lived Ancient Religion project (PI Jörg Rüpke).

The second part provides a brief case study to illustrate ways both approaches may complement one another and deepen our understanding of the ritual lives of ordinary Christians. The case study focuses on texts related to the early Byzantine celebration of Palm Sunday. Commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, as recounted in the gospels (Matthew 21:1–9; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–38; John 12:12–19), ritual descriptions, instructions, homilies and songs for Palm Sunday

provide valuable insights into the ways ordinary Christians experienced this Lenten rite in Jerusalem and Constantinople during the fourth through sixth centuries. Rather than focus on patristic biblical commentaries on this gospel story, this paper shall consider less studied resources for lived religion: 1) the diary of a pilgrim now known as Egeria (ca. 381–84), 2) the so-called *Armenian Lectionary*, a translation of a fifth-century list of biblical readings performed in Jerusalem as part of liturgical rites, and 3) homilies performed on Palm Sunday in Constantinople by Proklos (ca. 385–446; PG 65:772–77), Romanos the Melodist (fl. 555; SC 128, hymn 32) and Leontios (CPG 7893, 7898; ca. 485–ca. 583). This paper concludes that lived religion methods as applied to Byzantine texts composed for and about ritual settings may provide modern historians of religion with greater understanding of the role of embodied experience and mixed emotions in the days leading up to the celebration of Easter.

Session 4B

Technological Approaches

Byzantine Manuscripts in Illinois: The Photostatic Facsimiles of St. Jerome's Project at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Elias Petrou (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

In 1943 the monumental hagiographical work "Studies in the Text Tradition of St. Jerome's *Vitae Patrum*" was published by the University of Illinois Press under the guidance of Prof. William A. Oldfather, one of the founding fathers of the Classics Department at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The work included the editions of the Latin and Greek *Vitae* of three Saints (Paul, Hilarion, and Malchus), prepared by Saint Jerome. For its preparation, Prof. Oldfather and his colleagues consulted at least 300 medieval manuscripts, of which 170 were Greek and dated from the 11th–15th centuries. The methods and means for completing such a project, considering the technological limitations of its time, were unknown until today.

A few months ago, during an inventory program of the Classics Library Collection at the Main Stacks at the Library of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, a corpus of photostatic facsimiles of manuscripts was found at a corner of the 3rd floor, neglected and uncatalogued. It can be identified with the copies of the manuscripts that Oldfather's team used for the preparation of the above-mentioned editions. The majority of them were prepared through the "photostatic method", a cutting-edge technology for copying documents in the first decades of the 20th century. From Sinai to Paris and from the Escorial to the monasteries of Mount Athos, photostatic facsimiles were prepared and sent to Illinois at a time when the aftermaths of the Great Economical Crash and WWII were ravaging the entire world.

This paper aims to present the Classics Library Collection's initiative at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, to save a recently found treasure of Byzantine Manuscripts' facsimiles and discover its historical course. How were these copies copied and arrived safely in Illinois from places and libraries that are challenging to visit even today (e.g. monasteries of Mount Athos)? What was the

photostatic method, and how common was it among European Libraries? Which manuscripts' facsimiles are stored today in UIUC Main Library, and what are the procedures for restoration and digitization? The presentation is accompanied by photos of the material along with the various relevant documents of the protagonists about the specific editions.

Does My Computer Read Greek? Recognition Software and its Applications for Byzantine Greek Materials

Hannelore Segers (Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library)

With increasing interest in textual materiality, limited in-person access to manuscripts and early prints can easily become a roadblock to the success of any research endeavor. Even in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, issues of in-person access to early materials still arise from lack of travel funding and/or materials that are not openly accessible. These accessibility issues do not pertain to scholars alone. In 2021, OCLC published the "The Total Cost of Stewardship: Responsible Collection Building in Archives and Special Collections" which responds to an ongoing challenge of backlogs in archives and special collections. While even special collections are becoming aware of the importance of accessibility of their acquisitions to scholars and students, issues such as backlogs in cataloging descriptions or the time-intensive digitization of material can cause certain materials to remain undiscovered.

Thanks to the emergence of digital humanities as a field and the creation of tools that can help process large quantities of data, scholars have turned to OCR and HTR to assist them in assessing manuscripts in a more efficient manner. These tools hold particular promise as a vehicle for an automated digital transcription of manuscripts that can be at least of great introductory value to scholars by providing easily findable insights into an item's overall contents. However, it is not always clear — particularly when it comes to materials in Greek — which (if

any) of the multiple competing OCR and HTR tools available in 2023 is most useful for non-computer specialists at parsing the complexities of non-Latin alphabet materials, or what to do with the resulting transcriptions.

This paper takes a case study approach and assesses the practicality and ease of use of a variety of OCR/HTR tools by applying them to materials drawn from the collections of the Beinecke Library (Yale University, USA). Since accuracy is of little value if the tool itself is difficult for the average humanities (i.e., non-technically trained) scholar to use, this paper comparatively assesses the results obtainable through tools ranging from web-based, PDF parsing utilities to Python-based Github projects and weighs their accuracy alongside the ease of use for the average researcher. I also briefly examine modern Greek and other non-Latin script based OCR systems in an attempt to understand whether the additional funding that comes from a modern language perspective could assist with greater correctness of OCR. Finally, this paper takes a look at the current state of Mirador viewer plugins that would allow scholars to pair their transcriptions to IIIF files.

By exploring this case study, the paper aims to demonstrate the significance, value, and limitations of OCR and HTR for Greek texts, and particularly for large-scale OCR projects. It also hopes to contribute to an ongoing conversation among scholars and special collections about the value, practicality, and usefulness of these transcriptions to the modern researcher.

Digital Byzantium: Three Case Studies for Teaching the Byzantine World

Joseph R. Kopta (Temple University)

This paper evaluates three separate pedagogical strategies for integrating digital humanities projects into the teaching of Byzantine studies at both undergraduate and graduate levels. For years, university educators (particularly in the hard

sciences) have successfully used various digital technologies to motivate and engage students; these are increasingly becoming employed and available in arts and humanities fields. Based on developed projects for several separate North American-based colleges and universities, this presentation walks through the learning goals, experimental strategies, and outcomes of using distinct digital humanities technologies with students at multiple levels of engagement. In one case, a website-development project leading to a virtual exhibition in a Byzantine art history course allowed students to pursue close observation and make connections between individual objects separated by collection, chronology, and geography. In another, the use of augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) allowed students in North America to experience Byzantine sacred spaces in the classroom using image-capture and laser-scanned data. In a final case study, in which students built an interactive website that allowed them to annotate a Byzantine text, students collaborated on translation strategies and fine-tuned their paleographical skills. The paper also addresses practical aspects in the use of such digital pedagogy, including technical support, cost, implementation, and collaboration. It likewise evaluates the value of these various projects as process-driven and ongoing for the students, for instructors, and for Byzantine studies. Ultimately, the paper offers practical strategies to scholars and educators for engaging students of the Byzantine world at different levels of exposure, availability of resources, and skill sets.

Session 5A

Gender

Agents of Emasculation? Eunuchs and Women in Middle Byzantine Manuscript Illumination

Lora Webb (Emory University, Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry)

Framed as a dialogue between a eunuch monk and a skeptic, Theophylact of Ohrid's eleventh-century *Defense of Eunuchs* presents two opposing views of how women affected eunuchs. The anti-eunuch voice claims that eunuchs are prone to the passions and sensibilities of women because they live in close contact with them. This idea had long been used in the Byzantine world as evidence of eunuchs' unmanliness. Countering this negative assessment, the eunuch monk claims that if eunuchs follow and model themselves after a godly mistress, "they might draw themselves in the glory of the divine image and become a likeness of the divine word." Both assessments assume a certain malleability inherent to eunuchs whereby they are shaped by the women they accompany. Drawing on Theophylact's text, this paper examines the relationship between eunuchs and women via a comparison of two manuscript illuminations that challenge typical gender roles.

The first image is from an eleventh-century manuscript (cod. 6) in the Panteleimon Monastery on Mt. Athos illustrating the commentary of Pseudo-Nonnus. It depicts the followers of Rhea-Cybele gathered around a column topped by a statue of the goddess (fol. 162v). Alluding to their ritual practice of self-mutilation, a group of nude followers hold knives. Blood-red cuts mar their thighs and form jagged lines down their smooth pubic regions. The ecstatic devotion to a female goddess leading to self-castration aligns with the polluting influence of women expressed by the anti-eunuch voice in Theophylact's treatise. In contrast, a eunuch's proximity to a godly woman places him at the center of the second image. The miniature from the Leo Bible (Vat. Reg. Gr. 1, fol. 383r), likely made in the early to mid-tenth century, depicts a eunuch, dressed in bright white, leading Judith into the chamber of Holofernes. There, she beheads the invading general. The eunuch is a servant of Holofernes, not Judith, but his role in her act of retribution forms the visual center of the

miniature. Reading these two images against one another, I show how mutable eunuchs were thought to be shaped by the women around them.

Despite and because of their apparent pliability, in many historical societies eunuchs were tasked with the maintenance of boundaries and thresholds, including those between male and female. Unlike the later Ottoman court, the Byzantine court did not have a strict harem system. Instead, eunuch associates often enabled women to become public and political actors. Throughout Roman and Byzantine myth and history, women and eunuchs can be found acting together. The Romans attributed the invention of eunuchs to the eastern queen Semiramis, while Procopius reports that Theodora (ca. 497–548) terrorized courtiers with her corps of eunuchs. Especially when operating under female rulers, eunuchs were critical political players. The empress Theodora (r. 842–56), for instance, was aided in her restoration of Orthodoxy by the eunuch courtier, Theoktistos. By investigating when eunuchs enabled women to act and when women stirred men to emasculation, I work toward filling out the contours of Byzantine gender construction and performance.

Towards a History of Women's Writing in Byzantium

Alexander Riehle (Harvard University)

While from the 1970s to the early 2000s second- and third-wave feminism spawned a wealth of scholarship on the history of Byzantine women, the field curiously still lacks a book-length discussion of female authors and their literary oeuvres. Researchers have offered some feminist readings of individual texts. Yet the scarcity of surviving texts has discouraged scholars from attempting any synthetic interpretation. In fact, in the single reasonably comprehensive article on the subject, Enrico Maltese contended that "for the Byzantine Middle Ages such books [as exist for medieval women authors writing in Latin] are not only non-existent but would be inconceivable. The author would have to reject from

the outset any historical approach and confine his task to two monographic chapters, dedicated to the poet Kassia (9th c.) and the historian Anna Komnene (1083–ca. 1153) respectively — the only female authors of secular literary texts of the entire millennium." The present paper, which lays the groundwork for a history of women's writing in the Byzantine Empire from the fourth to the fifteenth century, hopes to refute this claim.

The paper consists of two, closely interlocked parts. I begin with a survey delineating the text corpus for the project but also inquiring into the glaring lacunae in the surviving record. In establishing this corpus, it is unhelpful, I argue, to distinguish between "secular" and "religious" literature — the basis for Maltese's dismissal of the bulk of Byzantine women's writing — or between "literary" and "non-literary" texts, as these distinctions are anachronistic and obfuscate important connections between texts supposedly belonging to such categories. Questions of literary genre and textual transmission are pivotal for this discussion, as constraints on higher education, authorship and public performance made it more likely that women would author texts in the "author-less," anonymous tradition, rather than in the author-centered, rhetorical genres.

The second part of the paper addresses the issue of conceptualizing this project as a history of literature. While the recent work of Panagiotis Agapitos proves helpful in this regard, there remain specific challenges involved in a history of women's writing. Most importantly, the surviving corpus — though considerably larger than Maltese claimed — is still so fragmentary that it renders a continuous narrative difficult or even impossible. Yet as scholars in other disciplines facing similar problems of preservation have demonstrated, such a situation invites us to reconsider established concepts and methods of historiography which often exclude marginalized, non-canonical voices. For my project I have adopted a case-study model: six chronologically arranged chapters focus on one author each whose oeuvre I discuss in the context of both diachronic and synchronic literary trends and traditions. Through this approach, the project hopes to offer not only a history of women's writing but also an exploration of key aspects of Byzantine

literature at large, such as literacy and education, self-presentation and anonymity, authorship and gender, genre and performance, canon and transmission.

Between Laymen: An Unusual Byzantine Tale of Male Bonding

John Duffy (Harvard University)

Within the broad category of Byzantine hagiography spiritually beneficial tales (διηγήσεις ψυχωφελεῖς) constitute a vast corpus of interesting literature that sheds much light not only on monastic ideals of holy living but also on many aspects of social reality inside monasteries and beyond their confines during the Late Antique and Early Byzantine periods. The body of texts that make up the genre has been most deeply explored in the last fifty years by the Bollandiste François Halkin in his *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* and by the British Canadian scholar John Wortley in his "Repertoire of Byzantine Beneficial Tales". The number of stories analyzed and summarized by Wortley is close to one thousand but, as he readily admitted himself, new tales are coming to light all the time as more Greek sources are investigated.

Recently an examination of two Paris manuscripts devoted to hagiographical material has revealed a hitherto unrecorded story set in Alexandria, possibly in the sixth century. The narrative, divided into several distinct episodes, gives an account of two military men who, filled with Christian zeal, form a loving partnership, spend all of their time together, and vie with each other in doing good deeds. The tale is unusual, and possibly unique in the genre, seeing that the protagonists are not a monastic pair, but two laymen.

In this presentation we highlight the terms used to characterize the relationship, analyze the individual episodes, discuss the one main difference between the two manuscript witnesses, and consider the possibility that the tale represents an early form of the social practice known as brother-making.

From Homosociality to Homoerotics: Interpreting the Rhetoric of Queer Desire in the Lives of St. Barbara and St. Eugenia from the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes

Larisa (Orlov) Vilimonovic (Belgrade University)

The proposed paper explores and interprets the Lives of St Barbara and St Eugenia from the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes, through the discourse of queer desire. It lays out a methodological framework for interpreting same-sex desire in the homosocial encounters and sexual choices of the early Christian female martyrs. By focusing on queer desire, I purposefully shift from working under the banner of identity to more comprehensive views of same-sex desire. Queer theory allows us to think and see beyond the heteronormative categories of power and sexual relations that were based on strict gender divisions in which men were the dominant force and normative power in the society. Queer also refers to practices that center on resistance to normative discourses of sex and sexuality. The lives of St Eugenia and St Barbara are essentially founded on the female resistance to sexual protocol of the Late Roman society and the queer choice of living an ascetic life, which again, does not conform to ascetism's expectations. Both *Lives* culminate in the emotionally charged episodes of female partnership that reflect the socio-cultural context of patriarchal anxiety over feminine sexuality that is uncontrollable by men.

I examine the rhetorical and poetic production of female-desiring subjects in the Lives of St Barbara and St Eugenia, relying primarily on Jill Gorman's study of same-sex desire in the *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena*. In the second part, I discuss the author's perspective on the formation of the transgender subject in the narrative as a rhetorical figuration of the queer desire that the beautiful body of transgender eunuch Eugenia ignited in the woman Melanthia. By focusing on the plot and author levels at the same time, I hope to broaden the discussion beyond the text itself to the anticipated audience and the social context to meditate on the *queer before queer* — what it meant to be queer in the premodern context? How far and how deep should we go in interpreting female emotional bonds — do we

have enough material to interpret them as erotic experiences? How should we interpret material that employs erotic terminology to discuss female companionship and female bonds? How should we interpret the scribal act in which Eugenia's gender fluctuates between male and female, potentially implying both homoerotic and heteroerotic desire in the plot?

I argue that the question of reading and interpretation of queer desire rests on the various levels of the text — on the author's manipulation of the protagonist's gender, on the audience's implied apprehension of the text formed in the landscape of the Greek erotic novel, and on the sociocultural context of men's anxiety regarding emotionally charged female bonds.

Session 5B

Art, Reception, and Performance

Framing Initiation within the Dura-Europos Baptistery: A Ritual Interpretation of the Painting of the 'Woman at the Well'

Michelle Keefe (Yale University)

The paintings in the baptistery of the Christian building excavated in Dura-Europos provide some of the earliest figural Christian images. Despite the inconclusive identities and functions of some of the figures, the surviving fragments give insight into the rituals that took place within the baptistery in early third-century Syria. Further analysis of the images would aid in speculations of potential meaning and ritual use of the Christian building. I suggest one way forward is to examine the often-overlooked framing devices in which each of the images is "displayed" and organized. Not only do the painted frames provide visual evidence for ways in which initiation may have been envisioned and enacted in third century Syria, but the architectural framing elements may provide insight into interpretations of the painted images as well, in turn influencing the ritual experiences of the initiates. Therefore, careful examination of the framing devices in the Christian building may shed light on the ways such elements within the overall program might have both reflected and informed the viewer's understanding of the Christian ritual initiation in Dura.

I apply analysis of the framing devices within the baptistery's pictorial program to a particular case-study, focusing on the representation of the woman drawing water from a well, which is located on the south wall between the canopied font and the western door. This figure is most often identified as the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). My interpretation, however, based on analysis of the framing devices, supports recent arguments identifying the figure as Mary, the mother of Jesus. Careful examination reveals a particular emphasis on the image through its frame and physical location near both the canopied font and the door. Therefore, the scene likely held particular significance for the initiate stepping out of the font and leaving the room to rejoin the community for the eucharist.

I argue that the location of the scene would have evoked themes not just relating to the "living waters" at a well (John 4:5–42), but also relating to the nourishment of the eucharist, connecting to both baptism and eucharist. Second-century Syrian texts, such as the *Odes of Solomon* and the *Acts of Thomas*, give evidence for the practice of a baptismal eucharist which may have included milk and honey for the newly baptized. Ritual milk and honey provide further explicit links between eucharist and "God's milk," given through the Incarnation in the womb of a Virgin (*Ode* 19:2–6).

Therefore, within the highly ritualized context of the Dura baptistery, exploring the physical framing and placement of the image of the woman offers an unstudied perspective and may help shed light on her significance within the pictorial program as related to both baptism and eucharist, giving more clear evidence for her potential identification and function. This approach would have significant implications for further research on the ritual use of the space.

Artificial Light and Monumental Art in the New Church at Tokalı Kilise

Evan Freeman (Simon Fraser University)

This paper seeks to reconstruct the interplay of art and artificial lighting in the tenth-century New Church at Tokalı Kilise in Göreme, Cappadocia. Although Tokalı's rock-cut architecture and monumental decoration are well studied, the relationship between Tokalı's architecture, art, and artificial lighting has not yet been explored. This paper contributes to emerging research on natural and artificial light in medieval churches and the embodied experiences of medieval users, arguing that artificial lighting devices at New Tokalı were deployed to illuminate, enliven, and extend the vault paintings for worshippers in the church below.

Tokalı Kilise was constructed in two phases. The smaller, barrel-vaulted Old Church, which dates from the early-tenth century, leads into the larger New Church, which was added around the middle of the tenth century. The New Church features a large, transverse barrel-vaulted nave and three sanctuaries. Tokalı Kilise — the "Buckle Church" — is named for two "buckles," or bosses, that protrude down from the north and south parts of the barrel vault of the nave in the New Church. Holes at the center of these buckles indicate where lighting devices likely hung from the ceiling of the nave at Tokalı.

Although the lighting devices from New Tokalı no longer survive, the narrative paintings that surround the bosses indicate how these lighting devices must have illuminated and amplified the vault paintings in the dark interior of this cave church. Images of the Annunciation and Nativity of Christ appear on opposite sides of the vault around the north boss. The staff of the angel in the Annunciation points like an arrow toward the boss from which a lighting device once descended, perhaps signaling the entrance of the divine light into the world. The star of Bethlehem is positioned close to the boss in the corresponding image of the Nativity on the opposite side of the vault, and a ray of light descends from the star toward the newborn Christ below. Both images narrate the entrance of God into the world, and the lighting device that once hung from the north boss drew on pervasive symbolism of God as light to actualize and extend these pictorial events downward into the dark space of the nave. This effect is even more pronounced with the partially damaged image of Pentecost that surrounds the south boss on both sides of the vault. In this painting, the Holy Spirit descends from heaven in the form of fire onto the apostles on both sides of the vault below. The flickering light hanging from the south boss must have animated the flames of the Spirit descending on the apostles and given the impression that the Spirit was descending on the worshippers gathered in the nave as well. These examples at Tokalı illustrate how architecture, art, and artificial light could be integrated to animate and extend salvation history into the space of medieval viewers in Byzantine churches.

The Spatial Impact of Cyril of Jerusalem's Cross of Light

A.L. McMichael (Michigan State University)

In the fourth century, theologian Cyril of Jerusalem described a phenomenon that he considered to be a miraculous sign from God: a monumental cross of light spanned the sky over the city. Dazzled residents hastened to the church to give thanks. The primary textual source for this event is a letter that Cyril wrote to Emperor Constantius II in 351.

Previous scholars have shown that the letter reflects Cyril's political ambitions and how theological interpretations reflect Cyril's relationship to Arianism. My approach is to examine the visual and cultural milieu into which the letter was written, articulating the social contexts that made Cyril's account of the phenomenon an appropriate venue for his political and theological messaging.

In his account, Cyril describes not just a static image, but an event. He did not limit his reportage of the residents' understanding of the cross to the visual or imaginative ekphrasis. Movement and motion activate the city via a performative, impromptu, city-wide procession. By describing the cross as an image in a spatial context, Cyril was claiming the space of the city for Christ in a manner that its residents would understand and want to participate in.

Multisensory analysis of the event shows how the cross of light was part of the visual culture of the city of Jerusalem, and that viewers responded to it with their eyes and other senses similarly to the way they would experience any work of religious art. By incorporating interdisciplinary methods, this paper expands on previous interpretations and move toward an understanding of the cross of light as a kind of immersive, multisensory experience that was emerging in late antique literature. I use art and architectural history to discern the socially constructed visuality of the cross image. Archaeological approaches elucidate the geography of Jerusalem as a place to examine the event through phenomenology. Visual and material methods work alongside textual analysis. These approaches demonstrate

how Cyril's description of the multisensory response to the ephemeral monument is an early and crucial example of late antique placemaking, a practice that reaches far beyond the Holy Land during this period.

I conclude with an argument that the material turn in late antiquity was an inherently spatial one. Cyril's response to the cross of light was made possible by a dynamic material/spatial relationship that developed in late antiquity through the incorporation of visual language and ekphrasis into geographic experiences described in texts and hagiographic traditions.

Drama Queens (and Kings): Visualizing Theater in Middle Byzantine Luxury Objects

Elena Gittleman (Bryn Mawr College)

On the back panel of the Veroli Casket, a putto pulls a satyr mask over his face; medieval schoolboys read Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, and Aristophanes; mimes and dancers entertain the emperor and his elite guests; Michael Psellos and John Tzetzes publish treatises on the ancient tragedians and comedians; and Evangelists are painted sitting in theater niches in illuminated Gospels. These reverberations of ancient theater in medieval Byzantine culture have been discounted over the last century as scholars have debated the existence of theater in medieval Byzantium. Although theater was a polyvalent, evolving institution since its inception in fifth century BCE Athens, scholars of Byzantium, restricted by disciplinary biases and bolstered by the Church's anti-theatrical stance, applied an anachronistic definition of theater to the search for the institution in Byzantium. Most scholars hunted for evidence of staged Athenian dramas or newly-written plays in Byzantium to no avail, leading to the conclusion that theater disappeared altogether in Byzantium.

However, the theater they were searching for had not existed for centuries. Over the millennium, categorical distinctions between theater, dance, and athletic spectacles — so strict in ancient Athens and Rome — collapsed. By the sixth century, state-sponsored theater was part of the consular games, a singular multi-day event organized by the *demes* which, in addition to dramatic performances, included chariot races, with dancing, music, and acrobats between races, and gladiatorial and beast combats. Thus, the question of theater in Byzantium cannot be limited to masked performances of ancient tragedies and comedies, or the creation of new plays in that same archaizing style and structure. I propose that in medieval Byzantium, as theater shifted from public to private contexts, from egalitarian to elite milieus, it also expanded to encompass the spectacle performances of dance, acrobats, music, and mime.

Theater is a visual and experiential media; however, visual and material evidence has largely been ignored in discussions of theater in Byzantium. In this paper, I center medieval Byzantine visual culture to argue that theater was in fact a constant and curated presence in elite medieval Byzantine spheres. I present a corpus of well-known medieval Byzantine luxury objects including (but not limited to) the Veroli Casket, Beryozovo cup, the Monomachos Crown, the Khludov Psalter, and a twelfth-century ring that employ antiquarian and medieval theatrical iconography including scenes from Euripides, comic figures, theater architecture, masks, musicians, dancers, and *grylloi* (a type of mime performer). I argue that the elites who commissioned and displayed these objects did so to perform their societal role as *pepaideumenoi* (πεπαιδευμένοι; the educated) and to perpetuate the cultural memory of the Empire's Classical heritage. Perhaps more importantly, these objects speak to the surprising and often subtle ways in which theater was adapted and integrated into medieval Byzantine culture.

Session 6A

Graduate Student Session

The Priestly *Schema* of the Diaconate in the *Life of St. Domnika*

Laura Wilson (Antiochian House of Studies)

While there is great diversity of form among historical witnesses of female deacons, the Constantinopolitan tradition appears to have held the most sacramental view of the order, evidenced by the eighth century Byzantine ordination rite which conformed to that of higher orders. Similarly, the sixth century Novels of Justinian (6.6) describe it as a "priestly (or sacred) diaconate" (την ἱεράν … διακονίαν) and she is instructed to behave in a manner that allows her to keep what is due "the priesthood" (τῇ ἱερωσύνῃ). However, there are few examples of the practical aspects of this ministry.

This study examines the deaconess in the ninth century hagiography of St. Domnika (*BHG* 562), who was said to have lived under the reign of Theodosius the Great. St. Domnika was born in Carthage, traveled to Alexandria, and finally arrived in Constantinople where she founded a monastery and was ordained to the "priestly *schema* of the diaconate" (τὸ ἱερατικὸν σχῆμα τῆς διακονίας). *Schema* indicates a specific order or rank with an identifiable form. The sacramental order of women deacons was well established in Constantinople by the writing of the life and hymns of this saint. Therefore, the functions of her ministry inform our understanding of why the Constantinopolitan churches considered it to be a sacred or priestly *schema*.

The *Life* reveals a strong teaching role and pastoral ministry among women. However, it also reveals diverse liturgical functions beyond monastic prayer. Despite modern scholars' assertions that Byzantine women deacons never had access to the sanctuary, the *Life* presents St. Domnika caring for the sacred vessels (16.1). Additionally, she anoints the sea with oil in the form of a cross (8.3) and prays for the blessing of the waters on the feast of Theophany (15). The author, and presumably the monastic audience, did not share the concern for women's impurity demonstrated in the writings of the later canonists. These liturgical functions are integral to the conception of a priestly *schema*.

The tradition of St. Domnika emerged from an anonymous source sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries, and three recensions survive in manuscripts dating from the tenth to fourteenth centuries. The recent scholarship of Andrey Kurbanov and Lydia Spyridonova presents a critical edition of these recensions and a French translation of the *BHG* 562f, which they date to the ninth century. This longer life survives in only one thirteenth century manuscript; however, it includes more details, scriptural quotations, and prayers of the saint which are especially relevant to this study. The canon written for St. Domnika is attributed to Joseph the Hymnographer, also of the ninth century.

St. Domnika's life becomes an excellent case-study for understanding the unique ordination of the Byzantine deaconess and her priestly *schema*. General conclusions are drawn on the functions of deaconesses in the Constantinopolitan tradition, with reflections on the broader theological implications of the Byzantine model of the ministry of women.

The Koimesis in a Cappadocian Rock-Cut Church

Sarah Mathiesen (Florida State University)

The Cappadocian rock-cut churches represent the single largest body of surviving Middle Byzantine painting, providing valuable data that complicates the limits of "standard" Byzantine iconographies. The naos of *Yılanlı Kilise*, a funerary church located in the İhlara Valley, currently dated to the late ninth century, features on its south wall Constantine and Helena with the True Cross around a carved window and, below, the *Koimesis* of the Virgin above a carved niche decorated with a painted cross. Notably, the Yılanlı Koimesis includes the Jew Jephonias, an iconographic element more often associated with Byzantine art of the 12th and 13th centuries. Placed below the Virgin's funerary bed, Jephonias raises the stumps of his arms aloft in an orant-like gesture, while his body breaks through

the painted image border into the register below to touch the top of the carved niche.

Scholarship on Yılanlı tends to narrowly focus on discrete images, isolating them from their immediate context and overemphasizing any iconographic peculiarities as part of Yılanlı's "archaic" nature. The Yılanlı naos has received only limited attention, with much of it concentrated on Constantine and Helena. Natalia Teteriatnikov valuably identifies the carved niche as a water basin but notes that its small size precludes a baptismal function. I propose that a baptismal function is indeed indicated if we contextualize the basin with both Constantine and Helena with the True Cross and the Koimesis above; the Koimesis is not only the central register on the south wall, but, I suggest, centrally important to the interpretation of the entire wall.

I argue that the Yılanlı naos south wall exhibits a cohesive self-contained program that emphasizes the themes of the afterlife and salvation communicated by the larger church funerary program. A formalist approach demonstrates that the images and carved furniture on this wall express a symbiotic relationship that amplifies and extends their individual functions and meanings, a relationship that can be considered characteristic of the church program overall. Similar to other Byzantine images of Jephonias, the Yılanlı Koimesis highlights the moment after Jephonias is violently punished for attempting to upset the funerary bier of the Virgin, but before the subsequent healing and recovery of his hands. Significantly, however, unlike other Jephonias images, the Yılanlı program also cues the final part of the Jephonias episode — his future conversion and salvation — through his contact with the basin. The particular iconography and composition of the Yılanlı Koimesis and south wall thus combine to create a complete narrative image that both conveys a supersessionist conversion message and identifies the basin's baptismal function; simultaneously, the completion of the Jephonias episode is only activated due to his proximity to the baptismal basin. This case study demonstrates not only the complexity of the Yılanlı program but also the dynamism of Byzantine iconography.

The Mediations of Byzantine Gold Embroideries

Catherine Volmensky (The University of British Columbia)

A gold-embroidered silk textile from the fourteenth century shows the full-length figure of the dead Christ. Known as the *epitaphios* of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1312–1328), the veil depicts Christ lying horizontally on an altar table, surrounded by the symbols of the evangelists, two angels, and varied ornamental motifs. By examining the evidence for a workshop of gold-embroiderers in fourteenth-century Thessaloniki, I demonstrate the affinities between the ornament found on textiles, and images of textiles and ornamental borders painted on the walls of late Byzantine churches in Thessaloniki and the Balkans. Since Palaiologan textiles traveled great distances across the empire, the medieval Balkans, and beyond, this paper grounds five embroideries in the social and historical context of the Thessalonian workshop in which they were made, and subsequently, the monasteries and churches where they eventually resided; this gives agency to the producing community and the users in the monasteries. Through my examination of gold-embroideries, I show that there was an active network connecting patrons, churches, artists, and craftspeople.

While Palaiologan textiles have featured prominently in scholarship, the medium's ability to connect late Byzantine churches and monasteries to gold-embroidery workshops in cities, including the one in Thessaloniki, has yet to be fully explored. This paper uses a theory of line to understand the connections between a group of late Byzantine veils made in Thessaloniki, and the ornament found on frescoes in four churches in Thessaloniki, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Lines of communication, interaction, and patronage connect the churches and the gold-embroidery workshop examined in this paper. Lines are the basis of writing, drawing, and embroidery, and allow us to explore the woven narratives of craftsmanship, its echoes in other artworks, and its materialization in the places of devotion that these *epitaphioi* reached. As lines of thread materialize into ornamented surfaces, dedicatory prayers, and inscriptions, a theory of line enables

us to understand embroidery as a distinctive medium that often acted as a mediating force.

Having as a starting point the *epitaphios* of Andronikos II Palaiologos, my paper seeks to demonstrate that a larger group of *epitaphioi* were created in a specific textile workshop in Thessaloniki; I then trace artisanal links with the workshop of painters from which important artists such as Michael Astrapas and Eutychios emerged. Gold-embroideries, such as the *epitaphios* in question, demonstrate the concept of transmediality, especially when examined alongside frescoes. This concept can be investigated through this *epitaphios* and the scene of the *Communion of the Apostles* in the King's Church, Studenica (1313–1314), which was painted by Michael Astrapas and Eutychios. On the veil, the ornamental pattern of the altar cloth on which Christ's body is placed finds its echoes in the altar cloth found in the scene of the *Communion of the Apostles*. This paper demonstrates that embroiderers interacted with the works of painters, as both woven and embroidered textiles appear in frescoes, demonstrating that lines of inspiration were both synergetic and collaborative.

Behind the *scheda*: The Social Life of Stenographers at the Fifth-century Ecumenical Councils

Ella Kirsh (Brown University)

Reflecting on half a century of studying the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), Geoffrey de Ste. Croix admitted: "I have sometimes tried to tease colleagues in 'Ancient History' or 'Classics' by insisting, half seriously, that we actually know more about the council than about any other event in ancient history" (de Ste Croix 2011). For this reason alone, he argued, the council deserved extensive scholarly attention, particularly from social historians. Scholars eagerly took up his challenge. Studies of the council as a sociological event have proliferated, with many historians looking to the conciliar *Acta* to reconstruct the relationships

between bishops and to recover the role of secular imperial officials within the proceedings (Millar 2006, Graumann 2021).

Yet this recent wave of conciliar studies has generally shied away from the question of how councils reached their decisions, or how the minor clergy in attendance, who outnumbered bishops by a ratio of around four to one (MacMullen 2006), shaped the deliberations. The best guides to the investigation of both these questions are the conciliar stenographers, who transcribed what was said when the bishops were in session, but who also played a leading role in collecting, marshalling and selecting the documentary evidence the council relied on when making its determinations.

Councils, with their cacophony of accents and barrage of new words, challenged stenographic technique and practices. They brought some rival stenographers into close contact with one another and opened up new social worlds for others. Far from home and often particularly dependent on their bishop for basic needs (Theopistus, *History of Dioscorus* 5, 11), shorthand-writers wrestled in new ways with the tension between power and vulnerability, consensus and isolation, deference and control, that lay at the heart of their experience.

In this paper, I interrogate the social experience of conciliar shorthand-writers by examining the curatorial and interpersonal styles of two chief stenographers, John of Alexandria and Aetius of Constantinople, who led the transcription process at two successive ecumenical councils: the Second Council of Ephesus (449 CE), and the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE). I draw on a range of textual sources to elucidate the individual personalities, priorities, rivalries and ideologies of John and Aetius: the Greek and Syriac surviving *Acta* from both councils, letter collections of Leo of Rome, Theodoret and Dioscorus, biography, sermons, and ecclesiastical histories. For the Alexandrian John, these texts reveal a deep network of contacts in Syrian sees which shaped how and from where he gathered evidence, petitions and acclamations to marshal at Ephesus against Ibas of Edessa, Irenaeus of Tyre, Domnus of Antioch, and others. By contrast, Aetius' approach to the documentary agenda of Chalcedon was shaped by narrow,

hyper-local institutional concerns — the political problems within the stenographical and wider clerical companies of the church of Constantinople in the first half of the fifth century. In different ways, John and Aetius both reveal how the practices, ideologies, and personal interests of individual stenographers played an overlooked role in shaping both the content and the memory of councils.

Session 6B

Justice and Morality

Slippery Fate: Circumstantial Justice and Morality in the Poetry and Prose of Agathias

Jonas Tai (Stanford University)

In his narrative recollection of the 557 Constantinople earthquake (*Histories* 5.4–5), the Justinianic historian Agathias of Myrina (CE 530–582/594) digresses at length on the fate of Anatolius, a corrupt senator of Constantinople who perished when one of his ostentatious marble plaques, dislodged by the tremors, struck him on the head. According to Agathias, the commonfolk began to circulate a rumor that this was divine punishment for Anatolius' wickedness. Although Agathias remains skeptical of this, he admits that such a rumor should not only be maintained but also encouraged as a noble lie that might promote moral behavior.

Agathias' fixation on this and other moral stories are emblematic of his larger philosophical preoccupation with justice and right action. Justice is the primary theme of Agathias' *Histories* and likewise figures strongly in his *Cycle*, a collection of epigrams preserved largely in the *Greek Anthology*. This justice is explicitly not divine but circumstantial and is exemplified by the phrase, "what comes around goes around." Anatolius' fate is emblematic of a karmic pattern of wrongdoing followed by retribution and bears similarities to the moralizing anecdotes of Agathias' epigrams, which include the stories of Hellenis and Lamaxis (*Anth. Graec.* 7.614) and a miserly poor-man-turned-rich (*Anth. Graec.* 10.66).

Agathias' commitment to justice thus renders of secondary importance his obligations to the traditional conventions and tropes of Classical historiography, such as the aversion to poetry and notional adherence to the ideal of truth at the expense of pleasure. Tensions between prose and poetry manifest in the *Histories* insofar as Agathias pays historiographical lip service to disavowing poetic wiles. However, Agathias ultimately recognizes that mixing both delightful poetry and

serious history can effectively bring about moral edification, and thus implicitly downplays the literary boundaries between those genres within his works.

Past scholarship on Agathias has debated his religious views (Kaldellis 1999) or has discussed his treatment of genre but have limited their analyses to either his historiography or poetry without reaching across the aisle (Cameron 1964, 1970; McCail 1971; Kaldellis 1997, 2003; Smith 2016). Such perspectives can be integrated and further revised through a more holistic and intertextual approach to his prosaic and poetic careers, which is invited by a statement in the proem of the *Histories* that history and poetry "were kindred and related disciplines differing radically perhaps only in the matter of meter" (Agathias *praef.* 12).

By altering the parameters of the longstanding debate between history and poetry (e.g., Thuc. 1.21; Aristot. *Poet.* 1451b; Polyb. 2.56.10–12; Procop. *Pers.* 1.1.4–5), Agathias marks a turn in Greek and Byzantine history-writing and its classical reception. He sprinkles numerous classical references throughout the *Histories*, in which his personality is charmingly and refreshingly evident. His work reflects a transition to a more personalizing historiography, which is echoed in later writers such as Anna Comnena and Michael Psellus. In conjunction with his stylistic mode of frequent self-insertion, Agathias was an early proponent of grounding the authority of the historian on their command of the classical "canon."

Gender and Persuasion in the Byzantine Greek *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher*

Craig A. Gibson (University of Iowa)

In Michael Andreopoulos' *Book of Syntipas the Philosopher* (c. 1090), the king's son is falsely accused of rape by the king's favorite wife and sentenced to death. Unable to defend himself because of a seven-day vow of silence, the boy is defended by the king's seven royal philosophers, who, in their attempt to save the

boy from execution, each tell two stories in order to persuade the king to fully investigate any matter before taking irrevocable action and to beware the tricks of wicked women. The wife, in turn, responds to the philosophers with stories of her own that are aimed at persuading the king to carry out the execution and to beware the tricks of wicked advisors. The king is seemingly persuaded by the arrangement and thematic coherence of the philosophers' presentations, but he is also persuaded to reverse his decision each day by the increasingly theatrical performances of his wife, whose shorter stories not only lack the sound construction of the men's stories, but often inadvertently serve to confirm the mens' position by highlighting the destructive influence of female or effeminizing forces.

Of course the wife cannot win, for the narrator of this "Potiphar's wife" tale has assured us of her guilt and the boy's innocence from the start; however, I argue that the frame story rhetorically overdetermines her losing position by misaligning her thesis and conclusion with the content of each story. The wife fails to present a single example of how these particular advisors might be trying to harm the king in defending his son against execution, and none of the advisors in the inner stories does anything analogous to the behavior of the king's advisors in the frame. It is only after the wife confesses and awaits a verdict that she is portrayed as capable of delivering a longer, more thematically coherent story whose rhetorical appeal is anchored within the story itself. In the story of the hungry fox, she herself is the fox: a cunning creature who must struggle to stay alive, who in the course of that struggle commits a minor and understandable infraction, who is trapped while trying to escape, and who realizes that the only way to save herself is to stay still and allow herself to be mutilated by men who see her not as a living creature but as an object, a source of goods and services. And like the fox, she says that she can tolerate almost any punishment, but not the (literal) removal of her heart as a (literal and metaphorical) panacea. Killing her, she says, will not make everything right. The boy agrees and urges the king to show her mercy.

This paper thus argues for a much closer connection between the frame and the inner stories than has previously been noted in the scholarship.

The People as Ejectorate in the Early Byzantine Empire

Kevin Feeney (New York University)

Over the last decade, much scholarly attention has been paid to Byzantium's self-representation as a *res publica* in which the public theoretically played a leading role in the process of making and unmaking emperors. Although there is considerable disagreement over whether this model can serve as a useful analytical framework for understanding the actual practice of Byzantine politics, it remains inarguable that the *language* of popular sovereignty played a central role in the legitimation of imperial regimes. Early Byzantine accession addresses are replete with claims to power through the force of election, both human and divine, an idea reinforced in both political handbooks and other contemporary orations. In parallel with this rhetoric, it is evident that the period from the late fifth century onwards really did see an increased role for the Constantinopolitan masses in both the elevation and deposition (or attempted deposition) of emperors, perhaps most famously in the so-called *Nika* revolt of 532. As a result, much academic debate has focused on the apparent links between official rhetoric and observable reality in understanding the growing role of the 'public' in the creation of emperors at Constantinople.

This paper seeks to broaden this discussion by utilizing the insights of political scientists studying modern autocratic states. Byzantium was certainly not the only authoritarian regime in human history to cloak autocracy in the language of popular sovereignty, nor was it the only example of a state which occasionally permitted some group of 'the people', however defined, to have a role in the legitimation or delegitimation of otherwise absolute rulers. In recent years, social scientists have emphasized in particular the potential for the 'public' within autocratic states to act not as an electorate affirmatively selecting rulers but rather as an *ejectorate*, removing or preventing the installation of leaders who are broadly disliked through the extralegal means of mass protest, demonstrations, and popular violence.

This paper argues that this ejectorate model can help us to understand the role of the Constantinopolitan *populus* in imperial politics of the early Byzantine era. It makes this case by examining the behaviour of the urban public in four key moments: the appointment of the Caesar Patricius in 470, the elevation of Anatasios in 491, the riots against Anastasios in 512, and the aforementioned *Nika* revolt of 532. In each of these instances, I argue that some set of 'the people' as they were constructed in the Byzantine imagination sought to convert their theoretical role in the ideology of the *res publica* into something substantive by rejecting candidates for power whom they deemed unacceptable, and were in some cases successful at winning concrete concessions as a result. Byzantium may never have been the *res publica* of its own rhetoric, however it was an empire in which at least some of the public could have their say on the single most important political issue of their state, even if their only means of self-expression were exclusively negative in character.

Preacher and Audience Through Byzantine Eyes. John Chrysostom as Rhetor in Hagiographical Narratives

Cosimo Paravano (University of Vienna and Dumbarton Oaks)

How can one use rhetoric and the enormous social cachet which that use entails within a Christian moral framework? The question was an often debated one in Byzantium and produced different answers. This paper analyzes two cases in which the figure of John Chrysostom was used by later Byzantine hagiographers as a canvas onto which to project ideas about morally grounded rhetorical practice.

The first case tackles the question of how to walk the fine line between losing the authoritativeness conveyed by the use of rhetoric and being unduly emboldened by the worldly glory which was associated with its masterful display. In the very popular *Life of John Chrysostom*, attributed to the 7th c. Patriarch of Alexandria

George, a long episode explores this exact conundrum in narrative form. John is repeatedly asked by the Antiochene bishop Flavian to start delivering homilies, but resists this request because of his aversion to public praise. He only yields after an angel asks him to and he starts preaching in successive steps: first, "he forced himself to do so through written texts" to a restricted audience, then he did so in church and, finally and only after intense external pressure, he improvised a speech — thereby drawing ever increasing enthusiasm from the audience at every step. John Chrysostom thus proves to be the perfect combination of rhetorical mastery and rejection of the success deriving from it.

The second case deals with the issue of the proper relationship with the audience or, in other words, how a preacher should make one's sermons accessible to a large audience rather than focusing on achieving prestige by means of rhetorical display. In his *Life of John Chrysostom*, Kosmas Vestitor (8th–9th c.) invents an interaction between an uneducated woman and the saint which purports to tell the origin story of the accessible nature of his widely read homilies. While John is preaching in lofty language, the woman stands up and scolds him in what looks like a full-fledged (and, paradoxically, literarily elaborate!) speech-in-character. Consequently, John decides to "turn the high cliff of his mouth into a basin of accessible wisdom". The episode, which must have been dear to Kosmas, as he also repeats it almost verbatim in his *Praise of John Chrysostom*, prescribes the morally proper way of dealing with an audience.

The balance between two opposing but ever coexisting and often intersecting poles, i.e., the promotion of Christian morality and the personal prestige tied to rhetorical skill, was often a subject of discussion in Byzantium and looking at the hagiographical narratives of an exemplary figure like John Chrysostom provides a promising and little-treaded pathway to exploring this recurring tension in Byzantine literary culture and society. A final section of the paper briefly reflects on how a similar investigation could be carried out in the genre of rhetorical theory (especially Photios and Psellos), in which John Chrysostom's accessibility and 'clarity' (*sapheneia*) were often extolled.

Session 7A

Intersecting Sexes: Byzantine, Sasanian and
Eurasian Masculinity

'*What a Man, What a Man, What a Mighty Good Man*': Theophylact Simocatta on the Masculinity of Military Men in the Late Roman and Sasanian World

Sean Strong (Cardiff University)

A soldier's embodiment of martial virtue, and by extension their masculinity, was a critical theme reflected on by ancient authors. For Late Antique historians, who followed the grandiose Greek classical style of writing, such as Procopius, Agathias, Menander, and Theophylact, it can be argued that masculinity was at the centre of their narratives because substantial emphasis was placed on campaigns, battles, and more widely political conflict; instances where individuals could prove their masculinity through martial virtue. This phenomenon did not end in the Late Antique period but continued to be an important theme touched upon by later Byzantine historians, such as Nikephoros Bryennios (the Elder) and Anna Komnena in the twelfth century (Neville: 2016, 2019). Theophylact Simocatta's decision to comment on masculinity in political and military contexts was therefore not unique. Despite this, scholars have traditionally not approached Theophylact's *History* in this vein; accordingly, a further examination of his narrative should be undertaken. Michael Stewart (2016) has proven that investigating masculinity in the Late Roman period, and specifically in the age of Justinian (2020), demonstrates that contemporary authors measured a general's battlefield success and a ruler's legitimacy against their masculinity. For this reason, it is important to assess how and why Theophylact chose to identify masculinity in a period of transition, and whether these characteristics impacted a military man's career (general or ruler) and battlefield prospects.

This paper explores Theophylact's presentation of masculinity pertaining to Roman and Sasanian military men. It considers what Theophylact believed masculinity embodied, alongside how and why masculinity could be secured or lost. By assessing how military men are presented on and off the battlefield, we can begin to find patterns which demonstrate that ideals of masculinity, and in the

same vein martial virtue, were universally shared across political and cultural borders. In addition, Roman and Sasanian rulers in the late sixth and early seventh centuries needed to realign their identities to encompass military characteristics. Consequently, authors started to praise and critic rulers' masculinities in direct connection to military virtues, such as courage, leadership, and martial fortitude. Therefore, it is critical to evaluate whether the identification and presentation of masculinity was also shared, vertically across societal hierarchies, between military commanders and their respective monarchs.

Using case studies from the late sixth century, we can assess how Theophylact moulded his ideas surrounding military masculinity in Roman and Sasanian contexts. By interacting with how Theophylact implemented his masculine identities onto military commanders, such as Philippicus and Bahram Chobin, and then also rulers who held military identities, such as Emperor Maurice (582–602) and Sasanian *shah* Khosrow II (590/591–628), we can unveil whether he articulated the ideal masculine identity into a singular shared identification across all societal and cultural classifications or whether certain individuals and cultures had distinguishable characteristics. Significantly, this paper adds Theophylact to the ongoing scholarly debate surrounding gender and masculinity at the end of Antiquity; thus, diversifying our understanding of military masculinity in the wider Late Antique and Byzantine world.

Ferdowsi's *Rum* and the Middle Persian Characterisation of Roman Masculinity

Eve MacDonald (Cardiff University)

There are very few representations of Roman/Byzantine hegemonic masculinity in the Sasanian world. A few are portrayed in Abolqasem Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, written in the late 10th/early 11th century CE, that preserve much older stories originating in the myths, legends and historical records of the Sasanian Persian

and Parthian Empires. The character filled epic is a visual and often canny telling of key personalities of the Sasanian dynasty and their struggles, with only the rare instances of any memory or mention of the Romans whose centuries of conflict with Sasanian Persia are largely subsumed into more complex tales of hero, prince, or priest.

The only ideal man from the west who is fully presented in the *Shahnameh* is Iskander or Eskander, the heroic Alexander, whose evolution from Hellenistic conqueror to Iranian hero is a well-researched tale. Middle Persian texts do preserve another Alexander however, and he has more than one identity in the *Shahnameh* that embody aspects of both the hero and epic villain. This duality is rooted in the nature of idealised male identity in a Zoroastrian context but also reflects the sources Ferdowsi accessed in constructing his tales. Where it is possible to discern, as studies by Mantaghi (2018, *Alexander the Great in the Persian Tradition: History, Myth and Legend in Medieval Iran*) and Shayegan (2011, *Arsacids and Sasanians*) have clearly shown, the negative view of Alexander's (the 'accursed') actions as portrayed in the *Shahnameh* seems to come from the Sasanian period sources as opposed to other routes, i.e. Parthian, Syriac or Quranic versions.

In the middle Persian texts all Hellenistic or Roman leaders are called 'Caesar' and judgement of their actions is rooted in constructs of Sasanian good and 'other' bad, of truth and lies. This paper seeks to analyse the negative portrayal of masculinity attributed to the 'accursed' Alexander described in these texts and how it correlates more broadly with the Sasanian ideas of the typical 'western' or Roman man in the assessment of hegemonic masculinity of their contemporary world. The visual evidence, of short haired and duplicitous Roman Emperors on Sasanian rock reliefs, and the actions of these rulers on the accompanying inscriptions present just such an image: a subservient, lying and duplicitous enemy who challenge the true and rightful king. In the surviving literature from the Sasanian period to the early Persian romances we see the Roman, Hellenistic, or Greek male all mixed into a singular masculine type, as someone whose alterity resides in the Sasanian conception of the antithesis to ideal masculinity. This

paper explores the presentation of key identities attributed to this bad Alexander and illustrates how other examples from the texts and images of the Sasanian period can help us piece together just what they made of the 'western' man, otherwise known as Ferdowsi's *Rum*.

Of Men, Beasts, and Martyrs in Armenian Texts

Alison M. Vacca (Columbia University)

At the end of the eighth century, the Khazar khagan proposed a marriage with Šušan, one of four daughters of the late (purportedly) Xosroiani king Arč'il of K'art'li and Kaxet'i (d. c. 786). After she turned him down, the Khazars spread their incursions over Georgia and took her and her brother prisoner. On their passage into Khazaria, Šušan declared her purity of body and mind and ended her own life before she could be handed over to the khagan. This story was first recorded in Georgian in the eleventh century, but the earliest manuscript evidence we have is in Armenian from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. This paper analyzes the Armenian version of Šušan's story by reading it in a broader context of Armenian, Georgian, and Arabic sources about Khazar intermarriages.

First, it asserts the significance of an Armenian model of hegemonic masculinity through the comparison to irreligious beasts. This paradigm is very familiar across the late antique and medieval world — the irreligious and ignorant man is compared to or becomes a beast due to his inability to grasp true religion, demonstrating his irrationality. In these stories, hegemonic masculinity is constructed against the beast, a figure that is commonly described in feminine form for greatest rhetorical affect. Emotions — particularly the control over anger, or lack thereof — become a marker of masculine behavior, as proof of rational humanity or irrational bestiality. However, the Armenian version of the story of Šušan (contrary to the Georgian) asserts the bestiality of the khagan with specific characteristics that resonate in Armenian historiography. Šušan becomes

an echo of the revered Hṙipʿsimē, the Roman saint who introduced Christianity to Armenia in the third century who died resisting the sexual advances of the pagan Armenian king Trdat, who is himself transformed into a beast due to his behavior towards her and could only be cured by converting Armenia to Christianity.

Second, this paper continues the study of Šušan by challenging the consideration of martyrs through a lens of female masculinity. This line of analysis draws on scholarship about early Christianity, Byzantium, and early Islam, which analyzes pious women as men through their defense of the faith and rationality. This paper instead reads the centrality of the Hṙipʿsimēan model as an alternative route of producing a pious and rational femininity. In part, this position is clarified by reading the story of Šušan against other examples of female masculinity in the stories about Khazar intermarriages of the eighth century (e.g., Khātūn bt. Taʿāṭir, the wife of Yazīd b. Usayd al-Sulamī).

The two main topics of this paper — the beast as the antithesis of hegemonic masculinity and the female masculinity of martyrs — both read the story of Šušan in light of other sources in Armenian, Georgian, and Arabic and engage with topics that are familiar across Muslim and Christian contexts of late antique and medieval Eurasia. However, the Hṙipʿsimēan model stands as a reminder of how shared concepts about masculinities find local expressions familiar to specific audiences.

Military Masculinity in Tenth-Century Byzantium: The *History* of Leo the Deacon

Shaun Tougher (Cardiff University)

The Byzantine Empire in the tenth century is a good period to study military masculinity. In this phase of its history the empire experienced recovery and conquest, notably on its eastern frontier with the Abbasid Caliphate, but it also

campaigned to the north, with Bulgaria and the Rus', and to the west in Italy. Byzantium was able to go on the offensive; significant successes were the recovery of Crete in 961 and the recapture of Antioch in 969. Famously these campaigns and successes were not generally commanded and achieved by emperors of the ruling dynasty, but rather by their generals. To explore the subject of military masculinity in the period this paper focuses on a specific text, the *History* of Leo the Deacon. Leo was a member of the palace clergy under Basil II (976–1025), and his *History* dates to the late tenth century. It narrates the reigns of two emperors, Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969) and his nephew John Tzimiskes (969–976), who were both successful generals before becoming emperors and continuing to campaign (and who were both also depicted and celebrated in the 'pigeon church' in Cappadocia). The *History* is particularly concerned to relate the campaigns undertaken by these men, and in the course of doing so offers rich reflections on gender identity. While the interest of Leo the Deacon's *History* for the subject of gender has been recognised, for instance in an article by Athanasios Markopoulous (in Greek in 2000, and an English translation of this published in 2004) and in the Introduction to the translation of the *History* by Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan (2005), this paper demonstrates the fuller depth of interest of its depiction of masculinity in relation to those who played military roles.

The paper not only analyses how Leo the Deacon presents the two main figures of Nikephoros and John, but also how he presents others who feature in the *History*: successful commanders and soldiers, commanders who fail, and non-Byzantine commanders. For instance, Leo also reflects on figures such as: the brave and physically scarred general Nikephoros Pastilas who nevertheless was killed on the Cretan campaign; the unimpressive specimen John Kourkouas who met a brutal death at Dorostolon for his sins; Peter 'Phokas' who was a successful general despite being a eunuch; Nikephoros' brother Leo Phokas, who transitioned from an admirable general to a greedy and unmanly administrator; Anemas the son of the last Emir of Crete who ended up as one of Byzantium's imperial bodyguards and fought bravely against the Rus'; the Rus' leader Sphendosthlavos himself, hot-headed and cruel but who demonstrated intelligence by recognising the need

to save his men. In the construction of the masculinity (or lack of it) of military men Leo reflects on a range of aspects, including bravery, cowardice, leadership, impiety, virtue, physical bodies, and ethnicity. The paper thus demonstrates that the *History* is a perfect vehicle of exploring military masculinity in tenth-century Byzantium, but also for exploring the nature of Byzantine historiography itself.

Session 7B

Space and Identity

Reconstructing the Naves of Late Antique Basilicas: The Quarry-Church at Deir al-Ganadla (Asyut, Middle Egypt) as Architectural Cipher

Mikael Muehlbauer (Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Red and White Monasteries, the most important survivals of early Byzantine art and architecture in upper Egypt, are fragmentary. Both monastery churches retain only their portals and sanctuaries from their early Byzantine foundations. Indeed, given the outsized importance of these buildings within the history of early Christian architecture scholars have debated the format of their naves for over one hundred years. Although it will remain unknown what the original basilicas looked like, my paper presents the little-known cave monastery at Ganadla near Assyut and suggests how it could be used to reconstruct the lost naves and ceilings of late antique churches, both in Egypt and the greater Mediterranean.

Deir al-Ganadla is a quarry-church, that is a hewn church that, instead of being carved as an ecclesiastical space, was instead appropriated from a preexisting artificial cave, in this case a Pharaonic limestone quarry. In the case of Ganadla, the church is adorned with frescoes of fictive architecture and some sculpted elements that are stylistically, and iconographically, consistent with the murals of the Red Monastery triconch and the White Monastery stuccos. However, Deir al-Ganadla preserves the inverse of the aforementioned churches: only its nave and aisles survive today (the altar chamber was freestanding). Because the fictive architecture painted in the nave of Deir al Ganadla is both contemporary with those freestanding late antique churches, and consistent with fragments of sculpted architecture (namely wood coffers) recovered from archaeological sites (as in nearby Bawit), I propose that this church may be our best point forward for reconstructing the ceilings and naves of hitherto lost Late Antique Churches.

Anicia Juliana's Other Church: St. Euphemia *en Olybriou*

Geoffrey Nathan (University of New South Wales and San Diego State University)

In the last fifty years, there has been a growing body of scholarship about the church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople, ever since its foundations were first discovered in 1960 (Bardill 2006 and 2011; Connor 1999; Fowden 1994; Harrison 1989; Harrison and Hayes 1986; Mango and Ševčenko 1961; Mclanan 1996; Milner 1994; Nathan forthcoming; Pizzone 2003; Russo 2004; Speck 1991; Strube 1984; Vickers 1986 and 1989; and Whitby 2006). The late antique aristocrat Anicia Juliana, heir to the Theodosian dynasty, commissioned its construction in the years just prior to the accession of Justinian in 527.

But Polyeuktos was her final project. Anicia had already been an active benefactress, financing the building or rebuilding of several churches in Constantinople before overseeing what would be a masterpiece of civil engineering and artistic skill.

Of two earlier structures mentioned specifically in the sources, apparently the grander was dedicated to Saint Euphemia — a virgin martyred in 303, during the so-called "Great Persecution." Located in the Olybrian district of the capital, Constantine VII *Porphyrogenitos* mentions that the church had served for centuries as a prayer station for imperial and religious processions (*de Caer.*i:5). Six inscriptions mostly from Euphemia's entablatures also survive in the *Anthologia Graeca* (i:12–17), describing the virtues of the church and its builder. Although a prominent and important structure to medieval Constantinopolitans, the church remains unidentified today.

Moreover, despite considerable interest in Anicia Juliana and having some circumstantial evidence about the church, St. Euphemia has only been tangentially discussed in the modern scholarship. Accordingly, the proposed paper focuses on three issues:

1. The specific location of the church, focusing on the present grounds of the University of Istanbul. It also proposes a date for construction between 512 and 518;
2. The church's role in creating imperial and religious legitimacy for its builder;
3. Understanding its construction within the context of aristocratic and imperial competition over built space in Constantinople.

In sum, I argue that the building of St. Euphemia was based on Anicia's desire to associate herself with the martyr's role as a symbol of Chalcedonianism. By doing so, she
expressed her own legitimacy, both as an imperial patron and as a champion of orthodoxy set against the religious landscape of the eastern capital.

Byzantine, Romanesque or Rus' Architecture? 12th Century Galicia-Volhynia

Özlem Eren (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

The art and architecture of Rus' have long been treated as a case study under Byzantine Art in the scholarship for several decades, but the rich and complex heritage of Rus' warrants a deeper investigation. To understand the development of the architecture of medieval Rus', one should consider Northeastern Rus' (Vladimir-Suzdal) and Southwestern Rus' (Galicia-Volhynia) as two separate groups and make their distinct historical trajectories as the basis for the analysis. While being predominantly under the Byzantine cultural umbrella, the architecture of these regions had developed under quite different artistic currents, namely Eastern (Armenian) and Western (Romanesque).

This study focuses on the architecture of the Galicia-Volhynia, which is located on the territories of present-day Ukraine, Belarus and Poland, and has been at the crossroads of diverse artistic and religious traditions, trade routes and multicultural populations. Arguably, the region was relatively protected from eastern invasions and built closer ties with the Western medieval kingdoms. The twelfth century church of Saint Panteleimon in the Old Halych National Preserve is the oldest and the best-preserved example of monumental architecture in Galicia-Volhynia. Its massive stone structure, gabled façades, round portal with semicircular archivolts and sculptural decorations, and single dome on a long drum, curiously resemble Italian, Serbian Raška and Balkan church buildings, reflecting the heritage of Byzantine, Serbian and Romanesque architecture.

By closely examining Romanesque elements in monumental churches from the eleventh to thirteenth century across Italy, Croatia, Montenegro and Balkans, one can gain insights into the transmission of architectural concepts and decorative styles to Galicia-Volhynia. This transmission presumably occurred via the movement of building workshops, as well as through the exchange of small objects and books. Djurdjevi Stupovi and Dečani Monasteries in Serbia are especially known for employing builders from Montenegro; thus, St. Luke and St. Tryphon in Kotor provide meaningful comparisons. The comparative examples of Serbian churches help understand the Latin Christian and Crusader interactions with the Eastern Orthodox states.

My proposed solution toward a greater understanding of the architecture of the twelfth century Rus' lies in a reconsideration of the definition of what is meant by *Rus'* as in the phrase *Land of Rus'*. The term *Rus'* tries to encompass a time span of approximately four hundred years and a geographical reach that has expanded in every direction throughout these centuries. The people of Rus' did not perceive themselves as a unified state — each principality was independent and had pursued its own interest above the others. This study contributes to the dismantling of the Russian imperialist theory of unbroken continuity of Kyivan heritage from Kyiv to Moscow by revealing the complex architectural

developments in Galicia-Volhynia through its interactions with Western medieval kingdoms, quite differently from the Northeastern Rus' principalities.

Supersession, Conversion, and Race in the Baptistery Mosaics of San Marco

Thomas Dale (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

The mosaics of the baptistery of San Marco in Venice, completed under Doge Andrea Dandolo (1343–54) present a heterogenous range of subjects and hybrid formal and textual languages reflecting the complex political, religious, and cultural interactions in the late medieval Mediterranean. Complementing studies by Pincus and Gervini that have focused on the political and civic functions of the baptistery mosaics, this paper explores themes of supersession, conversion, and race, in relation to the baptistery's primary function as locus of the formation of Christian identity. It is argued that the mosaics forge an imperial rhetoric of race in which all nations or "races" (*gentes*) are assimilated to Latin Christian Whiteness, and the Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Church, by analogy with Judaism, are superseded by a new Latin Christian empire, led by Venice.

This message is conveyed by the mosaics' subject matter, temporal sequence, inscriptions, and form. The temporal sequence begins in the vault over the vestibule with Christ as Ancient of Days surrounded by Prophets. Their prophecies convey Christianity's claims to supersede Judaism by inheriting Abraham's lineage, by Christ's incarnation as promised Messiah, and by responding to the call to conversion. Fulfillment of these prophecies is visualized in the vestibule beneath the Ancient of Days by the Adoration of the Magi, who acknowledge Christ's lordship over all "nations" (*gentes*), and by the Apostles baptizing the Nations, depicted in the cupola over the font. Here, the Church's mission is fulfilled in the conversion and "whitening" of the non-Christian nations in the waters of baptism. The texts of the four fathers of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, all translated into

Latin in Gothic script, emphasize a universal Christendom under Latin rule, in which there is "One God and one water," a water which "purifies" the baptized and prepares them for the "kingdom of heaven." The future revelation is forecast in the second cupola mosaic depicting the hierarchy of the angels, leading to a beatific vision of Christ. In the spandrels of this cupola, the fathers of the Western Roman Church — Ambrose, Gregory Augustine, and Jerome — whose writings are translated into Greek. Together with the Four Greek church fathers, they embody a prospective union of the churches under the Pope's authority that was under negotiation at the time the mosaics were being made. The union of churches, which was promoted to stave off the collapse of the East Roman Empire to the Ottoman Turks was paralleled by the promotion of a *translatio imperii* with Venice playing a leading role in colonizing former Byzantine territories. An apparent justification of Venice's role in the new world order is suggested by the depiction of Doge Andrea Dandolo kneeling at the right hand of Christ in the Crucifixion mosaic on the east wall, and by the position of Venice's patron saint at Christ's right hand in the Baptism of the Nations.

Session 7C

Law and Authority

Three Faces of the Notion of Confiscation in Byzantium: Evidences from the *Peira* and the *History* of Michael Attaleiates

Ziyao Zhu (King's College London)

Confiscation is a well-known concept that can be challenging to define comprehensively. In contemporary legal scholarship, confiscation is generally understood as a financial penalty whereby offenders' property is deprived in accordance with legal procedures. However, this understanding is flawed when applied to the study of pre-modern history, as it implies that all confiscations were just punishments. In reality, there were numerous instances where property deprivations were arbitrary and lacked a sound legal basis for justification. Byzantine scholars, in their analysis of historical sources, have acknowledged that "the concept of confiscation by the state must have been different from that of today" (Penna 2012: 55). However, Byzantinists still tend to apply modern notions to comprehend confiscation in the pre-modern Byzantine era and use the term confiscation as a generic term to encompass both lawful and illicit property deprivation, leading to confusion regarding the source of the emperor's right of confiscation. Therefore, it is important to draw attention to this phenomenon and make efforts to correct it.

A major difficulty in studying the concept of confiscation in Byzantium lies in finding a viable research methodology. Numbers of researchers have suggested that "the term 'confiscation' has been used indiscriminately" in Byzantine sources (Maniatis 2007: 611, 2016: 223). However, my revisionist observation is that in many cases, the legal terms in Byzantine sources were not used indiscriminately, which contrasts with the opinion of many researchers, and can reflect the Byzantine notion of confiscation to some extent.

This paper focuses on examining how the Byzantines understood the concept of confiscation by analysing two texts from the eleventh century — the *Peira*, a collection of judicial cases, and the *History* of Michael Attaleiates, whose experience as a judge guaranteed his knowledge of Byzantine law. The paper

argues that while the author of the *Peira* generally followed the norms of using the concept and terminology of confiscation in Byzantine legislations, Attaleiates developed a different concept in his narrative history.

At least three distinct conceptions of confiscation can be identified from the two texts studied in this article. The first is confiscation as described in legal texts, which is considered the most traditional form of legal confiscation and requires it to be legal and just. The second is the notion of confiscation held by Attaleiates in his narrative, which may be consistent with legal provisions but not necessarily just. In contrast, the third is the idea of 'dispossession' of a subject's property, which may not conform to established law but is considered confiscation if it is at the will of the emperor. The last view, although met with resistance, was not completely eradicated. The existence of these three conceptions not only suggests the emperor's need to justification his "confiscation" but also suggests potential directions for justification.

Eunuchs, Intersectionality, and Queer Families in Byzantine Legal Corpora

Tiffany VanWinkoop (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

In the Medieval Roman Empire overlapping and intersectional identifiers such as race, gender, and sexual orientation impacted how marginalized individuals lived in and were regulated by the hegemonic Christian, male, and heterosexual power structures. By further exploring issues of identity and praxis, my paper examines the ways Byzantine legal corpora legislated the family life, sexuality, and the creation of eunuch subjects during the Macedonian Dynasty, specifically *Novels* 26, 27, 60, and 98 of Leo VI, which collectively banned the practice and punishment of castration, barred eunuchs from marriage, but, notably, granted legal permission for eunuchs to adopt. Although the impact and legacy of Leo's *Novels* may be questioned, his ideological engagement with eunuchs provides a crucial window into the legal construction of identity in his society. Leo's

digressions within the *Novels* affirm the rhetorical and ideological challenges that existed concerning a eunuch's gender role, family life, and legal personhood.

Leo's conception of legal eunuch identity is interpreted in this paper as an example of medieval legal intersectionality whereby enmeshed identifiers altered how eunuchs could live and function in the eyes of the state. Conversely, legislation such as Justinian's *Corpus Juris Civilis* legislated eunuchs based on the discrete aspects of their identity, namely servile status, citizenship, or socioeconomic position. The eighth and ninth century legal corpora, the *Ecloga* of Leo III and Constantine V, imagined the Medieval Roman Empire as an Old Testament successor that simply and, counterfactually, did not have eunuchs. Using the theoretical framework of Critical Legal Theories as a guide to understanding the governance of marginalized subjects, we can see how Leo's conception of eunuch identity is far richer than his predecessors.

Although the origins and social statuses of eunuchs fluctuated from the sixth to the tenth centuries, their very presence consistently challenged intersecting binaries of Medieval Roman legal identity such as, "male/female," "freeborn/slave," and "citizen/foreigner." Collectively, Leo's corpus considers eunuchs' gender to be "a different sort" (οὐχ οἶον, *Novel* 60, line 19) and subverts the expected binary. Leo equates castration with the loss of a limb, and subsequently does not consider this disability to be sufficient grounds to bar eunuchs from adopting (Novel 27). Finally, eunuchs are automatically granted the status of freedman because of their castration (*Novel* 60). Ultimately, Leo gives these rights to eunuchs in order to alleviate the suffering of their marginalized position, concluding that he wishes to grant them the joy of fatherhood (*Novel* 26).

Regardless of their actual legal application, Leo's *Novels* demonstrate a nuanced and complicated relationship with an entire category of imperial subjects, challenging a reductionist view of eunuchs merely grounded in their physiology or perceived gender identity. Rather, through Leo's logic, one can see how eunuchs served as an ideological canvas with which to grapple with broader

questions of state intervention, family planning, and Christian identity. Ultimately, legal corpora are a yet untapped source for conceptualizing both imagined lives and experienced realities of intersectional subjects during the Macedonian dynasty.

What Was The Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority (*Magisterium*) According To St. Theodore Of Studios?

Andrei Psarev (Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary, Jordanville, NY)

According to Byzantine canon law, every member of the clergy was required to mention by name his superior bishop in the course of every liturgical service. The only exemption from this rule was when a superior had preached heresy. St. Theodore of Stoudios (d. 826), abbot of the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner in Constantinople, is a much venerated saint, especially in monastic circles, who, in the Orthodox Church, has been accorded the status of a teacher. Having disagreed with the decision of the Council of Constantinople of 809, which had justified the emperor's divorce — amounting to heresy for Theodore, he stopped commemorating his superior, Patriarch Nikephoros, and appealed to the Pope in Rome to endorse his position. My paper explores what constituted *magisterium* (supreme ecclesiastical authority) for Theodore.

On the basis of Theodore's letters, studied in their original Greek, and the relevant secondary literature, I reconstruct Theodore's concept of authority. All divisions in the Byzantine Church may be viewed as ideological clashes pitting the Church factions of *akribeists* and *oikonomists* against each other. The *akribeists* argued for the norms of church law to be applied as literally and strictly as possible, while the *oikonomists* sought the application of the *spirit* of the law. The labels used for these groups are useful but should be applied only tentatively and with an awareness of their limitations, since a particular individual might act in one dispute as an *akribeist* and as an *oikonomist* in another.

For many years I have been studying schisms within the Orthodox Church and Orthodox churches' relations with non-Orthodox churches. My Master's thesis in Theology was dedicated to the Russian Church's relationship with non-Orthodox Christians outside of Russia, while in my doctoral dissertation, I looked at various cases of the rupture of communion in the Byzantine Church in the ninth to thirteenth centuries. As far as I know, no other research offers the approach that I am taking towards Theodore's ecclesiology.

The fact that churchmen were able to express their protests demonstrates that Byzantine society, like Roman society, allowed a degree of individual freedom. My research serves as a case study, enabling us to understand the "system of checks and balances" that operated in the Byzantine Church; and it may also lead us to a better understanding of present mindsets within the Orthodox Church.

Religion and Senatorial Service in the Later Roman Empire

Leonora Neville (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Ten centuries after Emperor Augustus curtailed the governmental authority of the Roman senate, why did it still exist? The answer lies in the Senate's role in Roman civic religion: maintaining the proper relationship between the polity and the gods was a primary function of the ancient Senate. Long after the theology of the Roman polity had changed thoroughly from traditional cult to Christianity, the Senate remained engaged in religious activity on behalf of the polity. The processions and ceremonies of the tenth-century Senate, known in detail from Constantine VII's Ceremony Book, were often primarily religious in nature. Even more purely governmental actions such as appointments, commissions, payments, and authentications all entailed prayers and overt religious statements and imagery.

Despite the relatively large amount of evidence for the prayers, psalms, liturgies, and processions that enveloped imperial service, this aspect of religious experience has been largely ignored by scholars studying medieval Orthodoxy. Rather, prayers for and by the state and the emperors have been dismissed as ideology or political theater. Drawing on the research and theoretical frameworks developed for the study of ancient civic religion, this paper explains how participating in religious activity on behalf of the Roman polity formed part of the experience and expression of Orthodoxy for servants of the imperial government in the tenth century.

For example, a tenth-century seal in the Dumbarton Oaks collection bears an image of the Mother of God holding a medallion of Christ and records the prayer: "Mother of God, help Ioannis, *anthypatos*, *patrikios*, imperial *protospatharios*, and *domestikos* of the God-guarded *scholōn*." The seal's role in authenticating Ioannis' correspondence did not nullify its function as an icon and prayer for help with a holy enterprise. According to the Ceremony Book, Ioannis would have been invested with his office in the "holy" the palace, in front of an image of God in the form of a man on a throne, by the "holy" emperor with the words: "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, my God-given majesty promotes you *domestikos* of the God-guarded *scholōn*," followed by multiple sets of acclamations and prayers by growing crowds in increasingly public spaces. Subtle variations between such appointment ceremonies indicate they were not proforma.

Ioannis' inauguration was likely the most elaborate religious ritual focused on him in his life. His baptism and marriage were also transformational, but this ritual had a larger audience, was conducted in a monumental ancient sacred space, and set him in a unique role in divine providential economy. Nothing in our sources justifies assuming cynically that this was mere political ideology. Such simultaneously governmental and religious ceremonies were likely powerful religious experiences for participants. Just like ancient inauguration ceremonies, they provided reassurance that the Roman polity would retain divine support. At

least in the tenth century, such manifestations of civic religion constitute an under-examined aspect of medieval Orthodoxy.

Session 8A

Texts and Contexts

Gädlä Gärima: A Six Century Textual Witness for Ethiopian Mythology and Monastic Ties between Axumite and Roman Empire

Teweldeberhan Mezgebe (Mekelle University)

The present manuscript is about the life of *abba* Gärima, at birth named Yəsḥaq. He is one of the nine saints who came to Ethiopia from Europe and/or Asia. The two codices of *abba* Gärima Four Gospels manuscripts have been recently dated to the sixth century CE by radiocarbon dating, and are believed to be the earliest existing manuscripts. Paleographically, Gädlä Gärima can be dated probably at the end of the 6th century CE though it is not attested by radiocarbon dating.

This lecture presents textual evidence for the ancient historic relations of monasticism of the Byzantine Empire of Rome and Axum. Gädlä Gärima, MS GG 015, narrates how the historic king of Rome, Mäsmiyanos and his wife Səfngiya, begat their child Yəsḥaq through prayer and absolution and how the successor Emperor Yəsḥaq was influenced by *abba* Pentelewon's monastic practice in Axumite kingdom of Ethiopia. The act also explains the then social beliefs and norms of the people of Ethiopia. For instance, they sacrify their daughter to a big serpent turn by turn until the advent of *abba* Gärima to Ethiopia, whom he together with other monks' prayer last destroyed it. Consequently, the people of Tigrai narrates this as "*zanta gäbäl*, 'Tales of the Serpent'" as a myth orally through generation up to the present.

Manuscripts can be a paramount source of history and myth. In fact, a philologist can reconstruct many things from codices: historical, mythical, linguistic, philosophical, theological, and so forth. Thus, this paper presents the mythical instances of the act and the monastic ties that the *gädl* preserves about the ancient relations that the Byzantine Empire of Rome had with Axumite Kingdom.

The Use of the Bible in the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu

Daria Elagina (Universität Hamburg)
Felege-Selam Solomon Yirga (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

The *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu is a vastly understudied but vital source of Byzantine and Early Islamic history, which survives in the form of a 17th-century Ge'ez translation of a medieval Arabic translation of the 7th-century Coptic (or Greek) original. As with many other historical writings of its type from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine world, it makes heavy use of the Bible through a variety of strategies which have heretofore not been studied or examined in a systematic way.

This talk illustrates some of the ways in which biblical narrative frameworks and citations are deployed in the *Chronicle*. We argue that the text makes use of a narrative framework which is heavily reliant on a biblical interpretation of human history up to the author's own time. This framework lends authority to the various smaller arguments that John makes in support of a larger narrative arc of God's alienation from humanity, and specifically from the Christians of the Roman empire.

This argument is built as follows: First the *Chronicle*'s use of the Bible as a source of rhetoric and moral authority within the narrative is carefully laid out, not as an exhaustive catalog of every instance of biblical citation, but as an examination of when John of Nikiu felt it was appropriate to make use of scripture for the rhetorical or moral weight, it could lend the argument. This is followed by a discussion of the use of Scripture in the course of religious disputation within the narrative. John's text is deeply occupied with religious disputation as the core engine of religious history, not only between Christians, but also with consideration for events in Jewish history and Christian interactions with pagans. Finally, the argument covers the *Chronicle*'s biblical narrative framework, revealed in John's use of God as a narrative actor, and the role of satanic/demonic interference.

Ultimately, we demonstrate that John of Nikiu's *Chronicle* is more than a simple amalgamation of sources into a loose chronological organization. John's subtle and considered use of scriptural reference and narrative framework points to the carefully managed compilation of sources into a coherent work of "world" history that carefully plots human history as a continuation of events narrated in the Old and New Testaments.

The Jerusalem Liturgy, the Earliest *Life of the Virgin*, and the Origins of Passion Piety in Late Ancient Palestine

Stephen J. Shoemaker (University of Oregon)

By all indications the *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximus the Confessor, which presently survives only in Georgian translation, was composed at the monastery of Mar Saba sometime during the seventh century, or the eighth at the latest. Such a dating is clearly evidenced by this *Life*'s manuscript tradition and its use by George of Nikomedia, making recent suggestions that it was composed at the end of the tenth-century on the basis of John the Geometer's *Life of the Virgin* untenable. Nevertheless, the primary remaining objection to the composition of this text in seventh or eighth century Palestine would appear to be that its lamentations of the Passion do not find clear parallels until later centuries. Yet as it turns out, affective devotion to the Crucifixion of Christ developed much earlier than most Byzantinists have heretofore recognized. Although it may have arrived in Constantinople only some time later, the existence of such piety is evident in Palestine as early as the fourth century, as witnessed clearly by the pilgrim Egeria. Emotional devotion to the Passion is also a principal theme of hymnography for the Triduum in sixth-century Palestine, as evidenced by the *Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook*. This paper compares the lamentations of these Passion hymns with the lamentations in the *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximus, demonstrating their remarkable similarity. Accordingly, the hymns of the Jerusalem Patriarchate

from the sixth century provide clear and obvious precedent for the lamentation of this earliest *Life of the Virgin*. The fact that these hymns were preserved at the monastery of Mar Saba and were in use there in the period when this *Life of the Virgin* was composed not only confirms the evidence of the manuscript tradition but also obviates any objection to this dating based on the history of piety. One imagines that the regular use of these hymns in the monastery where this *Life* was composed in large part inspired the lamentations of the Crucifixion in the latter.

The Holy Friday Idiomelon Σήμερον κρεμᾶται ἐπὶ ξύλου: Liturgical History & Theology Between Jerusalem & Constantinople

Gregory Tucker (University of Regensburg)

The ancient hymn Σήμερον κρεμᾶται ἐπὶ ξύλου ("Today, he is hung upon wood") stands among the most widely disseminated compositions for the liturgical commemoration of Christ's Passion to have emerged from the peripheries of the Greek-speaking Christian East. Just one of twelve *idiomela* (hymns with unique melodies) composed for the Holy Friday liturgy of the Anastasis Cathedral in Jerusalem, it appears for the first time in manuscripts of the Old *Iadgari* (the Georgian translation of the Old Tropologion, which is no longer extant in the original Greek) and subsequently in witnesses to various oriental liturgical traditions in several languages. Taken over into the New Tropologion by the eighth century, it soon entered the Constantinopolitan Triodion (service book for Lent), which, along with other expanded collections of hymns, soon replaced the Tropologion and became normative within the Byzantine Rite.

Despite its enduring popularity, Σήμερον κρεμᾶται ἐπὶ ξύλου remains little studied. Sebastià Janeras included an edition of the text with notes on biblical and patristic sources in *Le Vendredi-Saint dans la tradition liturgique byzantine* (1988) and there have been several musicological studies of the hymn, but the history of the text and its literary analysis remain largely virgin terrain. Detailed

consideration of the text is invited not only by the hymn's masterful theological rhetoric — which draws on a tradition of Paschal theology associated with the Quartodecimans of Asia Minor, exemplified by Melito of Sardis — but also by one significant variant in the text observed by Janeras: the absence in the earliest witnesses of two hemistichs, mentioning the nails and lance, that are found in the later Byzantine sources.

Supplementing Janeras's edition with data from the Sinai New Finds and deeper historical contextualisation, this paper argues that these hemistichs were added to the hymn after it was received in Constantinople, where the veneration of the relic of the lance was enacted at the end of Holy Week (rather than that of the cross, as in Jerusalem). This hypothesis is supported by the absence in many manuscripts of the corresponding hemistichs in the parallel hymn for the Nativity of Christ, Σήμερον γεννᾶται ἐκ παρθένου. The paper exploits this discernible textual development as a point of entry into analysis of the hymn's rhetoric, identifying a shift from an understanding of Christ's passion developed around language of institutional abuse and slavery to one based on late antique and Byzantine understandings of gendered social hierarchy. Specifically, it explores the enigmatic image of Christ effecting freedom by being slapped (part of the rite of the manumission of slaves) and the paradox of the penetrated bridegroom and son of a virgin.

This paper offers an historical and literary analysis of a celebrated Byzantine liturgical text, incorporating original manuscript research and an innovative approach to liturgical microhistory. This gives us both the rare opportunity to appreciate the effect of recontextualisation of liturgical texts on their content and the chance to unpack a shift in theological metaphors used to celebrate a biblical episode so central to Byzantine Christians as the crucifixion.

Session 8B

Imperial Matters

The Daughters of Valentinian I: Grief, Piety, Virginity and Imperial Womanhood at the End of the Fourth Century

Euan Croman (Queen's University Belfast)

Sometime around 370 CE, Valentinian I discarded his first wife Marina Severa and married Justina, a scion of the Constantinian dynasty. This marriage produced four children before Valentinian's sudden death in 375, including a son who became emperor Valentinian II upon his father's demise.

The life of Valentinian II is relatively well known. He was declared emperor by his father's court in 375 and he would outlive his uncle Valens (died 378), half-brother Gratian (died 383), and mother Justina (died c. 388) but would meet his end in 392, when he was found dead in the imperial residence at Vienne.

What is less well known is anything concerning the lives of the three daughters of Valentinian I and Justina: Galla, Justa and Grata. Very little has been discussed, let alone written, about these three women in modern scholarship. This is, to some degree, understandable; very little information survives about any of these women and they seem to have played a relatively minor role in the political crises that surrounded their lives. Galla did not live much longer than her brother, dying just before Theodosius' second march westwards in 394, meanwhile Justa and Grata almost completely disappear from the historical record after 392. However, to ignore what we do know about these women would be a mistake, because their lives can actually reveal much about the experiences of imperial women in the later empire.

While no archaeological evidence for any of these three women survives, there are significant references within contemporary literature. Broad details of Galla's life can be reconstructed through a patch-work of historical references in Socrates Scholasticus, Zosimus and Marcellinus Comes. As for Justa and Grata, the main evidence comes from two works dating to 392, a funeral oration and a letter, both written by Ambrose, bishop of Milan. Despite the apparent sparsity of these

fragments, from them we can infer a great deal about the lives of these three women and by doing so, make a significant contribution to our broader understanding of the lives of imperial women at the end of the fourth century.

This paper explores this evidence, and finally gives it the attention it has previously been denied. This exploration demonstrates that Galla was an imperial woman who, isolated from her family, attempted to navigate the power-politics of the eastern court both to protect herself and the surviving members of her family. Justa and Grata for their parts, offer a fascinating case study for the intersection of some of the most powerful ideas of the age: worldly position, virginity, and Christian piety. Above all, these women help to contextualise the much more famous Galla Placidia, showing her to be a further development of historical processes that can only be properly understood by examining the historical traces of the lives of these largely forgotten imperial women.

The Agency of Art in an Age of Dynastic Reproduction

Cecily J. Hilsdale (McGill University)

Over the course of the Theodosian period, from the late-forth to mid-fifth century, imperial authority became increasingly associated with dynasty. Despite the fact that the Roman imperial office was not inherited, in theory at least, the art and poetry of the era went to unprecedented lengths to stress the supremacy of imperial lineage and the bonds of blood, and women of the imperial house were central to this project (Holum, 1989). As one of the key distinguishing features of the era, the programmatic effort to consolidate the power of imperial *genos* has been described by historians as a dynastic agenda, principal or impulse, urge, even imperative (Croke, 2014, 2121; Icks, 2014; McEvoy, 2013).

The visual dimension of this sustained program of dynasty building is the focus of this paper, which provides a reassessment of the art associated with the marriage

of Honorius, son of Theodosius I, and Maria, daughter of Stilicho and Serena, in the year 398. In addition to Claudian's poetry celebrating the wedding, two glyptic works associated with the union survive in Paris. An ancient cameo now in the Rothschild collection was re-cut for this occasion (Coche de la Ferté 1957, Sande 2001, Gagetti 2011), and a cameo pendant in the Louvre was commissioned *de novo* for the bride (Garipzanov, 2015, 2018). Read together and alongside contemporary court rhetoric, the paper examines the potential of symbolically-significant old stones to legitimate new brides who would, in turn, authenticate new regimes. In this way, the paper raises a capacious set of questions about the agency of art in enacting dynasty at the turn of the fourth century.

While the marriage of Maria and Honorius prompted the creation and adaptation of both works, the pieces were designed for different audiences, one intensely personal and the other considerably more public. They also met with distinct fates. Epigraphic evidence on the Rothschild cameo testifies to its continued later medieval devotional life, in all likelihood as an icon, whereas the Louvre pendant was interred with Maria in the imperial mausoleum in St. Peters. In tracing such divergent later social lives in addition to their original commissioning, this paper aims to clarify how art does practical work for dynastic agendas. Rather than merely documenting such agendas, these pieces are read as agents in constructing the subjectivities of their viewers and users, thus actively participating in the ambitions of the Theodosian dynasty. Moreover, despite their divergent original audiences and later social lives, both works promote ideas about legitimacy and dynasty through the emergent and powerful graphic culture of Christianity. Through analysis of these works, ultimately, we can see late antique dynastic building in action.

A Byzantine Gift Box

Kriszta Kotsis (University of Puget Sound)

The David Casket, an intricately carved middle Byzantine ivory box in the collection of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome shows an imperial couple on its lid and a lengthy narrative cycle of the life of David on its body. The imperial portrait, narrative cycle, date, and political significance of this object have been discussed extensively. Although some scholars suggest that the box was a wedding gift to the imperial couple depicted on its lid, little attention has been given to how it might have operated as a gift. While the casket is richly inscribed and includes representations of both the givers and the recipients, neither are identified by name. This paper affirms the identification of the imperial couple as Basil I and his wife, Eudokia Ingerina and argues that centering the function of the box as a gift opens up new ways of understanding this luxurious object.

Previous analyses characterized the imagery of the David Casket as a straightforward, direct expression of imperial ideology, despite the fact that it was commissioned by non-imperial patrons as a gift to an imperial couple, complicating our understanding of the significance and operation of the imagery. The paper argues that the inscriptions and iconographic details emphasize acts of giving and receiving objects and highlight the importance of marriage and couplehood. The matrimonial emphasis appears to have been an intentional choice of the patrons because it draws attention to the figure of the empress alongside her husband and underscores her role within the imperial office. It seems likely that the patrons attempted to garner the facilitation of the empress in seeking a favor from the emperor through her inclusion in the representation since her presence is not strictly necessary when addressing the emperor, after all, Byzantine empresses had only vaguely defined roles within the state. In order to envision the circumstances of the imperial couple receiving this gift, the paper draws on the letter of Patriarch Photios to the Bulgar khan, which outlines the responsibilities of a ruler, including the granting and receiving favors and benefactions. Photios' text highlights the great importance Byzantine society

ascribed to favors and beneficence in general and of rulers in particular, and provides a framework to imagine how this object operated as a physical testament of exchange between the ruling couple and the subject couple, bound in obligations of reciprocity of munificence rendered and/or expected.

The "Duty of Sovereigns": An Alternative to the "Mirror of Princes" in Byzantium

Marion Kruse (University of Cincinnati)

Despite an extensive scholarly literature, there is currently no consensus about whether or not the so-called "Mirror of Princes" genre existed in Byzantium. One reason for this scholarly impasse is the failure of scholars to agree on the criteria by which the genre should be defined. To date, different schools have emphasized criteria including formal features, such as format and embeddedness; social features, such as the relationship between the advisor and advisee; and Byzantine perceptions of genre as reconstructed from literary handbooks and the manuscript tradition. Meanwhile, scholars who deny the existence of the genre, most famously Paolo Odorico, often do so on intellectual grounds by arguing for the unoriginality of Byzantine texts compared to their classical models.

At stake in these debates is not merely a taxonomy of literary works, whether emic or etic, but the analytical frames through which those works are interpreted. Genres presuppose a set of shared features and concerns that permit and reward comparative analysis. These shared features are essential to the construction of meaning, both for contemporary audiences and modern scholars, but it is precisely this construction of meaning that is often lost in contemporary discussion of genre, which tend to prioritize taxonomy over interpretation.

The current paper intervenes in these discussions by proposing a new genre, tentatively called the "Duty of Sovereigns," on interpretive grounds. The paper

argues that four Byzantine works — Synesios of Kyrene's *On Kingship*, Theophylaktos of Ohrid's *To Lord Konstantinos Porphyrogennetos*, and Thomas Magistros' *On Kingship* and *On the Polity* — should be understood as examples of a common genre primarily based on their ability to illuminate one another.

The paper begins by identifying the formal features that tie these works together, in particular the conceit of direct address, the explicit rejection of encomiastic tropes, the use of a common pool of classical authors, the identification of a common set of imperial virtues, and, most importantly, the application of all of these to a specific set of contemporary problems. Next, the paper argues that all of these formal features are driven by a shared model of imperial sovereignty, which understands that sovereignty as a trust held on behalf of the common good of the Roman people. This conception of Byzantine sovereignty emerges clearly only when the logic behind these speeches' common features is unpacked, meaning that the interpretation of each speech is dependent on other speeches in this proposed genre. The paper concludes by arguing for the broader utility of an interpretive approach to the "Mirror of Princes" genre, in particular for the gnomic tradition exemplified by Agapetos and Basileios I.

Session 9A

Imagining, Experiencing, and Participating in Governance in Byzantium

Personalized Efficiency: Taxation and Dialogue in Byzantine State Finances

Dimitris Krallis (Simon Fraser University)

The study of the past is often undertaken by means of Weberian concepts such as rationalization, bureaucratic rule, and impersonal governance. The proposed paper examines the impact of this unacknowledged Weberian influence on Byzantine scholarship by way of engagement with questions of taxation and tax-assessment. It proposes that in assessing the tax burden of village communities, Roman officials in the Middle Ages were by no means inefficient, let alone irrational, or simply corrupted by patronage and private/personal interests and relations. They rather operated within a bureaucratic framework, which valued healthy, consenting communities, as much as it sought maximization of fiscal returns.

To use a Polanyian notion, the Medieval Roman bureaucracy was "deeply embedded" into the society that funded it and achieved its goals by relying on two archives in dialogue with one another. One was formal, centrally operated, and regularly updated in Constantinople, the other informal, in effect a "distributed archive," constituted out of myriad family documents, kept carefully in peasant homes as proof of ownership of land or other assets and rights. In village communities in constant flux, the process of measuring, assessing, and assigning a community's tax burden could not simply take the form of impersonal, not to say violent, outside imposition. A modicum of consent and consultation was both essential and expected, as evidenced in stipulations of the Zavorda treatise, which allowed for the possibility that assessed peasants might not accept the decisions of assessors. At the village level then, the two "archives," formal and informal, came into dialogue, one updating the other in a periodic feedback loop.

What is more, operating within a Roman legal framework that relied on witness testimony for the confirmation of contracts and the resolution of all manner of legal disputes, tax officials were inclined to approach finances through a judicial lens. When documentation was absent, the Roman reliance on multiple witnesses to all manner of contracts would ensure the presence within each community of

commonly verifiable sources of legally binding oral testimony. Reliance on local knowledge, as articulated in oral witness testimony or recourse to locally held documentation, should therefore not be seen as evidence of state weakness or inefficiency. They were, rather, time-honored, and efficacious discursive processes.

In our world of fragmented identities, social, economic, personal, and professional, the state's engagement with its constituents gets increasingly personalized in ways familiar to a Roman administrator of the Middle Ages. Recent scholarship on public administration recognizes this reality and stands critically vis a vis the Weberian ideal of impersonal governance, decoupling it from the notion of bureaucratic rationality and efficiency. We should perhaps do the same when reading Byzantium.

All Too Human? Political Punishment and the Rhetoric of Imperial Impotence in Byzantium

Jake Ransohoff (Princeton University)

Byzantine propaganda encourages us to see the emperor as if through a spyglass — his stature and movements magnified to larger-than-life proportions. Art and panegyric, court ceremony and diplomatic protocol all foster a vision of the emperor's authority within the state as absolute. Today's scholarship teaches us to mistrust this distorted image. In the past two decades, a number of studies have emphasized the fragility of imperial power, its basis in popular consent, and the human and natural obstacles that limited its executive reach. The result has been a growing consensus that the Byzantine emperor was rarely in practice the all-powerful sovereign he claimed to be in theory.

The present paper does not seek to challenge this emerging consensus. Instead, it asks what we can learn about state and imperial authority in Byzantium when we

invert the spyglass, to consider cases where emperors intentionally *diminished*, rather than magnified, public perceptions of their omnipotence. It focuses on a series of unusual penalties perpetrated by emperors against rebel leaders between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Before *ca.* 800, Byzantine sovereigns punished rivals for power in public, ordering their disfigurement or death before crowds of onlookers in Constantinople's Hippodrome. After *ca.* 800, however, rulers increasingly chose to blind defeated rebels in secret, concealing their punishment in monasteries or fortresses far removed from the capital and its crowds. And when news of these secret punishments reached the public, emperors openly disclaimed any knowledge of or responsibility for the act — instead blaming disobedient subordinates and circumstances beyond their control.

This paper begins by tracing the movement of political punishments from "spectacular" to "secret" venues across the watershed of the ninth century. It then considers how, in cases of hidden punishment, emperors shielded themselves from backlash by pleading their limited control over people and events. Finally, it considers how such pleas speak to societal expectations about the power of the emperor, before concluding with several wider reflections on the force and strategies of central authority in Byzantium. Court propaganda may dazzle us with the image of the emperor as God's counterpart on earth; but where the punishment of political rivals was concerned, the emperor's designs were sometimes best served by reminding his subjects that he was, in the end, all too human.

Imperial Bureaucratic Practices in the Provincial Society of Ioannes Apokaukos

Aleksandar Jovanović (University of the Fraser Valley)

This paper explores the local Epirote populace's engagement with the Byzantine bureaucratic practice of issuing contracts in managing their own cotidal affairs, based on the surviving works of Ioannes Apokaukos, the metropolitan bishop of

Naupaktos in the 13th century. By looking at the ways in which both urban and rural dwelling Epirotes employed various written agreements to regulate their interrelationships — rather than just the relationships between themselves and the central administration — I examine the extent to which the imperial centre's bureaucratic habits played an active role in forging a sense of an orderly local community in the minds of provincial peoples.

The surviving opus of Ioannes Apokaukos comprises over two hundred letters, notes, and synodal decisions — all of which have escaped the traditional Byzantine literary editing process of turning them into a cohesive but somewhat depersonalized letter collection — leaving us with a significant number of references to the mundane workings of provincial society. I specifically chart the references made by Apokaukos to marriage, property exchange, inheritance, and other types of contracts in order to examine the local production of written agreements kept in the personal possession of individuals from all walks of life in Epiros. Thus, we see that provincial communities both urban and rural, literate and illiterate, and spanning from the island of Kerkyra to the metropolitan city of Naupaktos, had a shared tradition of producing written and signed agreements modelled on the exempla offered by imperial administration when it came to arranging their local interrelationships. This further allows us to think about the remarkably uniform mindset of the people living across the Byzantine world when regulating their private and business affairs, which, in turn, made cross-regional communication and interconnectedness rather seamless.

Session 9B

Archaeology, Place, and Space

Claiming Antiquity, Claiming Global Empire: The Loulon-Constantinople Optical Telegraph as an Instrument of Competition

Lucas McMahon (University of Ottawa)

Three inter-related tenth-century texts report that the emperor Theophilos (r. 829–42) established a long-distance chain of beacons linking the eastern frontier to Constantinople and that shortly thereafter the system was abolished by his son Michael III (r. 842–67). This paper examines a brief moment in the history of imperial communication: the establishment, function, and mothballing of a medieval Roman long-distance optical telegraph line. While the telegraph was novel, how and why it was developed and used tells a story about competition between elites across borders, polities, and languages, the appropriation of the past, and efforts to shore up bonds between centre, heartland, and periphery of a state grappling with a long-term crisis. The study of the logistics of communication makes clear the logic of empire.

Did the telegraph work as described, and what was its purpose? The telegraph's subsequent fame and alleged novelty was that it could transmit different messages, yet the (incomplete) list of those messages provided by Pseudo-Symeon raises questions about what authorities in Constantinople could actually do with that information. The first of these questions is addressed through what might be (hesitatingly) termed digital experimental archaeology, namely, a GIS visibility study aimed at identifying potential beacon sites to determine if Anatolia can actually be bridged by the number of beacons described in the tenth-century texts. Only a summary of the methods and results are presented in order to dedicate more time to the second question: why was the telegraph built, what purpose did it serve, and what does it mean?

The tenth-century accounts of the beacon line's designer, Leon the Philosopher, set the origin of the telegraph as part of competition between the courts of Theophilos and the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn. The beacon system was developed at a specific moment of intense intellectual rivalry in which the

Abbasids were actively trying to claim the ancient Greek scientific heritage for themselves. Al-Maʾmūn was also attempting to improve upon Ptolemy's measurement of the circumference of the Earth and had experiments carried out on the Tauros frontier as well as at Damascus when on campaign. These attempts are particularly relevant because the function of the beacon chain as described in the textual sources requires an understanding of Ptolemy's calculations of longitude. While the telegraph had some value as a tripwire, it was unwieldy and only practical at a moment when emperor and caliph both took the field, which explains the efforts to shut it down after the 830s. More generally, however, the telegraph was ultimately an expression of empire and a claim on the ancient heritage in direct contravention to contemporary Abbasid efforts. Leon's famous optical telegraph needs to be seen as the result of a moment of imperial competition, rather than any sort of normal form of optical communication.

Objects and People at a Medieval Harbor: An Archaeological Perspective

Georgios Makris (University of British Columbia)

How can we reconstruct the living conditions in an important provincial city of the Byzantine world if the surviving written references are few and only in passing? If we turn to the built environment for evidence of urban life, what methodology should we use when the physical remains of buildings have been eroded by time or reconfigured through later interventions? These questions form the departure point of this paper.

While scholars have systematically studied the rich histories of Byzantium's metropolitan centers, with Constantinople and Thessaloniki being the prime examples, less attention has been paid to the empire's smaller urban centers. This issue concerns particularly the middle and late Byzantine period, as recent studies have illuminated the biographies of several late antique cities across the eastern Mediterranean and from multidisciplinary perspectives. This paper examines the

portable objects, primarily ceramics, metal dress accessories, as well as glass items recovered from a decades-old excavation of the medieval port-city of Maroneia in northern Greece in order to reconstruct the lives of its inhabitants and their connections with distant and nearby places.

Maroneia was a geopolitically important coastal city on the route between Thessaloniki and Constantinople with a long history of occupation from prehistory to modern times. Due to its location in the empire's heartland, it remained under Byzantine control throughout the period under review, from the ninth to the fourteenth century. Although Maroneia's Classical and Roman/Late Roman past is well-known, its medieval phase has been overlooked partly due to the scanty written sources. This paper presents the results of the ongoing investigation into the archaeological record and archives of earlier excavations at Maroneia that include objects and remains of modest buildings discovered at the center of the medieval city. The recovered material culture provides important information about the daily activities and rituals of the city's residents, including their aesthetic values, dining customs as well as funerary practices. The portability and wide circulation of artefacts such as ceramics and glass objects also point to the commercial and social links between the people of Maroneia and other important places of the Byzantine world and beyond. To return to the questions posed in the introduction: by focusing on an understudied site and its archaeological signature, the paper ultimately underlines the need to reinterpret and contextualize old sets of archaeological data, in the absence of standing monumental structures or dense historical accounts.

This paper also seeks to generate dialogue on modest and everyday items such as household ceramics or copper-alloy accessories beyond the specialist studies that often project divisions between the different categories of artefacts. This study argues for a more integrated view into the function and use of such artefacts in their original socio-cultural context; the discussion of objects as parts of varied assemblages, sheds light on their relationships with past people. It is these dynamic relationships that formed a major part of city life throughout the Middle Ages.

Transforming Commerce into Charity at San Nicola in Carcere, Rome

Gregor Kalas (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

The church of San Nicola in Carcere in Rome is first attested in inscriptions with eighth-century epigraphic characteristics written on a column. This paper argues that Anastasius, who instigated the epigraphic texts, bequeathed his distant commercial farm to honor the saints at an inner-city church occupying one of three adjacent temples so as to endow a charitable institution. Welfare is not explicitly stated in Anastasius's inscriptions. Still, Anastasius's action is best explained by comparison to the *diaconia*, a charity center distributing food and cures, at Santa Maria in Cosmedin nearby with its own inscription. Anastasius's bequest is clear due to the inscription referring to a burial in the statement: "[H]ic requiescit in ante" or "here [he] lies in front [of the column]." Anastasius added a more lengthy inscription to establish that his bequest included vineyards and an agricultural operation in Portus. He further dedicates these gifts in honor of an assemblage of saints in a manner resembling Theodotus's eighth-century inscription at Sant'Angelo in Pescheria (Rome), also a *diaconia*. While San Nicola in Carcere may appear to fit uncomfortably within the canonical lists of Rome's *diaconiae*, this paper presents research about the ancient public buildings and ancient market infrastructure utilized by Greek migrants living in Rome who combined commercial ventures with their ascetic projects of ministering to the needy. Admittedly, there are inherent contradictions in proposing that Anastasius both sold food commercially and concurrently donated it to the poor. Yet the quest for spiritual rewards motivated him and other Greek migrants to make charitable use of their properties. Moreover, pious endowments allowed for collective administrators (unmentioned in the inscriptions) to operate within urban public buildings without making claims to own them. Thus, Anastasius's inscribed column, occupying the inner colonnade of a three-temple assemblage, effectively shifted the ancient structure toward the donor's spiritual goals. The research is significant for documenting how commerce intermingled with charity when Greek migrants imported Byzantine lay organizations into Rome.

The specifics of the inscription are striking in connecting Anastasius's burial with an implied bequest and further hints at a transportation network linking the Tiber port close to San Nicola with the sea port facilities in Portus. He donated part of his vineyards at Portus with the implication that he shipped wine and other goods for sale inside Rome, unloading them from the Tiber and selling them near the church. The inscription states: "Of the gifts of God and of St. Mary Mother of God; to St. Ann, St. Simeon, and St. Lucy, for your feast days, I Anastasius, *maiordomus*, offer five square plots of vineyard located in Portus, and two pairs of oxen . . . 30 sheep, 10 pigs, 26 pounds of copper coins, a building for the use of priests and a structure for those in charge of the horses." These words, I argue, attest that the possessions shifted from commerce to charity.

Kourion in Crisis and Catastrophe: Byzantine Resilience and Responses to Disaster on the South Coast of Cyprus

Ian Randall (University of British Columbia)

At the end of the 4th century and again in the mid-7th, the city of Kourion on the South coast of Cyprus was subjected to periods of intense stress that placed the lives of its inhabitants in severe danger, as well as challenged the fabric of social and economic life for the whole island. The earthquake of 395 and the Arab raids of 649 and 653 devastated the city and are clearly discernable in the archaeological record. This paper examines the response, how the city rebounded (or did not) and how this fits into the larger picture of the overall resilience to catastrophe of Byzantine systems of command and control at these points in the history of the Empire. Making use of resilience theory, this examination demonstrates how the *material* responses of different sectors of society elucidate strengths and weaknesses in the interconnecting systems of socioeconomic interdependence, with important implications for shifts in the relations between classes, as well as between Constantinople and more peripheral regions following periods of stress.

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