

Abstracts

Visualizing the Byzantine City

Charalambos Bakirtzis

Depictions of cities: in the icon “Allegory of Jerusalem on High,” two cities are depicted, one in the foothills and the other at the edge of a rocky mountain. The lengthy inscription of the icon is of interest from a town-planning and architectural standpoint. The imperial Christian city: in the mosaics of the Rotunda in Thessalonike, the city is not shown with walls, but with palaces and other splendid public buildings, declaring the emperor’s authority as the sole ruler and guarantor of the unity of the state and the well-being of cities, which was replaced by the authority of Christ. The appearance of the walled city: all the events shown in the mosaics (seventh century) of the basilica of St. Demetrios are taking place outside the walls of the city, probably beside the roads that lead to it. The city’s *chora* not only protected the city; it was also protected *by* it. A description of the city/*kastron*: John Kameniates lived through the capture of Thessalonike by the Arabs in the summer of 904. At the beginning of the narrative, he prefixes a lengthy description/encomium of Thessalonike. The means of approaching the place indicate that the way the city is described by Kameniates suits a visual description. Visualizing the Late Byzantine city: A. In an icon St. Demetrios is shown astride a horse. In the background, Thessalonike is depicted from above. A fitting comment on this depiction of Thessalonike is offered by John Staurakios because he renders the admiration called forth by the large Late Byzantine capitals in connection with the abandoned countryside. B. The depiction of Thessalonike in an icon is closer to the urban development data of the Late Byzantine city.

The Art of Memory: Visualizing Death in Byzantine Greece

Sarah Brooks

Medieval Greece offers invaluable archaeological evidence for how the dead were memorialized across the greater Byzantine Empire during its long history. The excavation, study, and preservation of the artistic culture of death in Greek cities and villages allow us to visualize funerary monuments and buildings that are vividly described in texts, but are extant to a lesser degree in other parts of the empire. Such monuments survive from extensive urban cemeteries, as in Early Byzantine Thessalonike, as well as from intimate family churches in settlements such as Late Byzantine Longaniko in the Morea. The tomb monuments of Byzantine Greece and their related finds span a wide range, demonstrating a diversity of architectural forms and featuring many different artistic media in their decoration. They thus reflect the broadest levels of Byzantine culture in terms of

economics and social class. The 2013-2014 exhibition *Heaven and Earth* brings together a rich representative sample of portable artworks from this cultural sphere, including marble headstones, architectural elements in stone, monumental frescoes, glass flasks and lamps, precious metal objects, and icons in many media. This paper will consider key case studies in the funerary art and architecture of Late Byzantine Greece, reconstructing the monumental contexts for the display and use of these artworks by a wide range of patrons.

Patronage, Politics and Art in Crete on the Eve of the Council of Ferrara-Florence

Anastasia Drandaki

In my paper I shall discuss religious paintings made by Cretan workshops in the first half of the fifteenth century, in which the studied amalgamation of Palaiologan and Italian late Gothic elements shapes a new pictorial language that conforms to certain rules and serves specific theological and devotional needs. In these works of pronounced hybrid character, multifarious iconographic subjects in the same composition are conveyed with surprising stylistic diversity, often backed up by some equally distinctive technical solutions. Thus the various components retain intact their dual origin, yet the painting as a whole acquires a unified character thanks to the uniform treatment of the background and landscape, and above all the faces of the holy figures that are always in keeping with the Byzantine tradition. Apart from the always intriguing subject of the painters' training and the artistic milieu in which they developed this artistic bilingualism, I will address the question of the motives behind the patrons' choice of such hybrid ensembles. The careful stitching together of elements from two different artistic and religious traditions becomes meaningful only when examined against the complex historical background of Venetian Crete. And this is all the more true at a time of intense debate over the burning issue of the union of the churches. Aspects of that debate, which sharply divided the Orthodox population, can be discerned in religious paintings from other parts of the Byzantine world. In the Venetian colony of Crete, however, this phenomenon takes on a distinctive local flavor, determined by the long term coexistence, struggles and interaction between the two communities on the island.

Byzantine Greece in the Light of Recent Archaeological Finds from Large-Scale Infrastructural and Development Projects

Eugenia Gerousi

Major public works encompass the whole of mainland Greece and consist of infrastructure projects such as highways, rail corridors nationwide and others. Within the framework of their execution, to ensure the protection of antiquities that may exist or be identified extensive archaeological projects are carried out. During these excavations findings covering chronologically all periods from the early Iron Age until the Postbyzantine era have been brought to light. One category of archaeological

projects is carried out during the construction of new highways on totally new road alignments such as the road from Lefktro to Sparta that brought into light surprisingly many findings from Byzantine period such as an early Byzantine country villa, a bath-complex of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine period decorated with mosaics or workshop installations of the Middle Byzantine period. Another category of these projects are carried out during the improvement and widening of the highways that already exist such as the road Corinth to Patras or the road from Athens to Thessalonike. Such projects have not only uncovered remarkable new archaeological findings such as a complex of the Middle Byzantine period that was excavated in the Vale of Tempe that includes a traveler's lodge and a church of the basilica type but also have led to a better understanding of archaeological sites that were known from previous research projects. Finally, the excavations of the Thessalonike Metro reveal the Byzantine city in all its diachrony on the central route of Egnatia street that remains central through the ages. Of special interest is the central road which has been developed from the marble paved decumanus of Late Antiquity to a narrower "Avenue of the Byzantines" (Λεωφόρος) or "Middle Street" (Μέση Ὀδός) and then to the "Wide Street" (Φαρδύς Δρόμος) during the Postbyzantine period.

Art and Craftsmanship in Medieval Byzantium

Ioli Kalavrezou

The paper, through a discussion of a variety of works of art and objects present in the exhibition, will be addressing the significance of the arts in Byzantium. Byzantine craftsmen were much admired and their achievements highly regarded and sought after not only in Byzantium, but also in the Western and Eastern worlds throughout the middle ages. Besides the making of splendid mosaic surfaces with figural programs decorating the interiors of their churches, other crafts like enamel work, ivory carving, silk textiles, bronze casting or the application of precious stones and other materials, were trades in which they excelled. Since production and workshop practices were carefully controlled few written sources exist thus much has to be inferred from the art works themselves. The paper will attempt to present through visual evidence aspects of Byzantine culture and its view of the world.

Architecture and Piety in the Urban and Rural Peloponnese

Michalis Kappas

After a general review of ecclesiastical architecture in Byzantine Greece, this paper will concentrate on the examination of religious buildings in cities and villages of the Peloponnese from the beginning of the ninth century onwards. It is the era that the central administration aims at the full re-incorporation of the Morea, after a long period of instability. Although the ecclesiastical foundations of that period – mostly cathedrals of basilican type – are few in number, their

dimensions as well as their construction quality may indicate that they were planned and funded centrally, from the capital itself, proclaiming the glory of imperial art and ideology. By the middle of the tenth and especially during the two following centuries, the number of ecclesiastical monuments increases rapidly, the most glorious of them being located either within or very close to cities. As in the previous centuries, it seems that the most sophisticated enterprises were somehow related to central decisions, while at the same time a number of important monastic foundations were erected either by the local aristocracy or by ecclesiastical dignitaries. At the same time, the geographical distribution of the churches in the Peloponnesian countryside indicates that a network of villages or agricultural settlements was gradually created. Their parish churches are usually of medium size and poor quality. The last part of this paper is dedicated to the period following the Fourth Crusade, especially after the foundation of the Principality of Achaia and the re-establishment of Byzantine rule in Laconia (1262). Our interest will focus on Mystras, the most important Byzantine town in the Morea after the end of the thirteenth century, and some related villages. We will try to examine whether the ecclesiastical buildings of the time reveals the social changes that took place in late Byzantine society, just before the very last pages of Byzantine history and art were about to be written in the Southeast Peloponnese in the 60s of the fifteenth century.

Social Hierarchies and Social Power in Medieval Greek Villages

Leonora Neville

Social hierarchies in Byzantine Greece relied less on strict, categorical, distinctions between social classes than on perceptions of prestige and potential for being intimidating. The “powerful” were not a clearly definable group, but anyone who could be frightening. Muscle, and the money to buy it, were certainly the most straightforward, and probably among the most common, ways to become powerful in many provincial contexts. There were other ways of gaining authority however, and these less straightforward examples can give us some good ideas about the real dynamics of wealth, honor, strength and prestige in Byzantine Greece. This essay examines two forms of empowerment that illuminate some of the more interesting dynamics of power in Byzantine society. The first is the potential for loose alliances between households allowing for informal collective representation of villages and towns. This power of alliances of households can be seen in legal disputes between villages acting collectively and monasteries, whose records of the disputes survive on Mt. Athos. Variations in the legal definitions of the party of the village suggest that the whole village community was represented by a selection of the heads of households. This markedly informal representation system worked by building on the authority each *oikodespotes* had over his family and their dependents. Recognizing the informal nature of community representation raises questions about the formation of prestige and honor in village communities, and turns our attention to how individuals created authority by mapping themselves onto ideal types of behavior and character. The Byzantine conception of ethics in the formation of individual character relied on patterning one’s own behavior on idealized types. While these types long have been recognized as driving factors of Byzantine high-level rhetorical culture, they also appear central to the formation of honorable character, and hence the creation of prestige, in non-elite communities as well.

Earthenwares from “Heavenly” Byzantium

Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi

Byzantium is commonly identified in relation to its production of religious art and architecture bringing to mind icons and religious wall paintings in churches depicting the celestial world of angels and saints. However, even in the theocratic state of Byzantium people did not have only religious needs and life did not consist solely of prayer. While turning their gaze to heaven, Byzantines had their feet firmly placed on earth and they had earthly needs. A great deal of light can be shed on these earthly needs through the study and examination of everyday earthenwares. The various types of clay domestic wares provide valuable information about their use and about the dining and eating habits of their owners. They also reveal the artistic pursuits of the craftsmen who made them and the aesthetic preferences of the consumers who used them. A study of the evolution of earthenwares during the period covered by the exhibition on Byzantium hosted by the National Gallery of Art gives an overview of the socioeconomic parameters of a broad spectrum of everyday life in Byzantium. It also enables visitors to become acquainted with Byzantium through an artistic manifestation other than that of religious art; an art free in expression, far from religious restrictions and constraints.

Visualizing Urban Economies in Late Medieval Greece

Jonathan Shea

In the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, Byzantine Epiros was transformed from a peripheral region into the heartland of one of the Byzantine successor states, sandwiched between Frankish Greeks, Serbs, Venetians, and the Epirotes' Byzantine rivals. During the early decades of the thirteenth century the two major settlements of the region, Arta and Ioannina, likewise developed into important administrative and economic centers. Taking a cue from Angeliki Laiou's paper from the 2008 Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium "Regional Networks in the Balkans in the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods," this paper will explore the local and regional economy of Epiros, and the role of Arta and Ioannina therein. Although not as numerous as those from surrounding regions a number of documents, chrysobulls, Venetian and Ragusan records, and chronicles have survived that mention Arta and Ioannina, and numismatic evidence has surfaced in the form of hoards and stray finds at locations across the region. I shall examine how Late Byzantine Epiros existed at the crossroads of several economic spheres, and how these external forces combined with internal forces to shape the economies of both the cities of Arta and Ioannina and the region as a whole.