

DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Virtual Teaching Day **Whose Byzantium? Identity, Ownership, and Legacy**



February 27, 2021
11:00 am to 2:00 pm EST

DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Program

- 11:00 a.m. Welcome by Anna Stavrakopoulou,
Program Director in Byzantine Studies, Dumbarton Oaks
- 11:10 a.m. *What did it look like when Byzantines activated or stated their identities?*
Anthony Kaldellis, The Ohio State University
- 11:40 a.m. Museum Panel Discussion
Elizabeth Dospěl Williams, Associate Curator of the Byzantine Collection,
Dumbarton Oaks
- 11:50 a.m. Q&A Discussion
- 12:00 p.m. Break
- 12:10 p.m. *Being Byzantine outside of Byzantium*
Dmitry Korobeynikov, SUNY Albany and Dumbarton Oaks
- 12:40 p.m. Museum Panel Discussion
Jonathan Shea, Associate Curator of Coins and Seals, Dumbarton Oaks
- 12:50 p.m. Q&A Discussion
- 1:00 p.m. Break
- 1:10 p.m. *The 5 Ws: Questions about Ownership in Byzantium*
Lynn Jones, Florida State University
- 1:40 p.m. Museum Discussion
Jonathan Shea and Elizabeth Dospěl Williams, Dumbarton Oaks
- 1:50 p.m. Q&A Discussion
- 2:00 p.m. Program ends

DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Abstracts

What did it look like when Byzantines activated or stated their identities?

Modern scholarship seems to be more interested in premodern “identities” than were most premodern people, but there are exceptions to that pattern, for instance, martyrs being persecuted who insisted publicly that “I am a Christian,” even if it meant their deaths. The modern category of “identity” is largely analytical and used by sociologists, whereas premodern identities were often performative, used to signal loyalties and belonging, and entailed ethical commitments. Can we catch glimpses in our sources of Byzantines performing or declaring their identity? What did that look like in its immediate historical context? What commitments to action were entailed by their different identities (ethnic, religious, professional, and the like)?

Anthony Kaldellis is Professor and Chair of Classics at The Ohio State University. He hosts the podcast *Byzantium & Friends*.

Being Byzantine outside of Byzantium

Throughout its history, Byzantium was surrounded by the satellite states and exercised its influence beyond its borders. Moreover, the conquest of the Byzantine lands by the Arabs, followed by the Byzantine Reconquista in the tenth and eleventh century, and the Seljuk conquests of the eastern provinces of Byzantium at the end of the eleventh century left many Byzantines outside the borders of the Empire. They formed what can be called the ‘soft power’ of Byzantium abroad. Their culture was an amalgamation of the Byzantine and local (Armenian, Islamic, or Syriac Christian) traditions.

Dmitry Korobeynikov (University at Albany SUNY and Dumbarton Oaks) works on the relations of Byzantium with Eastern world (in both Christian and Islamic parts). His monograph study “Byzantium and the Turks in the Thirteenth Century” focused on the relations between the Sultanate of Rum, Nicaean Empire, Cilician Armenia and the coming Mongols. He is currently engaged in the project of deciphering the non-Greek (Armenian, Syriac, and Arabic) seals in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks.

The 5 Ws: Questions about Ownership in Byzantium

The question of who “owns” Byzantium today is a thorny one; I frame it by employing the 5 Ws: who, what, where, when, and why. I focus not only on current issues but look too at the scholarly tradition of perceived ownership. Does our status as scholars of Byzantium entitle us to manage, define, to “own” what remains of Byzantium? Are we the rightful arbiters in disputes on the status of monuments that remain in the former Empire? Does *our* identity as scholars grant us the right to collect, and keep, Byzantine works of art? What are the roots and perceived requirements of this entitlement, and what are the biases and prejudices that underlie it? I seek to untangle the ways in which we, gathered (virtually) today in one of the great institutions dedicated to the study of the Empire, claim ownership of it.

Lynn Jones is Associate Professor of Art History at Florida State University and President of the Byzantine Studies Association of North America. Her scholarly focus is on issues of identity; her forthcoming book is on the cult of the emperor in middle Byzantine art.