

ΕΣΤΙ ΑΠΟΛΥΟΛΒΟΣ



Byzantine Studies

The Byzantine Studies department at Dumbarton Oaks, since its establishment in 1940, has supported a continuous program of residential fellowships and academic events to enable historical, philological, art historical, archaeological, and theological research on the Byzantine Empire from the fourth to the fifteenth century.

Annual Symposium

The 2017 symposium, “Rethinking Empire,” was a success. Visiting scholar Paul Magdalino, emeritus Bishop Wardlaw Professor of Byzantine History at the University of St Andrews, and Dimiter Angelov, Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Byzantine History at Harvard University, gave the introductory presentation “Defining Empire.” The symposium addressed the question of what we mean when we call Byzantium an empire. A flurry of recent studies of other hegemonic civilizations have situated empire and imperialism as historical phenomena across different periods and geographical areas. Until now, the involvement of Byzantinists in this reevaluation has been relatively marginal. Speakers reexamined Byzantium’s imperial identity in the light of new research by Byzantinists and with reference to the methods of historians of other empires. Their presentations focused on fundamental problems of definition and questioned Byzantium’s



Participants in the “Defining Empire” symposium, April 2017.

culture and institutions of empire, the relations between its core and periphery, its territoriality, and its ethnic diversity.

Public Lectures

Florin Curta, a professor of medieval history and archaeology at the University of Florida, gave a lecture entitled “An Uneasy Relation: Byzantium and the Nomads” in October. Byzantine sources provide abundant information about how the imperial government in Constantinople dealt with the people inhabiting the steppe lands north of the Black and Caspian Seas. New evidence from excavations has enriched our understanding of relations between nomadic and settled communities and has questioned the pigeonholing of diverse communities into preconceived ethnic categories. Recent

research has moved beyond the study of burial mounds to focus on the cultures of nomads who moved into areas neighboring the Byzantine Empire or into Hungary between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. These studies have emphasized the processes of sedentization, conversion to Christianity, and assimilation. The study of local settlements in the Balkans has revealed great differences between their relations with sedentary populations north and south of the Danube.

In April, Paul Magdalino gave a talk entitled “Constantinople in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries.” The talk provided insight into a period for which source material is scarce. Recent archeological excavations have produced evidence that may help researchers better understand these centuries, particularly relating to one of Magdalino’s areas of interest: the repopulation and reconstruction of Constantinople after this catastrophic period, often described as a “dark age” in the history of the city. The urban life of the Byzantine imperial capital was punctuated by a series of crises and is poorly documented in both the written and the material record. This gives the impression of general stagnation and low investment by the authorities, whose chief concern was to maintain the city center around the Great Palace as a theater of power. At the same time, it has long been clear that certain emergency measures of Constantine V, who repopulated the city after a plague outbreak and repaired the aqueduct in response to drought, marked the beginning of an upturn. The evidence of two surviving buildings, recently dated by dendrochronology to the end of the eighth century, and information from contemporary chronicles throw new light on the connection between the city’s demographic revival and the reconstruction of the built environment.

Collections

This year, we reached a milestone in the digitization of the Byzantine Seals Collection. Since 2011, a rotating team of cataloguers has digitized thousands of the seals. At the end of August 2016, they had digitized over one-third of the collection and uploaded the information on 6,000 seals to the online catalogue. This project will make our exemplary collection of Byzantine seals accessible to scholars and researchers across the globe.

Dumbarton Oaks acquired historian Frank Kidner's photographs of the Syrian countryside. Taken in the 1990s, these images document the architectural remains of the country. The collection covers Kidner's six trips to Syria and numbers more than 9,000 slides; it is now housed in the Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives. The collection is a rich resource for scholars, as many of the sites represented have been fundamentally altered or destroyed in the years since the photographs were taken. The images are beautiful, and their vast scope makes them a fundamentally adaptable resource, useful in any number of projects.

Summer Programs

The Byzantine Greek Summer School program, launched in 2000, continued this summer with a four-week course in medieval Greek and paleography. The two instructors, Professor Alexander Alexakis of the University of Ioannina and Professor Stratis Papaioannou of Brown University, engaged the students in readings of hagiography, charters, historiography, fiction, and rhetoric, and in the study of epigraphy and paleography. Daily sessions devoted to the translation of sample Byzantine texts were supplemented by assignments. Students also studied inscribed objects and original manuscripts in the Byzantine Collection and viewed facsimiles of manuscripts in the Rare Books Collection.

In collaboration with the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML), we launched a new four-week introduction to Syriac language and paleography. The Syriac Summer School, funded by Dumbarton Oaks, was hosted by HMML on the campus of Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The course instructors were Scott Johnson of the University of Oklahoma and Adam McCollum of the University of Vienna. Morning sessions concentrated on the study of the Syriac language; afternoons provided orientation in the reading of Syriac manuscripts of all periods from the major script-types. The students visited D.C. in July for a long weekend of exploring the city and the scholarly resources available at Dumbarton Oaks. The ten participants had backgrounds ranging from classics and medieval studies to liturgical studies and classical Arabic, and left the course equipped to continue reading on their own or to enroll in Syriac reading courses at other institutions.



Participants in the Byzantine Greek Summer School program.

The Academic Year

Seventeen fellows were in residence during the academic year; they shared their work in research reports. Project grants were awarded to three researchers in Byzantine studies: Melissa Bailey, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, for her project “Economic Networks in Byzantine Dhiban”; Jordan Pickett, University of Michigan, for his project “Gölören Archaeological Project (GÖLAP)”; and Natalia Poulou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for her project “Archaeological Research at Loutres, Mochlos: Investigation of a Bath Complex of Medieval Crete.” Six short-term predoctoral residents joined Byzantine Studies this year; Danilo Valentino, a PhD candidate in Greek studies at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at the University of Hamburg; Roxanne Radpour, a PhD candidate in the materials science and engineering department at the University of California, Los Angeles; Raf Praet, a PhD student at the University of Groningen; Tristan Schmidt, a PhD student in Byzantine studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University

of Mainz; Marco Fasolio, a PhD candidate at the University of Eastern Piedmont; and Nikos Mastrochristos, a PhD student at the University of Athens. One-month research awards were given to Micha Lazarus, a research fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge, who is working on the influence of classical poetics on Renaissance English literature; and art historian Anthi Andronikou, who is completing a project on “Venice before Venice: Serenissima’s Visual Culture in Pre-Venetian Cyprus.”

Special Activities

In February, Dumbarton Oaks held its seventh annual Teaching Fellows’ Day. The event, which is organized by postdoctoral teaching fellows in Byzantine studies, welcomes students from local universities and introduces them to research and resources at Dumbarton Oaks through scholarly presentations and gallery tours. This year, the theme was the nature of capital cities and their place at the center of the artistic, political, and administrative life of empires. “At the Center of Empire” examined these matters in Constantinople while at the same time foregrounding Dumbarton Oaks’ own resources, collections, and contributions to Byzantine studies.

Scholarly Activities

Annual Symposium

Rethinking Empire

April 21–22, 2017

Organized by **Dimiter Angelov**, Harvard University, and **Paul Magdalino**, University of St Andrews

Paul Magdalino and **Dimiter Angelov**, “Defining Empire”

Emma Dench, Harvard University, “Learning from the Past,
Learning from the Future: Contemporary Approaches to the
Earlier Roman Empire”

Sylvain Destephen, University of Paris, “From Moving Center
to Centralization: The Foundations of Byzantine Imperial
Government”

- John Haldon**, Princeton University, “Empire and Territory: Perceptions and Realities”
- Vivien Prigent**, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, “One for All, All for One? Provincial Elites and the Empire”
- Anthony Kaldellis**, Ohio State University, “Was Byzantium a ‘Multiethnic’ Empire?”
- Jennifer Davis**, Catholic University of America, “Rethinking Empire: The Carolingian Perspective”
- Angel Nikolov**, University of Sofia, “The Imperial Project of Symeon I of Bulgaria (893–927): Byzantine Frameworks and Aftermath”
- Niels Gaul**, University of Edinburgh, “Recording, Writing, and Enacting Empire: Officeholders as Agents of Empire in the Middle and Later Byzantine Periods”
- Annabel Wharton**, Duke University, “Imperial Peripheries and Holy Sepulchres”
- Cemal Kafadar**, Harvard University, “The Long and Winding Road to Empire: The Sublime State from the Late Fourteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century”
- Michael Puett**, Harvard University, “Comparative Reflections on Empires in Chinese Late Antiquity”
- Paul Magdalino**, “Rethinking Theocracy”
- Commentators: **Michael McCormick**, Harvard University, and **Maya Jasanoff**, Harvard University

Annual Colloquium

Monumental Painting in Byzantium and Beyond:

New Perspectives

November 4, 2016

Organized by **Ivan Drpić**, University of Washington, and **Tolga Uyar**, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University

- Robert Ousterhout**, University of Pennsylvania, “Byzantine Mural Painting in Context”
- Sharon E. J. Gerstel**, University of California, Los Angeles, “Painting Chanted Prayers: Cognition and Monumental Decoration”
- Vicky A. Foskolou**, University of Crete, “Telling Stories with Pictures: Narrative and Narrativity in Middle and Late Byzantine Monumental Painting”

Maria Xenaki, École française d'Athènes, "Non-Figural Imagery and the Inscribed Word"

Miodrag Marković, University of Belgrade, "Painters in the Late Byzantine World"

Tolga Uyar, "The Archaeology of Monumental Painting: Ways of Looking at the Painted Sources of Byzantine Society"

Athanasios Vionis, University of Cyprus, "The Aegean Painted Church within Its 'Urban' and 'Rural' Landscape"

Cristina Stancioiu, College of William and Mary, "Monumental Painting, Identity, and Cross-Cultural Interaction in the Eastern Mediterranean"

Teaching Fellows' Day

At the Center of Empire

February 25, 2017

Nathanael Aschenbrenner, Harvard University, "From Imperial City to Urban Empire: Constantinople in the Fifteenth Century"

Elizabeth Dospel William, Dumbarton Oaks and George Washington University, "Reflections of a Capital City"

Jonathan Shea, Dumbarton Oaks and George Washington University, "Constantinople Is Broken"

Public Lecture

October 13, 2016

Florin Curta, University of Florida, "An Uneasy Relation: Byzantium and the Nomads"

Talks

September 25, 2016

Ioli Kalavrezou, Harvard University, "Images of Legitimacy: The Paris Psalter"

April 5, 2017

Paul Magdalino, University of St Andrews, "Constantinople in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries"

Summer Program

Byzantine Greek Summer Program

July 5–29, 2016

Faculty: **Alexander Alexakis**, University of Ioannina, and **Stratis Papaioannou**, Brown University

Participants: Kelly Andino, Sergio Basso, Walter Beers, Julian Bertola, Absalom Garcia-Chow, Kerim Kartal, Roman Kovalchuk, Andra Juganaru, Michael Lessman, Alessandro Pasquato, Yan Zaripov