



# ICONS OF SPACE

ADVANCES IN HIEROTOPIY

Edited by  
Jelena Bogdanović



# Icons of Space

*Icons of Space: Advances in Hierotopy* brings together important scholars of Byzantine religion, art, and architecture, to honor the work of renowned art historian Alexei Lidov.

As well as his numerous publications, Lidov is well known for developing the concept of hierotopy, an innovative approach for studying the creation of sacred spaces. Hierotopy and the related concepts of “spatial icons” and “image-paradigms” emphasize fundamental questions about icons, including what defines them as structures, spaces, and experiences. Chapters in this volume engage with the overarching theme of icons of space by employing, contrasting, and complementing methods of hierotopy with more traditional approaches such as iconography. Examinations of icons have traditionally been positioned within strictly historical, theological, socioeconomic, political, and art history domains, but this volume poses epistemological questions about the creation of sacred spaces that are instead inclusive of multilayered iconic ideas and the lived experiences of the creators and beholders of such spaces. This book contributes to image theory and theories of architecture and sacred space. Simultaneously, it moves beyond colonial studies that predominantly focus on questions of religion and politics as expressions of privileged knowledge and power.

This book will appeal to scholars and students of Byzantine history, as well as those interested in hierotopy and art history.

**Jelena Bogdanović** is Associate Professor at Iowa State University, USA. She specializes in cross-cultural and religious themes in the architecture of the Balkans and Mediterranean. Her publications include *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (2017) and *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium* (2018).



Photograph of Alexei Lidov in St. Sophia, Kiev

# **Icons of Space**

Advances in Hierotopy

**Edited by**  
**Jelena Bogdanović**

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**A Tribute to Alexei Lidov on His Sixtieth Anniversary**



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# Abbreviations for Collections and Widely Used Primary Sources

- CCSG Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca. Turnhout: Brepols, 1977–
- PG Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. Paris: J. P. Migne, 1857–1866.
- PL Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. Paris: J. P. Migne, 1844–1880.
- SC Sources Chr tiennes, <https://sourceschretiennes.org/>
- Dionysius Areopagita; the same as (Pseudo-)Dionysius Areopagita
- Dionysius Areopagita, *De coelesti hierarchia, de ecclesiastica hierarchia, de mystica theologia, epistulae*, eds. G. Heil – A. M. Ritter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012); Dionysius the Areopagite. “The Celestial Hierarchy (CH),” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works (The Classics of Western Spirituality)*. Mahwah [NJ]: Paulist Press, 1987): 143–192; Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names (DN)*; *The Celestial Hierarchy (CH)*; *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy (EH)*. *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (London: SPCK, 1987).
- DN De divinis nominibus (Divine Names)
- MT De mystica theologia
- CH De coelesti hierarchia (Celestial Hierarchy)
- EH De ecclesiastica hierarchia (Ecclesiastical Hierarchy)
- Ep. Epistulae
- Aristotle. *On Generation and Corruption*.
- Aristotle. *Physics*.
- Athanasios. *Life of Antony* 65.8-9, SC 400:306.
- Basil. *On the Holy Spirit* 25-26, SC 17bis:456-77.
- Gregory of Nyssa. *Apologia in Hexaemeron*, PG 44:121B.
- Gregory of Nyssa. *Funeral Oration on his brother Basil the Great*, PG 46:809C.
- John of Damascus, *Oration on the Holy Icons* I 6-17, PG 94: 1248.
- Leontios of Constantinople. *On Pentecost*. CCSG 17:401.
- Lysias. *Oratores Attici Et Quos Sic Vocant Sophistae*, Tomus secundus.
- Maximos. *Amb.* 7.12, DOML 1:93; Maximos, *Amb.* 41.2, DOML 2:103-105; *Amb.* 10.58; 10.91, DOML 1:242; 292.
- Maximos. *Questions to Thalassios* 55, CCSG 7:485; 64-65, CCSG 22:209; 283 and 285.
- Maximos. *Mystagogy*, CCSG 69:6.
- Origen. *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1, GCS VIII/33:108-9.
- Philo. *On the Decalogue*, LCL 7:20-21.
- Prokopios. *Catena in Canticum canticorum*, PG 17:253; PG 87:1552.



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# Acknowledgments

The idea of preparing a tribute to honor Alexei Lidov, a world-renowned scholar of sacred space, was born at the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Belgrade, Serbia, in August 2016. For the occasion, Lidov organized a roundtable titled “Icons of Space, Icons in Space: Iconography or Hierotopy.”<sup>1</sup> The roundtable aimed to advance the discussions in hierotopical studies, which focus on the processes and mechanisms of the creation of sacred space, an area of study that Lidov formulated in 2001 and promoted publicly in early 2002.<sup>2</sup> Fifteen years later, a particular emphasis was placed on the comparative analysis of the methodologies stemming from iconography and hierotopy and on the ways in which they are used in the studies of sacred space. In addition to Alexei Lidov, whose original vocation is that of an art historian, the roundtable also included a range of scholars who had engaged with hierotopical studies over a prolonged period and who were trained in various disciplines. The art historians Michele Bacci, Annemarie Weyl Carr, and Maria Lidova provided insights into the relevance of sacred space for studying religious icons and holy places. The art historian and archaeologist Maria Cristina Carile highlighted the relevant questions of iconicity by examining the Great, Sacred Palace in Constantinople as an icon of space, one literally inhabited by icons in space. The two Byzantinists Nicoletta Isar and Andreas Rhoby brought additional invaluable perspectives on the potentials of hierotopical studies in their areas of expertise, Isar’s in classical archaeology and comparative religions and Rhoby’s in textual studies and literature. The theologian and historian of theology and patristics Ver. Rev. Maximos Conostas elucidated the religious perspectives in the construction of sacred space. As an architect and historian of architecture and arts, I focused on the iconicity of religious architecture comparatively analyzed through the lenses of hierotopy and iconography.

Following lively discussion and questions from the audience, the participants decided to honor Alexei Lidov and pursue a publication on the topic of hierotopy. In particular, we aimed to further investigate the place of hierotopy within disciplinary formations for studying religious art and architecture, and sacred space in general. Also of interest were the theoretical aspects of hierotopical studies, as well as their reception and applicability in scholarly discourses. Michele Bacci, Vladimir Sedov, and I gathered a group of international scholars engaged in studies of sacred space. While some contributors to the roundtable in Belgrade had to decline their contributions in this volume due to other professional and family obligations, most of the participants stayed in the project, and other scholars joined our efforts. Eventually, we decided to pursue two separate volumes by scholars writing predominantly in Russian and English, respectively. The first volume, consisting of 14 essays and lavishly illustrated

with more than 100 images, was published as *Пространство иконы. Иконография и иеротопия*. Сборник статей к 60-летию А. М. Лидова, Ред. сост. М. Баччи, Е. Богданович. Москва: Феория, 2019 (*Space of the Icon: Iconography and Hierotopy; Collection of Articles Presented on the Sixtieth Anniversary of A.M. Lidov*, ed. M. Vacci and J. Bogdanović. Moscow: Theoria, 2019). The 16 essays written in English are presented in this volume and complement the volume from Russia.

As an editor of this book as it approaches publication, I would like to thank the individuals and institutions who supported the project over the prolonged period of preparation. My first thanks go to the contributors to this volume, for their expertise, kindness, and patience as the book project went through several stages prior to completion. In addition to the organizers of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, who gave us an opportunity to present our work to a highly informed and exacting audience, special thanks also to the leadership from the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Center for Excellence in Arts and Humanities at Iowa State University for logistic and financial support. Above all we thank James (Jim) Reecy, Associate Vice President for Research, Kevin Kane, Associate Dean for Research and Outreach, Carlton Basmajian, director of the Center for Excellence, and their team members Sandra Norvell, Jeremy Neppl, Deb Hearn, Cathy Owen, and Kim Clinton. Michael Greenwood, the acquisitions editor, and Stewart Beale, editorial assistant, from Routledge, provided full commitment, proficiency, and wholehearted encouragement at various critical stages. The guidance of the editorial board as well as positive and constructive reviews by all four anonymous readers helped us shape the book. Professional copyediting and book production during various stages were carried out by Erika Zinsmeister, Joe Hannan, Assunta Petrone, and their teams. For support of this project, good advice, and help, I also thank Vladimir Sedov, head of the architectural and archeological department of the Institute of Archaeology at the Russian Academy of Sciences; Miodrag Marković, a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Professor of Art History at the University of Belgrade, and a member of the International Committee of the History of Byzantine Art; Archimandrite Tihon Rakićević, Hegoumenos of the Studenica Monastery; professors of Byzantine architecture and art Marina Mihaljević and Nebojša Stanković; and my former students and now colleagues Zhengyang Hua, Alexandar (Alex) Blum, and Tianling (Rusty) Xu. As always, my family members provided unconditional support for my work.

Jelena Bogdanović  
Ames, Iowa

## Notes

- 1 Alexei Lidov, "Icons of Space, Icons in Space: Iconography or Hierotopy," in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Belgrade, August 22–27, 2016, Round Tables, ed. B. Krsmanović and Lj. Milanović (Belgrade: Serbian National Committee of AIEB, 2016), 1070–1107; also at <http://www.byzinst-sasa.rs/srp/uploaded/PDF%20izdanja/round%20tables.pdf>, accessed September 25, 2020.
- 2 Alexei Lidov, "Byzantine Hierotopy: Miraculous Icons in Sacred Space," public lecture, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, January 14, 2002.

# Alexei Lidov: Biography<sup>1</sup>

Alexei Mikhailovich Lidov was born on March 9, 1959 in Moscow in a family of mathematicians. His parents were bright and charismatic people. His father, Professor Mikhail L'vovich Lidov (1926–1993), was a prominent scientist in the field of celestial mechanics, one of the founders of scientific programs for the first space flights, and was awarded the highest scientific award of his time in the former Soviet Union – the Lenin Prize. His mother, Diana Georgievna Sedykh (1933–2016), taught mathematics. She gave birth to three of her children, and when they matured, she took up a girl from an orphanage. After she retired, she began to engage in social activities, creating an informal charitable organization to help orphans, which has existed for more than 25 years. Lidov's parents had a variety of humanitarian interests, but they wanted to see their son as a mathematician. Therefore, Alexei Lidov graduated from school that focused on mathematics. His upbringing among mathematicians influenced Lidov's research based on analytical approach and logical rigor, tendency to search for explanations and hypotheses, the construction of theories, the formulation of new concepts. However, mathematics and natural sciences did not appeal to him. Very early on, he read a lot and developed an interest in history, stimulated by victories at school Olympiads. This interest led him in the eighth grade to the Club of Young Art Critics at the Pushkin Museum. Three-year studies at the museum determined the choice of his professional path, and in 1976, after graduating from high school, he entered the Department of History and Theory of Art of the Faculty of History of Moscow State University. Lidov had to overcome the resistance of his parents, but he never regretted his choice.

Alexei Lidov defined his sphere of special interests in Byzantine and Old Russian art early. Late Professor Olga S. Popova (died in 2020), who was the best student of the famous art historian Viktor N. Lazarev, was Lidov's mentor at the Faculty of History of the Moscow State University. As Lidov himself recalls, most of his university life was spent in the "cabinet of art history" organized after the death of V. N. Lazarev. In the cabinet students had a unique opportunity to read books with personal notes by outstanding art historian and critic. When asked about the reasons for his choice of studies, Lidov usually lightheartedly replies that he always wanted to work on a subject that would be greater than himself, and adds that his love for Byzantium is difficult to explain rationally.

After obtaining his diploma from the Moscow State University, Alexei Lidov got employment in the Moscow Museum of Oriental Art, where the Byzantine theme was supplemented by the one dealing with Christian-Caucasian topics. Over time, Lidov became the head of the Caucasian art sector. The topic of his dissertation was very



important, but practically unexplored monument of Armenian monumental painting – the painting of the Akhtala monastery at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Lidov recalls as how he had to work with hard-to-reach Armenian and Georgian sources, to study and photograph hereto unpublished frescoes from the restoration archives. Based on his studies, Lidov formulated the concept of the Armenian-Chalcedonian art, as the intersection of the Armenian, Georgian and Byzantine artistic traditions. This concept has stood the test of time and influenced many scholars studying art in this part of the world.

Two years after defending his doctoral thesis in 1989, Lidov published it as a book *The Mural Paintings of Akhtala*. Prepared in English language the book was published in connection with the International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Moscow in 1991. Lidov returned to the topic of Akhtala in 2014, when he prepared a new lavishly illustrated bilingual Russian-English monograph “Paintings of the Akhtala Monastery. History, Iconography, Masters.” The book was awarded the Grigor Narekatsi Medal of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia. Lidov’s contribution to the studies of Armenian culture is also marked by the prestigious state award of the Republic of Armenia – The Order of Friendship.

After his dissertation work on art in Armenia, Lidov also began a systematic study of the iconography of the Byzantine art. Temple iconography and liturgical theology of Byzantium and Old Rus were the main theme of his research for some ten years. It was at the time when the freedom gained with the wave of perestroika allowed a sharp increase of the iconographical studies, which had been previously subject of censorship in Russia and the former Soviet Union. In his work, Lidov proposed and used a new methodology, which he called “interpretative iconography” in contrast to traditional “descriptive” iconography. Lidov considered iconographical features of individual images and painted programs in connection with liturgical and theological texts of a specific historical and cultural context, which allowed him to interpret these images as important sources of historical information. An important example of the fruitful use of this innovative methodology was his work on the Byzantine images of Christ the Priest. Research during this period of professional development allowed Lidov to formulate a theory about the crucial role of the Great Schism of 1054 in the reform of the Byzantine church iconography. This work shows how within the conflict between Byzantine and Latin theology in the context of the Great Schism, a new concept of church iconography was formed with the dominant themes of the “Communion of the Apostles” and the “Christ the High Priest.” According to Lidov’s thesis, this event determined the final divergence of the Christian Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions of Christian art.

Parallel with liturgical topics, Lidov explored the iconography of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Byzantine and Old Russian traditions. Among his works on this topic, the first, conceptual article “The image of Heavenly Jerusalem in Eastern Christian Iconography” was published in the volume *Jerusalem in Russian Culture*, which he coedited with A. L. Batalov in 1994. The expanded version of this text was published in English a few years later as “Heavenly Jerusalem: The Byzantine Approach” in the journal *Jewish Art*, and became of the most cited works of Russian art history in the West.

Another important subject of his research in the 1990s was the investigation of miraculous icons and relics. Lidov started this research in 1992 during his participation in a large project of the international encyclopedia “The Miraculous Icons of the

Mother of God.” Work on this project lasted several years and attracted researchers across the world. This huge project remained unfinished due to the terminated funding, but the scientific effect was significant: for many authors, the study of miraculous icons has become a topic of research for many years. In 1994, Lidov organized an international symposium, “The Miraculous Icon in Byzantium and Ancient Rus,” and two years later published the first collection of articles on this topic, which played an important role in scholarship and stimulated new research.

The theme of miraculous icons was included in the studies of Eastern Christian relics. On the occasion of the celebration of the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christianity, following Lidov’s proposals, two significant exhibitions with published catalogues were organized in Moscow: “Christian Relics” in the Museums of the Moscow Kremlin and “The Image of the Savior Made Without Hands in the Russian Icon” at the Andre Rublev Central Museum of Ancient Russian Culture and Art. Within the framework of the same initiative, Lidov edited a collection “Eastern Christian Relics,” devised from the proceedings from an international symposium which brought together well-known experts from across the world. He also edited a unique anthology of the most important medieval sources on the topic, “Relics in Byzantium and Ancient Rus: Written Sources.” After these publications, the theme of Eastern Christian relics was firmly grounded in historical studies as one of the most fruitful research subjects. For Lidov, miraculous icons and relics also became the theme of his more specific works, among which are notable those published both in Russian and in English on the Hodegetria in Constantinople and Holy Mandylion (the miraculous proto-icon of Christ). This work also had a significant reception in scholarship.

The most famous concept by Alexei Lidov – the theory of hierotopy – emerged from his research of miraculous icons and relics. While studying icons and relics, Lidov came to the conclusion that their main significance was in the creation of special spatial structures, for which they were a kind of core. As a result, sacred spaces arise from the specific human creativity, the understanding of which requires a new methodology and system of concepts. It is this type of creativity which should be considered as a separate phenomenon, as the subject of a whole new field of art historical, historical and cultural research, done at the junction of several traditional disciplines, including art history, anthropology, religious studies and others. Yet, at the same time, hierotopy has its own subject of research and needs an original conceptual apparatus and methodology as an independent part of the history of culture. The new hierotopical concepts “spatial icon” and “image-paradigm” were elaborated in Lidov’s 2009 book *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image Paradigms in Byzantine Culture*. The book consists of Lidov’s main texts on hierotopy until that time and is beautifully presented and published by the Theoria publishing house.

The concept of hierotopy was formulated in 2001 and discussed at several seminars and conferences, the most important of which was the international symposium “Hierotopy” held in Moscow in 2004. Lidov repeatedly expressed his gratitude to outstanding colleagues and scholars, who supported his idea from the very beginning. Among them are Hans Belting, Peter Brown, Slobodan Ćurčić, Oleg Grabar, Nicoletta Isar, Herbert Kessler, Gerhard Wolf, and his compatriots V. M. Zhivov, B. A. Uspensky, V. S. Ivanov, M. V. Dmitriev, R. M. Shukurov, V. V. Sedov and everyone who took active part in hierotopical symposia and publications. The support for hierotopy was far from unanimous. Many did not like the very claim that hierotopy is a new discipline. Critical statements included those arguing that hierotopy is banal multiplication

of meanings and radical heresy, without trying to delve into the essence of the proposed theory. Lidov, however, continued to consistently advance hierotopical research by carrying out one hierotopical program after another. Since the first symposium, five hierotopical projects have been completed, each including a large international symposium and fundamental publications with articles in Russian and English: *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces* (2009), *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (2011), then a cycle of four symposia followed by publications dedicated to the elements -- *Hierotopy of Light and Fire in the Culture of the Byzantine World* (2013), *Holy Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World* (2017), *The Hierotopy of Holy Mountains in Christian Culture* (2019) and forthcoming volume on the *Air and Heavens in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*, following the symposium from 2019. This approach by Lidov to organize symposia in connection with problems of interest to him, thereby attracting the attention of the scholarly community, stimulating wide discussion and development of research, earned him the teasing nickname “symposiarch.”

The concept of hierotopy gradually entered the world scholarship and became both a topic for theoretical discussions and a tool for practical scholarly use. Hierotopy, which has a general character and is applicable to many phenomena of the sacred, is widely used in different types of research, including traditional sciences. The new *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* devoted a substantial article to hierotopy, thereby introducing this original concept and word coined by a Russian author into English language.<sup>2</sup>

A few words on Lidov outside his research are also in order. He managed to be so active in scholarship during a difficult period of Russian history that posed questions about both scholarly and physical survivals to many of his colleagues. Since 1991, Lidov refused to work in governmental institutions. He organized and lead an independent Research Center for Eastern Christian Culture in Moscow, which he designed to engage in interdisciplinary research of the symbolic language of the Byzantine, and more generally, of the Eastern Christian world. A. L. Batalov, L. A. Beliaev, A. A. Turilov, and B. A. Uspensky also took part in organizing the Center. The management of this Center was Lidov’s main job for 15 years, mostly on a voluntary basis, since the budget of an independent institute did not allow even the director’s salary.

Communication with scholars across the world and practical survival of the Center was facilitated by the scholarly grants Lidov won at the best world institutions. An important role was his work at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University in 1994-95, where he was able to get acquainted with an entire stratum of world scholarly research, then practically inaccessible in Russia. Equally important for his work were internships at the Warburg Institute in London at the invitation of the British Academy of Sciences, at the College de France in Paris, at the Byzantine Institute in Venice, the Onassis scholarship in Athens and the Getty Institute in Los Angeles. These grants allowed him to continue his work in Russia and to organize scholarly projects there without thinking about daily bread.

All these years, Lidov regularly participated at international scholarly conferences and congresses on Byzantine studies and art history, lectured and participated at specialized courses at various universities around the world, including Princeton, Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge and universities in Rome, Paris, Budapest and Krakow, among many. In 2008, at the invitation of the Japanese government, he spent two months in Japan working on a research project on a comparative analysis of Japanese

and Christian hierotopy. In 2011, he was elected Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of York and taught a course there. In 2015, he gave a series of lectures on hierotopy in Fribourg, Switzerland and a year later at the Higher School of Economics (officially National Research University Higher School of Economics) in Moscow. Lidov presented the first topical course on hierotopy at his alma mater at the Department of History and Theory of Art at Moscow State University in 2004.

Lidov's international recognition is confirmed by a prestigious grant, Christensen Fellowship from the University of Oxford and his election as a Member and Fellow of the Oxford College of St. Catherine.

Important place in Lidov's life has been always reserved for research trips, sometimes to very distant places, including a tour of the churches and monasteries in Ethiopia in 2011. Similarly, expeditions to Georgia, Armenia, Cappadocia, Mt. Athos and Sinai played an important role. Following his first trip to the Sinai monastery of St. Catherine in 1996, the first one by the Russian researcher after the October Revolution, Lidov prepared and published a book-album *Byzantine Icons of Sinai*. The first of its kind, this monographic edition described the unique collection of Byzantine icons kept there, which were important source for the history of Byzantine icon painting. Lidov also initiated a scholarly project "Russian Icons of Sinai," which after ten years of work resulted in the lavishly designed catalogue, that introduced the hitherto unknown artworks into the scholarly world. For this book *Russian Icons of Sinai* (2015), Lidov wrote a substantial chapter on the icon collection of the Sinai monastery and its Russian researchers. Trips to Mt. Athos and research there are reflected in the book *The Mount Athos. Images of the Holy Land* (2011) and a related large-scale exhibition at the Historical Museum on Red Square at the end of 2011.

Lidov recurrently participated at international exhibitions, scholarly and publishing projects. Among those are the huge exhibition *The Face of Christ (Il Volto di Cristo)* at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome (2001) as well as related conference and conference proceedings with this anniversary project, which became important event not only in academic but also cultural life in Europe. In 2018, Lidov organized a conference "Florence and the Idea of Jerusalem" as the beginning of a multi-year scholarly and cultural program with the aim to identify the original sacred meanings of the city of Florence, perceived by many exclusively as the capital of the Renaissance.

Among biographical notes, it is worth mentioning that in 2008, Lidov returned to work in state institutions as he became the Deputy President of the Russian Academy of Arts for scholarly and innovative programs. In 2007, he was elected a corresponding member, in 2012, full member and then also a member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Arts. Within the Academy, Lidov carried out a number of projects and was awarded the Gold Medal and the Medal for Services to the Academy of Arts, the latter representing the highest order for the all merits for service to the art.

In addition to scholarly work, Lidov is actively involved in social activities. He is particularly engaged in the problems of protecting the monuments of Christian Orthodox culture. In 2004, Lidov was invited as an official international expert to serve in a UNESCO emergency mission organized in connection with the massive destruction of Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. Thanks to these efforts, four sites were included into the UNESCO list of protected cultural heritage and received special protection from the world community: The Church of Our Lady of Ljeviš (Bogorodica Ljeviška) in Prizren, the Monastery of the Peć Patriarchate, the Monastery of Gračanica and the Monastery of Visoki Dečani. In 2007, he initiated and authored the

book *Kosovo. Orthodox Heritage and Contemporary Catastrophe*. The book collected information about the masterpieces of the Serbian medieval art in Kosovo, as well as international documents and data about 143 destroyed or badly damaged and desecrated churches as a result of actions of Albanian extremists. In addition, a complete catalogue of all Christian monuments in Kosovo and Metohija was prepared. The beautifully designed publication written in Russian and English received significant response in Russia, Serbia and European countries.

In recent times, Lidov is repeatedly present in dailies and newspapers, by drawing attention to the destruction in Syria. He was among the first to publicly speak about the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria, citing information received from local journalists, even before the terrorists of the Islamic State appeared on the scene. In 2010, Lidov was one of the founders of the expert community “Protection of Cultural Heritage,” which advocates cooperation between the Church and museums in the preservation of the monuments of ancient Russian art, in the use of the Church. He is one of the authors of the open letter of the artists and scholars sent to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, which received significant public reception and influenced church policy in this direction of the protection of art and culture. Lidov takes an active civic position and his regular appearances in the media are devoted to a variety of topics of culture and society: from the inadmissibility of erecting monuments to honor Ivan the Terrible to the threats of a split in Christian Orthodoxy.

Here presented biographical notes are no more than intermediate summary prepared on Lidov’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The research life of Alexei Mikhailovich Lidov will bring forward many more projects and recognitions.

Vladimir V. Sedov, Michele Bacci, and Jelena Bogdanović

## Notes

- 1 This is the translation of the Russian text originally published as: Владимир В. Седов, Микеле Баччи, Елена Богданович [Vladimir V. Sedov, Michele Bacci, and Jelena Bogdanović], “Алексей Лидов. Опыт творческой биографии” [“Alexei Lidov. The Author’s Biography”] *Пространство иконы. Иконография и иеротопия* [*Space of the Icon. Iconography and Hierotopy*]. Сборник статей к 60-летию А. М. Лидова, Ред. сост. М. Баччи, Е. Богданович. (Москва: Феория, 2019), 7–14.
- 2 Alexei Lidov, “Hierotopy. Christian Sacred Spaces,” in *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, ed. Daniel Patte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 512–515.

# Introduction

*Jelena Bogdanović*

This volume presents scholarly essays about icons of space, including but not limited to their occurrence in art and architecture. Prepared in honor of the sixtieth birthday of Alexei Lidov, the art historian, Byzantinist, and member of the Russian Academy of Arts, 16 original essays critically engage with the concepts and methodologies of *hierotopy* (meaning sacred place or space). Hierotopy is an innovative approach for studying the creation of sacred spaces, one that addresses traditional disciplinary limitations in investigations of religious art and architecture. Rather than exclusively or primarily focusing on the visibility and materiality of sacred spaces in art and cultural histories, hierotopy considers multisensory (visual, auditory, olfactory, and haptic) and dynamic, performative aspects of the sacred. Because hierotopy scrutinizes the processes of creating sacred spaces, it is never devoid of the ontological and aesthetic aspects of the sacred.

Contributors to this volume are scholars trained in art history, architecture, architectural history and theory, theology, history, and human geography who consider the overarching theme of icons of space, broadly defined. In the process, they employ, contrast, and complement the methodological tools offered by hierotopy while posing fundamental questions about the essence of icons and how they are studied in the more established frameworks of semiotics and iconography. In Part I, “Sacred Spaces: Their Traces and Representations,” the emphasis is predominantly on the innovative terminology developed and proposed in the context of hierotopical studies and methodology for studying icons of space. In Part II, “Icons and Holy Objects in Sacred Space,” the chapters focus on icons and relics as the two critical elements in the formation of hierotopy; here expanded by the inclusion of holy objects that at first sight do not necessarily belong to either of these two categories, such as functional or liturgical furnishings within places of worship. In Part III, “Embodied Experiences of Sacred Space,” case studies highlight particular icons of space as embodied individual or collective experiences of the sacred. These chapters reinforce some of the major ideas at work in hierotopical studies, such as multidimensional and multifaceted dynamics of sacred space, as well as the relevance of human presence and performative and lived experiences of the sacred. In each case, contributors aim to describe and offer interpretations of the particular mechanisms of the creation of the sacred and of sacred experiences that cannot be addressed adequately by relying exclusively on texts or material objects as ultimate points of departure for their scholarly investigation.

## Positioning hierotopy within studies of the sacred

The book opens with the texts by Michele Bacci and Andrew Simsky, who reflect on the development of hierotopy and situate it within a historiographical overview. Bacci, who has been engaged with hierotopical studies for a prolonged period of time by participating in the symposia organized by Alexei Lidov and by endorsing his work early on, sees hierotopy as a revival of research about the sacred within art historical and anthropological studies. Both Bacci and Simsky point to the formative role of the well-established scholarship produced by three intellectuals who promoted their ideas in pivotal books: David Freedberg in *The Power of Images*, Hans Belting in *Likeness and Presence*, and Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency*.<sup>1</sup> For Lidov, especially important for transcending conventional boundaries of art history was the inspiring work by Belting, who reestablished the fact that in medieval religious societies icons were not treated as art but as sacred objects.<sup>2</sup> Bacci elaborates Lidov's call to

the ways in which Christian sacred spaces happened to be shaped by the interaction of different elements, not all of which belonged to the traditional categories of art history, such as liturgical rites, music, lighting effects, and fragrances. This indication,

he contends further, “proved to be fruitful, given that many subsequent studies have dealt with the performative aspects and multisensory devices associated with Byzantine and medieval buildings.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, Nicoletta Isar elucidates the role of sensoriality, performativity, and phenomenology in hierotopical research.<sup>4</sup> In her work on hierotopical themes, she also acknowledges the importance of the work of John Sallis, a philosopher of phenomenology and memory studies, and a critical reader of Plato.<sup>5</sup> Looking at the architecture and its disciplinary aspects relative to iconography, phenomenology, and hierotopy, Iakovos Potamianos and Jelena Bogdanović provide historiographical insights brought forward by the scholars of ancient Greek, Byzantine, and medieval architecture. They point to the relevance of the works by competing schools of thought promoted by Heinrich Wölfflin, Paul Frankl, Erwin Panofsky, Rudolf Wittkower, Richard Krautheimer, Panayotis A. Michelis, Konstantinos Doxiadis, Marinos Kalligas, Dalibor Vesely, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Indra Kagis McEwen, Anthony Vidler, Lisa Landrum, and Tasos Tanoulas, among others.<sup>6</sup> However, these scholars, in contrast to Belting, did not figure as crucially for formative phases of hierotopy in the work of Lidov himself.<sup>7</sup> This quality of hierotopy as an essentially decentralized discipline in its scholarly formation will be discussed shortly.

Indeed, 20 years after Lidov initiated hierotopical studies, its principles remain hotly debated.<sup>8</sup> By pushing the formative stages of hierotopy further back to the mid-1990s, Simsky explains the relevance of Lidov's early interest in both icons and relics, and in particular wonderworking icons and miraculous relics, which goes well beyond conventional art historical studies.<sup>9</sup> The interconnections between icons and relics revolve around critical aspects of visibility and indexicality.<sup>10</sup> Nonreligious art is often studied within the concept of likeness, which is only partially applicable to sacred arts that always remain elusive, abstract, and evocative, but nonillusionary. Lidov's interest in relics highlights this associative chain of interrelated stimuli and the mechanisms of the transposition of indexicality to visibility.<sup>11</sup> Simply put, a fragmented relic of a saint, such as a bone, does not look like the particular saint.

Rather, the relic and the presence of the saint within point to the image of the saint. It is the saint herself, her likeness, and her deeds that come to mind to a person of faith venerating the saintly relic. These subtle questions on the relationship between the icons and relics, their reception, and their liminality, are especially nicely elaborated through numerous case studies, and in this volume presented in the texts by Ljubomir Milanović and by Danica Popović and Branislav Todić.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, questions of likeness, indexicality, and agency are applicable for the notions of sacred icons and iconic objects, regardless of whether they are understood as icons in place or spatial icons, as Maria Evangelatou, Ivan Foletti, Natalia Teteriatnikov, Annemarie Weyl Carr, Maria Lidova, and Veronica della Dora each detail in their case studies in this volume.<sup>13</sup> These scholars clarify the crucial convergence of the studies of relics and icons in expanding the traditional frameworks of art historical and anthropological studies. Simultaneously, they highlight the potentials of hierotopy and its methods in the search for alternative approaches. Potamianos and Bogdanović, who are primarily interested in architecture and architectural design, additionally delve into ambiguous aspects of sacred space, which Bacci highlights as problematic.<sup>14</sup> In their chapters, Potamianos and Bogdanović study sacred space not only as an abstract category or as a sacred place or location. Rather, they propose a combination of the two. Understood as such, sacred space points to a historical, dynamic, and evocative locale, as both a setting and a set of events associated with it, as further elucidated by della Dora and Ivan Biliarsky.<sup>15</sup> Evangelatou even proposes a new term, “hierochronotopy,” to reinforce spatiotemporal qualities and dynamics of the sacred space as studied in hierotopy.<sup>16</sup> Contributors also examine the relevance of iconography and phenomenology for hierotopy, which does not negate religious mysticism, often deemed as incompatible with empirical studies. In their research, they aim to include both noetic and iconic, multisensory concepts and forms that designate the sacred space.

### **The theory of hierotopy as a mode of cultural studies**

Lidov rightly establishes hierotopy as a mode of cultural studies, in this case focusing on sacred space. There is no consensus on how to define and pursue cultural studies, because culture in an anthropological sense is a holistic concept that includes the arts, beliefs, customs, values, and other material and immaterial aspects of human existence in a given society, whereas it can also be defined and examined through its manifestations in texts or other cultural products, today included under the umbrella of material culture.<sup>17</sup> Yet, hierotopy, like all cultural studies, focuses on the production of meaning(s).

The theory of hierotopy and its methodology are primarily examined in the first part of this volume. Purposefully titled “Sacred spaces: their traces and representations,” this section highlights the theory of hierotopy with an agent-based model and related stigmergic mechanisms (discussed below) of indirect operations between the agents and actions in the creation of sacred space. Hierotopical studies can examine the creation and perception of the sacred from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, even if methods used in hierotopy are occasionally viewed as incompatible, elusive, or devoid of the specificity of semantics.<sup>18</sup> Contributors to this volume especially discuss the complexity of mediating the connection between the seemingly conflicting aspects of hierotopy, its concern with human, material creation of the sacred, and its causes



within realms, which are understood to be divine, immaterial, or symbolic. Explicit themes that emerge strongly in these discussions are the distinctiveness of the methods of hierotopy; related terminology and taxonomy; and to a lesser extent, potentially different perceptions of the sacred examined through the senses of the beholder and the creator, the latter especially critical for growing questions of agency.

The notion of the paradigm shift is usually invoked in explaining the relevance of new disciplines and methods beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries.<sup>19</sup> In hierotopy, as in feminist studies, for example, a paradigm shift can be followed in at least three major directions—in challenging the epistemological foundationalism, in shifting away from specific disciplinary boundaries, and in the release from representational constraints.<sup>20</sup> Lidov and Isar have already suggested how performative studies offer a good alternative to the indexicality of the semiotics.<sup>21</sup> In her text in this volume, della Dora also asserts the potentials of indexicality and performativity in hierotopy in understanding performative capacities of texts, their overlapping, mixed uses, and meanings as repositories of memory.<sup>22</sup> Yet, hierotopy can be understood as a paradigm shift in the making, rather than a dramatic shift in which things change quickly, often with a premature declaration of the end of previous paradigms.<sup>23</sup> To support this opinion, we may turn to Thomas Kuhn, a physicist and philosopher of science who, in his groundbreaking and highly controversial work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, elucidated the concepts of paradigm and paradigm shift.<sup>24</sup>

Because Kuhn questioned the objectivity of strictly positivistic, empirical research, his reasoning about a paradigm and paradigm shift was heavily critiqued among scientists, who aimed to deny their own agency in order to promote the unconditional objectiveness and rationality of their research. In turn, it was wholeheartedly accepted by scholars in various humanistic and social disciplines.<sup>25</sup> Kuhn explained that within a selected discipline, the key elements—theories, instruments, values, and even metaphysical assumptions, those that cannot be settled by empirical facts—are fixed in order to allow the cumulative capacity of solutions for various complex questions. In scientific revolutions, the disciplinary matrix is occasionally revised to facilitate solutions of anomalous phenomena or problems, which he calls “puzzles” and which test the ingenuity of knowledge. In such a matrix, a paradigm is an exemplary research that relies not only on the major theories and laws but also the application of them in the solution of important problems, along with new methods and techniques of research. Kuhn further explains the “pre-paradigm” period, routinely lacking consensus, characterized by competing schools of thought, with different procedures, theories, and metaphysical presuppositions, during which thinkers argue over fundamentals instead of developing a significant body of work. This Kuhnian pre-paradigm concept at least partially clarifies the phenomenon of the so many prematurely proclaimed paradigm shifts and their short-lived reception in the humanities, as highlighted by Bacci in this volume. Progress is possible, however, once a new approach, even if localized, offers itself to describe and explain complex phenomena beyond traditionally defined disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, a paradigm emerges when multiple researchers work within the parameters of the same paradigmatic assumptions or, put otherwise, around similar questions, relevant data, and consensus about convincing arguments.<sup>26</sup> In that respect, following the wide approbation of Lidov’s hierotopy—which has been offered by scholars from different disciplines who ask similar questions about the creation of sacred space, including but not limited to an expanded focus on icons, relics, holy objects, and their architectural frames in articulating the notion of the sacred, and

who take into account the dynamics of its spatiotemporal, sensorial, and performative aspects—hierotopy qualifies at least as a pre-paradigm.

Among the major scholarly critiques of Kuhn's work are those related to his agent-based model, which negates the neutrality of positivistic scholarship, and to under-explained mechanisms for patterns of research that result from the interactions of autonomous researchers without centralized control. Recently, the philosopher Rogier De Langhe validated Kuhn's work by applying computer modeling in the analysis of the process of stigmergy, whereby one initial agent leaves a trace, in a form of an idea, event, or action, which then attracts other agents to build an elaborate structure of connecting thoughts and actions upon this initial trace.<sup>27</sup> The agent-based model remains flexible in its definition of the initial agent and the subsequent agents, which may be of the same or a completely different kind. In that regard, the generative concept, also characteristic of hierotopy, may be related to social and historical evolutions, often based on parallels with biological systems and corroborated by the data from material culture. Bacci similarly argues for resolving "the conceptual ambiguity of the notion of "sacred space" and look[ing] more closely at the different ways in which human cultures deal with the spatial and material dimensions of religious life."<sup>28</sup>

In his critical assessment of hierotopical studies, Bacci proposes a shift from a theorization of the ontological nature of holy sites to the investigation of the different spatial, visual, and ultimately aesthetic strategies.<sup>29</sup> For him, the future of hierotopy lies in studying the exceptional status of specific places and the ways in which different degrees of their sanctity are communicated to and experienced by material users. This thread of investigation about the mechanisms of various strategies for communicating the sacred is nicely articulated and advanced in this volume in the texts by Evangelatou, Foletti, Teteryatnikov, Carr, Lidova, Popović and Todić, della Dora, Biliarsky, and Zinaïda Yurovskaya.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, other contributors—Simsky, Isar, Potaminos, Bogdanović, Milanović, and V. Rev. Maximos Conostas—fully aware of the reasons for leaving ontological concepts behind because they cannot be "objectified," underline the critical aspects of being and becoming as crucial in the construction of the sacred space.<sup>31</sup> Simskey explains how "ontologically, image-paradigms belong to a general class of religious imagery that lives autonomously in the religious mind;" Isar elucidates the "dazzling radiance" filling "the ontological gap between the Creator and creation;" Potamianos explains the sensation of the divine, its latent existence and dense space achieved through the concept of *temenos* and the sectioning of light in sacred architecture; while Bogdanović investigates the embryonic world of architecture and its visible articulation as a relationship between the *chôra* and iconicity, and highlights their ontological difference.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, both Simskey and Milanović illuminate ontological difference between the sacred icons and relics and their place in representational and nonrepresentational realms as critical for advancing the hierotopical approaches.<sup>33</sup> Conostas explains the ontological boundaries of the sacred space and its different levels of reality within the doctrine of participation and motion toward its principle of origin, i.e., God.<sup>34</sup> Conostas' topical essay effectively captures extremely complex ontological aspects and dynamics of lived experiences and their space. This contribution to the individual religious experiences by St. Symeon the New is critical, as it includes the latest results from neuroscience research to explain how St. Symeon's experiences were not illusionary or psychopathic, and cannot be related to what may now be considered neurological disorders. Conostas clarifies the mystical experiences of saints as "embodied experiences

that unfold within a particular space: the multifaceted place where encounters with the divine converge with their social, textual, iconographic, and architectural representations.”<sup>35</sup> These alternative approaches proposed by Simsky, Isar, Potamianos, Bogdanović, Milanović, and Conostas reveal the potential of hierotopy in theorizing alterity as God rather than as the other self, as one sees in phenomenological studies that put human presence and actions at the center of investigation and shift away from aspects of the holy that cannot be fully described or comprehended. In addition, some of these metaphysical aspects of the sacred are in the current predominant scholarship occasionally shrouded by obscure terms such as “cult,” “sect,” “mysticism,” “magic,” or “occult.” As in stigmergy, which recognizes the possibility of autonomous existence and action, hierotopy suggests that certain phenomena of the human creation, perception, and reception of sacred spaces can be objectified and objectively analyzed only to a limited extent. This fact should not preclude our recognition of the limits and potentials of studying the holy while at the same time acknowledging the epistemological, aesthetic, and sensorial qualities of the sacred.

In their texts, all the contributors deal predominantly with the theory of hierotopy, its methodology and applicability, often tested through specific case studies. The essays cross different territories and chronological spans, and in general, they are not primarily concerned with the progressive chronological order and do not offer narratives about historical developments in the creation of sacred spaces. The texts avoid binary approaches, so often employed in positivistic and colonial studies, such as East-West, center-periphery, or Byzantine Orthodoxy–Latin Catholicism, premodern-modern, for several reasons. Most of the essays tackle specific examples of the creation of sacred space and cover them from multiple perspectives, thus practically precluding any binary approach. In contrast to the traditional subdivisions of historical studies, hierotopical studies are not restricted to (medieval) Christianity. Here, a few scholars also scrutinize Islamic and Jewish examples of the creation of sacred space examined through the lenses of hierotopical methods. The expanded and nonconventional chronological spans also allow contributors to selectively highlight examples dealing with a specific theme or terminology relevant for the theoretical discourse about the creation of sacred space. In essence, this volume emphasizes the major quality of hierotopical studies, which resist homogenization and tend to be quite fluid, cross-cultural, cross-temporal, cross-spatial, and cross-disciplinary. When Lidov proposed hierotopy as a distinct discipline, he simultaneously opened multiple trajectories of the investigation of the creation of sacred space, with the focus on creative processes and mechanisms that people employ when articulating the sacred space following the initial trace of the sacred, and by not necessarily placing the major focus on the end result. For these reasons, essays occasionally belong to one or more categories, thus challenging the positivistic empirical studies, and prompt questions about applied taxonomy.

### **Terminology and taxonomy of hierotopy**

Because hierotopy can be understood as a paradigm shift in the making, this soft transitioning is also characteristic of its terminology and taxonomy. Most of the terms used in hierotopy are still open, dynamic, and in development. They are occasionally neologisms, reflecting the active search for appropriate and understandable tools that can be used across various disciplines and their own taxonomies, and therefore

making any kind of rigid classification at this time premature and unhelpful. As explained by Bacci, Simsky, Isar, Potamianos, Evangelatou, and Bogdanović in their respective texts, most of the terms are elusive and potentially have to remain vague if studied only through positivistic analysis. Contributors to this volume, however, do engage with the issues of taxonomy by rethinking it and by providing a nuanced understanding of the terminology and methods used in hierotopy in their investigations of the creation of sacred space. At the same time, specific case studies of various scales, ranging from the level of the individual unit of the sacred to entire landscapes, test the applicability of proposed taxonomy and related terminology, and in the process elucidate that these concepts are not only abstract.

Over the past 20 years, scholarly attention has been paid in particular to two critical terms and methodological tools proposed by Lidov for hierotopical studies: “spatial icons” and “image-paradigms.” In his essay, in this volume, Simsky provides an eloquent analysis of these terms, as well as the logical sequence of their introduction and use in scholarship. Lidov first coined and used the term “spatial icon” in 1992; the formulation of hierotopy, specifically as the human creativity of spatial icons, happened in 2001–2002, whereas image-paradigms, as means for the creation of sacred space, were proposed by 2006.<sup>36</sup> Bogdanović additionally clarifies the relationship and distinctiveness of spatial qualities of icons of space and image-paradigms as studied by Belting and Lidov, but also Bissera Pentcheva, who all combine art historical and anthropological studies in their research.<sup>37</sup> All three scholars see icons as religious objects rather than conventionally defined artworks. Belting treats the monumental church program as an applied icon theory and examines the use of icons in ecclesiastical space through the lenses of religious dominance and control and focuses on them as a vehicle of church power. Lidov and Pentcheva move beyond icons as signifiers and investigate them as holistic iconic concepts intimately related to the lived experience of the faithful. In hierotopy, Lidov also manages to move beyond questions of official, doctrinal religion, and the imperial politics of spatial icons as expressions of highly controlled knowledge and power. As detailed in the text by Bogdanović,

In hierotopical systems of knowledge, the spatial icon is more than a *topos* or set of references. Lidov’s concept of spatial icons investigates iconic imagery in space or spatial experience of the sacred, not only the structured space of sacred icons,

as was established in the work by Otto Demus,<sup>38</sup> “but also the totality of sacred space that allows for the interactions between the divine and human agency, which can be contemplated and perceived.”<sup>39</sup> As is self-evident from the name, a hierotopic spatial icon is no mere image on a flat surface located in place. Rather, as Nathan Dennis succinctly wrote,

Heavenly visions can be created or divine presence projected through both the material and immaterial elements of spatial design, whether physical icons of divine or saintly figures integral to the space or more ephemeral, sensory agents such as light, sound, scent, taste, or the effects of haptic interactions with material forms within the space. [T]he bodily presence and movement of human devotees are interwoven with the divine agency embodied within the space, each presence permeating and interpenetrating the other as terrestrial and celestial realities collide in a singular locus.<sup>40</sup>

In this volume, contributors further our understanding of spatial icons and the processes of their creation on multiple levels. Teteryatnikov, Lidova, Evangelotou, Milanović, and Foletti juxtapose spatial icons and their locations in place and sacred space.<sup>41</sup> Yurovskaya analyzes the imagery of the return to the primordial Paradise.<sup>42</sup> Carr examines the referential function of toponymic icons and the ways they give presence. Rather than difference, Carr argues, the toponymic icons imply congruence—the namesake’s capacity to generate a potentiated space “fields of ritual and emotional interchange, drawing into play the space—the necessary distance—between the model, which is in the place it names, and the replica, which is not.”<sup>43</sup> Mechanisms and dynamics of topographic ways of seeing, experiencing, and imagining sacred space are fostered in the essay by della Dora.<sup>44</sup> Biliarsky examines the “other space” seen from sociopolitical and ideological perspectives of medieval statehood.<sup>45</sup>

Another critical term “image-paradigms” can be understood as holistic generative design concepts of sacred space, neither images nor concepts alone, which do not necessarily originate exclusively from the visual or material realms. In his essay, Simsky argues that image-paradigms are “image-concepts” made manifest within sacred spaces.<sup>46</sup> He clarifies that

A sacred space can be seen as a kind of “symbolic landscape,” the organization of which revolves around the actualization of its image-paradigm(s). An image-paradigm is thus an image of higher structural order than an individual symbol. It is “woven” from symbols as a map is composed of its elements. It is engendered in much the same way as the key theme of a musical symphony is given shape through an orchestrated array of melodies created by the unified work of many instruments, such that it, as a musical whole, leaves in our minds a lasting impression.<sup>47</sup>

Simsky explains that the image-paradigm or image-concept cannot be replaced by a symbol because in a contemporary scholarly discourse of the Platonic and Neoplatonic systems idea and image are separated and not studied together, as intended in hierotopy.<sup>48</sup> Within an open research framework, hierotopy is focused on the human creation of sacred space but image-paradigms also allow for teleological arguments and investigations of the believed divine – human interactions.

Image-paradigms are essentially nonillustrative and nonrepresentational. In their analytical papers, Simsky, Isar, Potamianos, Foletti, Lidova, Milanović, Todić and Popović, della Dora, Biliarsky, Yurovskaya, Conostas, and Bogdanović detail how image-paradigms emerge through the processes of associative reactions, evocative references, and symbolic associations within the sacred space and always remain ambiguous and multidimensional. Lidova also explains the reasons for privileging the spatial dimensions of Byzantine art production and attempts to transmit the power of the divine over apparent schematic similarities. As elucidated by Simsky, Isar, Potamianos, Todić and Popović, della Dora, Conostas, Evangelotou, Lidova, Carr, Yurovskaya, and Bogdanović, though unique in their essence, their multitude increases their value, collective veneration enhances their status, and their peculiarities and individual experiences do not contradict the larger whole, which is more than a simple sum of the individual parts. Critical aspects of the aesthetics of the invisible, of that that cannot be represented, are evoked by multisensory aspects of the holy.

Milanović, therefore, analyzes the special status of the icon, its promise of access to atemporal and aspatial being within the specific locale, and actual sacred ceremonies. He underlines the power of icons and relics to mediate the relationship between

the human and sacred realms. Isar, Simsky, and Bogdanović investigate the iconicity, which remains important for addressing the representational aspects of holy objects. Inspired by the earlier work on the topic by Isar, Bogdanović reinforces that *chôra* and its cognate *hypodochē*, concepts originally introduced by Plato, remained known to the Byzantines and were likely used in architectural concept design. As *chôra* and *hypodochē* provide more inclusive models of space than iconicity, they also unveil participatory, ontological aspects of architectural space in the Byzantine cultural sphere. Isar, Potamianos, and Simsky theorize the sensoriality of spatial icons and related saturated effects of light, the dynamics of whirling motion and dazzling light, and the relevance of visibility and subtle articulation of the perception of light in sacred spaces in contrast to ultimate darkness. Issues of aniconism and nonvisual aspects of the holy are likewise advanced in the essays by Foletti and Conostas.

### **The interlocution between the beholder and the creator seen through the lenses of hierotopical studies**

The question of the perception of the sacred space seen through the eyes of the beholders and the eyes of their creators emerged in almost all essays in this volume. The perspective of the beholder is articulated somewhat more than the perspective of the creator, as seen in the contributions by Bacci, Evangelatou, Isar, Milanović, Carr, Foletti, Biliarsky, and Teteryatnikov. In her text, della Dora offers a subtle insight into the highly dynamic interlocution between beholders, users, and creators of pilgrimage books. Perspectives of the creators of sacred spaces are provided in texts by Potamianos and Bogdanović. Potamianos details delicate variations of the lighting conditions in selected examples of religious architecture and their capacity to generate the sense of a rapture, which effects a perceptual transference to another world and reveals characteristics suggesting the sacred. The rapture of sacred space and a glimpse into supra-space are the focal points of the investigation in the text by Conostas.

### **Contribution of this volume to hierotopy and studies of the sacred**

Because hierotopy questions the limits of iconicity and the imagistic nature of icons by including considerations of their spatial and conceptual depths, this volume not only advances studies in hierotopy but also contributes both to the image theory and to theories of architecture and sacred space. The work represents a shift away from examinations of spatial icons and icons of space in strictly historical, theological, socioeconomic, political, and art history terms. In recognizing the restrictions of these traditional approaches, the authors pose epistemological questions about the creation of sacred spaces that are instead inclusive of multilayered iconic ideas and the lived experiences of the creators and beholders of such spaces. This volume, therefore, aims to advance the theory about the creation and icons of sacred space while at the same time disrupting positivistic and colonial scholarship focused predominantly on religion and politics as expressions of privileged knowledge and power.

### **Acknowledgment**

The introduction to this complex volume has been done through several iterations. Some clarifications about hierotopy and its methodology are provided, prompted by reviewers' comments and concerns. Additionally, communications with contributors

Maria Evangelatou, Nicoleta Isar, Andrew Simsky, and V. Rev. Maximos Conostas also helped me articulate some of the major theoretical and methodological aspects of hierotopical studies presented in this volume.

## Notes

- 1 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1989); Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1990), published in English as Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). See also the chapters by Bacci and Simsky in the present volume.
- 2 See the chapters by Simsky and Bogdanović in this volume. Andrew Simsky, “The Discovery of Hierotopy,” *Journal of Visual Theology* 1 (2020), 9–28, esp. 14 note 2, records personal communication with Lidov, who acknowledges specifically work by Hans Belting as critical for his intellectual development.
- 3 See chapter by Bacci in this volume, esp. p. 15.
- 4 See chapter by Isar in this volume.
- 5 Ibid. See also her latest book: Nicoletta Isar, *Elemental Chorology: Vignettes Imaginales* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2020).
- 6 See chapters by Potamianos and Bogdanović in this volume, with reference to works on iconography, memory studies, phenomenology, and Platonic concepts of place in architecture as relevant to hierotopical studies.
- 7 See note 3.
- 8 Simsky highlights that Lidov promoted the term “hierotopy” to the international audience in his lecture “Byzantine Hierotopy: Miraculous Icons in Sacred Space,” delivered at the Bibliotheka Hertziana in Rome on January 14, 2002, and points to his publication (in Russian): Alexei Lidov, “The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History,” in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 32. See chapter by Simsky in this volume, esp. p. 29. In her chapter in this volume, esp. p. 64, Isar additionally reveals a personal communication with Lidov and the creation of the term “hierotopy” in 2001. Simsky, “The Discovery of Hierotopy,” 9–28, effectively summarizes major controversies around hierotopy prevalent at the time of the production of the present volume. See also chapters by Bacci and Simsky in this volume.
- 9 Simsky, “The Discovery of Hierotopy,” 9–28, with reference to Lidov’s text “Чудотворные иконы в храмовой декорации. О символической программе императорских врат Софии Константинопольской” [“The Miracle-Working Icons in the Church Decoration. On the Symbolic Program of the Imperial Doors of Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia”], in *Чудотворная икона в Византии и Древней Руси*, ed. Alexei M. Lidov (Moscow: Martis, 1996), 44–75. See also chapter by Simsky in this volume.
- 10 On index in semiotic studies, see the classic text by Arthur Burks, “Icon, Index, and Symbol,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9/4 (1949), 673–689.
- 11 See Jelena Bogdanović with Katherine Marsengill, “Conclusions,” in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space*, ed. Jelena Bogdanović (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 190–201.
- 12 See chapters by Milanović and by Popović and Todić in this volume.
- 13 See chapters by these authors in this volume. Also important are Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), which questions the representational theory of icons by John of Damascus and Filip Ivanović, *Desiring the Beautiful: The Erotic-Aesthetic Dimension of Deification in Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), which highlights the aesthetic dimensions of deification in Christian Orthodox tradition in particular.
- 14 Compare chapters by Bacci, Potamianos, and Bogdanović in this volume.
- 15 See chapters by Biliarsky and della Dora in this volume.

- 16 See chapter by Evangelatou in this volume.
- 17 For a parallel of hierotopical studies with equally less conventional feminist cultural studies and their definition, see, for example, Fanny Ambjörnsson and Hillevi Ganetz, “Introduction: Feminist Cultural Studies,” *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 5 (2013), 127–131.
- 18 See chapter by Bacci in this volume.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 See, for example, Ann Brooks, *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory, and Cultural Forms* (1997; London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 210–211.
- 21 See, for example, Nicoletta Isar, “‘Chorography’ (Chôra, Chôros, Chorós)—A Performative Paradigm of Creation of Sacred Space in Byzantium,” in *Hierotopy: Studies in the Making of Sacred Space*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2005), 59–90; and Alexei M. Lidov, ed., *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia (Пространственные иконы. Перформативное в Византии и Древней Руси)* (Moscow: Indrik, 2011).
- 22 See chapter by della Dora in this volume.
- 23 See chapters by Bacci and Simsky in this volume.
- 24 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (1962; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012). I thank both V. Rev. Maximos Conostas and Dušan Danilović for reminding me of the work of Kuhn.
- 25 The discussion on the relevance of Kuhn’s work here mostly follows Alexander Bird, “Thomas Kuhn,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2018 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/thomas-kuhn/>, accessed August 1, 2020.
- 26 See Rogier De Langhe, “An Agent-Based Model of Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*,” *Historical Social Research* 43/1 (2018), 28–47, esp. 37.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 See chapter by Bacci in this volume, p. 23.
- 29 See chapter by Bacci in this volume.
- 30 See their respective chapters in this volume.
- 31 On objectifying, see chapter by Simsky in this volume.
- 32 See their respective chapters in this volume.
- 33 See chapters by Simsky and Milanović in this volume.
- 34 See chapter by Conostas in this volume.
- 35 Ibid., esp. p. 341.
- 36 See chapter by Simsky in this volume, esp. p. 29, with references to Lidov’s scholarly papers.
- 37 See chapters by Simsky and Bogdanović in this volume.
- 38 Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (1948; New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas, 1976).
- 39 See chapter by Bogdanović in this volume, p. 99.
- 40 Nathan Dennis, “Bodies in Motion: Visualizing Trinitarian Space in the Albenga Baptistery,” in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. Jelena Bogdanović (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 124–148, citation on 142.
- 41 See their respective chapters in this volume.
- 42 See chapter by Yurovskaya in this volume.
- 43 See chapter by Carr in this volume, p. 200.
- 44 See chapter by della Dorra in this volume.
- 45 See chapter by Biliarsky in this volume.
- 46 See chapter by Simsky in this volume.
- 47 Ibid., p. 41.
- 48 See chapter by Simsky in this volume.





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## **Part I**

# **Sacred spaces: their traces and representations**



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# 1 Sacred spaces versus holy sites

## On the limits and advantages of a hierotopic approach

*Michele Bacci*

It should be acknowledged that the *hierotopy* notion, first proposed by Alexei Lidov in 2001 and later developed in an international congress held in Moscow in 2004 as well as in a number of later publications, has the merit of having elicited a number of questions that became a matter of scholarly debate at an international level in the last decade. In keeping with a wave of new studies on architecture as a strategy for the monumentalization and materialization of the “sacred”, with a shift from the interpretation of forms as self-referential symbols to their analysis in terms of sensorial and material experience,<sup>1</sup> efforts were made to transcend the conceptual limits of architectural analysis to assess a notion of “sacred space” viewed as a basically relational, dynamic context for the ritual and performative evocation of the supernatural dimension: in Lidov’s approach, sacred space is described as resulting from the intermingling of multi-sensorial – that is visual, auditory, olfactive, gustatory, and tactile – effects.<sup>2</sup> Some emphasis has been laid on the Russian scholar’s reluctance to provide a wider and more grounded theoretical frame to his approach, which, I assume, should be basically interpreted as an intentional choice and a way to manifest distinctiveness vis-à-vis the often artificial scholarly trends that became so modish in the last years.<sup>3</sup> Instead of launching a new label – why not a “hierotopic turn” after so many analogous turns (iconic, spatial, liturgical, material, etc.)? – he preferred to make use of a neologism that may draw the attention of art historians and invite them to shift their focus to a hitherto neglected field of interest – namely that of the ways in which Christian sacred spaces happened to be shaped by the interaction of different elements, not all of which belong to the traditional categories of art history, such as liturgical rites, music, lighting effects, and fragrances. This indication proved to be fruitful, given that many subsequent studies have dealt with the performative aspects and multisensory devices associated with the Byzantine and Medieval buildings.

I assume that Lidov’s primary concern was with showing an alternative way, a direction that was worth following after the first years of the enthusiastic rediscovery of long underestimated fields of research that came after the publication of such ground-breaking books as David Freedberg’s *The Power of Images*, Hans Belting’s *Bild und Kult*, and later on Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency*.<sup>4</sup> In many respects, all of these works can be now at least partly understood as monumental attempts at making sense of the digital globalization of images in its very beginnings and the enormous change in cognitive praxis and communication processes they engendered. Religious, and more specifically cultic and miraculous images, were redeemed from their well-rooted perception as artworks intended for the illiterate and came to be used as key-arguments for the principle that images, far from being mere outcomes of historical

and cultural processes, also play an active role in the shaping of human groups, their self-awareness, and their approach to both the social and the supernatural dimensions.

For many readers of these three books, anyway, their innovative character lay in their legitimization of the art historian's right to show interest in images previously seen as devoid of sufficient aesthetic qualities: icons, wax statues, exvotos, advertisements, and political monuments came to the fore as the primary, or most fruitful, focus of art-historical research. Increased emphasis on the cultic dimension of images elicited a number of new studies, which gradually shifted their interest to other material objects being involved in the cultic phenomena: these included both the foci of worship – tombs, bodily and contact relics, holy mementos, *loca sancta*, and miraculous icons – and the various performative manifestations associated with them such as rituals, liturgical and extra-liturgical ceremonies, processions, forms of private and collective veneration, votive offerings, meditation practices, and so on. The liturgy itself, viewed as a shared technique to produce a sense of collective belonging and to mediate a group's relationship to God, became a privileged topic. In this connection, the sacred space started being investigated as something distinct from its architectural frame and came to be regarded as a context of interactions between multiple factors, including officiating priests, attending laypeople, images inhabiting the decorated walls of a church, the multifarious ephemeral and permanent furnishings, and the divinity itself, which is made present by both the performative power of rites and different strategies of monumental "mise-en-scène". This shift from a static to a dynamic view of Christian, and especially Byzantine, sacred spaces paved the way to a much-increased interest for the latter's most ephemeral aspects, namely elements of church decorum, veils and textiles, carpets, lamps and lighting devices, light effects, fire and water, sounds, and scents.

On account of this, I think that Alexei Lidov will agree with a definition of the hierotopical approach as focusing on the different strategies by which the divine, supernatural dimension is spatially, visually, and materially evoked in specific ritual contexts. The evocation of the sacred in material contexts has been rightly understood as a hitherto neglected form of human "creativity" that deserves being investigated from a historical perspective and cannot be underestimated by art historians: it would make no sense to reconstruct the art-historical meaning of single elements of a sacred space – such as lighting devices or frescoed cycles embellishing a church wall – without considering the latter as a whole. In anthropological terms, hierotopic creativity can be described as a set of specific techniques that enable the shaping of religious alterity and their materialization in a number of privileged spaces shared by single human communities. From a psychological viewpoint, it might be said that such techniques basically aim at exciting the beholder – believer's emotional perception of a material space as imbued with supernatural, otherworldly, and meta-human qualities: in this sense, they seem to be much akin to the techniques of "enchantment" that Alfred Gell attributes to magicians, shamans, priests, and artists.

Such an emphasis on hierotopy as a form of human creativity is perfectly legitimate, provided that its limits and conceptual boundaries are taken into account. One of the basic risks is that of substituting the traditional art-historical fascination for the Renaissance notion of an artist's *invenzione*, with a hypostatization of a new category of creators, including promoters and *concepteurs*. Secondly, one should be aware that the shaping of sacred spaces can be hardly thought of as exactly mirroring a well-structured, systematic project ascribable to the ingenuity of specific individuals: on the contrary, it could consist in a long-standing, sometimes even centuries-long

process, involving an uninterrupted compromise between the intentions of the original planners, those of the clergy officiating a church and other agents, and the specific needs of viewers and believers, which lead to frequent alterations and change.

Moreover, if our aim is to understand the dynamics by which divine “otherness” is made present in material contexts, it is important that we work out a specific terminology that may be helpful for a more conscious analysis of the religious, social, and anthropological phenomena we are dealing with. In his 2004 programmatic study, Lidov manifested his indebtedness to Mircea Eliade’s definition of a sacred space based on a reading of the Biblical episode of Jacob’s dream at Bethel (*Gen* 28, 12–22) as a portion of a natural environment that a community perceives as distinct from that of the ordinary life inasmuch it comes to be invested with “hierophanic” qualities that manifest its belonging to a separate, divine sphere. In this way, Eliade described the sphere of the divine as something thoroughly alternative to what he designed as the “profane continuum”. He basically relied on a dichotomic understanding of the world’s surface as a discontinuous juxtaposition of ordinary and “hierophanic” spaces, or “centers” working as meeting points of the heavenly, earthly, and even underground dimensions: such characteristics could be indistinctly attributed to all sites and spaces associated with worship and ritual.<sup>5</sup> To some extent, this view better fitted the principle, underlying the most religious traditions of the ancient world, where the temples and cultic places were to be understood as divine abodes where the physical relationship of a human community with its godly counterparts could be negotiated via the performance of ritual offerings and sacrifices. Yet, this definition proves to be limitative for our understanding of the multifarious religious phenomena, which, in Byzantium and the Middle Ages in general, associated the terrestrial and the divine worlds. In order to better understand our research topic, it proves necessary to overcome the classical distinction between the “sacred” and “profane” and introduce a number of further factors.

Indeed, the religious – historical discourse stands out for its rather indeterminate use of the word “sacred”. This is largely due to the influential work by the German theologian Rudolf Otto, who made use of the German term *das Heilige* to generically hint at the divine/supernatural dimension, even if he was the first to point out that the latter can assume a great many forms in human experience.<sup>6</sup> Most notably, given that the German adjective *heilig* can be used indistinctly to translate both “sacred” and “holy” or “saint” or “hallowed”, Otto’s work did not take into account the semantic shift between these two expressions, being characteristic of most European languages (cf. Greek *ἅγιος/ἁγίος*, Latin *sacer/sanctus*, Russian *священный/святой*). Recent studies reconstructed the etymological developments of such expressions and their use between Roman antiquity and their rediscovery and transformations in early twentieth-century anthropological literature and pointed out their semantic shift, which remained valuable in Medieval times regardless of their occasional, yet certainly not infrequent use as synonyms: if “sacred” seems to imply access to the divine that is mediated by some sort of human activity – such as a ritual of consecration that transforms an ordinary thing into something invested with religious meanings – “saint” basically indicates a divine attribute associated *per se* with a material object, which enables, therefore, a more immediate, direct contact with the supernatural sphere.<sup>7</sup>

The distinction between “sacred” and “saint” can be investigated against the background of yet another conceptual shift – between the “space” and “site”. Critics of hierotopy pointed out that a term including an explicit hint at the notion of the “site” (according to the meaning of the Greek word *topos*) was used to describe a

methodological approach that basically concerns sacred spaces, i.e., spatial contexts being instrumental to the performance of liturgical rites. In order to properly describe this research approach, the use of such expressions as, say, “hierochorology” would probably be much more accurate on etymological grounds but also admittedly much less efficacious from a pretty stylistic viewpoint. It is therefore not a matter here to criticize the term “hierotopy”: it can be considered as one of many scholarly conventions that are meant to summarize the complexity of a methodology, whose limits and advantages deserve being more accurately evaluated, especially as it concerns the distinction between “sacred spaces” and “holy sites”.

It should be namely stressed that, with these two expressions, we are speaking of two basically distinct phenomena. Churches, synagogues, and mosques can be rightly described as “sacred spaces”, inasmuch as they work as meeting places intended for the performance of rites, individual and collective prayers, processions and ceremonies, yet they are not, or not necessarily, also holy sites. In the Christian tradition, the latter emerges since the third/fourth century as specifically site-bound manifestations of both individual and public worship: they take the form of martyr’s tombs and memorial sites working as a visual witness to some major events of both the Gospels or the saints’ heroic lives. In such places the spatial element plays a minor or accessory role and, in some specific cases – for example, the rock of Moses on the top of Mount Sinai or the stone marked with Jesus’ footprints in the Garden of Gethsemane – it can be even thoroughly absent. The worship of both tombs and memorial sites can take place only *in situ* and cannot be efficaciously transported elsewhere. Unlike the evocation of Christ’s body in the Eucharistic rite, the “locative” experience of a holy site cannot be repeated or multiplied throughout the Christian world: it is associated with cultic foci, which unlike objectified bodily relics or icons are grafted onto the soil. This is true with the Palestinian *loca sancta* but also with empty burial places, such as that of Saint Stephen in the Zion Basilica in Jerusalem: even if the first martyr’s relics were housed there for a very short period – between 415 and 439 – his sarcophagus was the object of pilgrims’ veneration until the Crusader period.<sup>8</sup>

A systematic and theoretical approach to such topics is still largely missing. The problem of the interaction between space, religion, and materiality is the focus of much recent work in the fields of anthropology, religious studies, and cultural geography, where the essentialist reading of the “sacred space” is being dismissed in the aim to emphasize the interactive process by which religious places are invested with meaning under specific circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Cultural geographers and archaeologists, especially those in Prehistory, have been committed to investigating the impact of religious experience and beliefs on natural landscapes, the topographic transcription of the sacred dimension, the monumentalization and memorialization of cult-sites, and the response of human societies to environments invested with religious meaning.<sup>10</sup>

Alternatives to Eliade’s notion of holy sites as “centres” were only partly worked out in the frame of anthropological studies on pilgrimage from a comparative perspective. Whereas a functionalist interpretation, informed by Durkheim’s work,<sup>11</sup> and interpreting cult-phenomena as strategies for the shaping of integrated, meta-personal identities, was dominant until the 1970s, new perspectives were opened by the influential work of Edith and Victor Turner. The latter interpreted pilgrimage shrines as “liminoid phenomena” or thresholds between different experiential, and spatial, dimensions and stressed the analogy of pilgrimage with rites of passage, stimulating

the feeling of belonging to a wider, universalist “communitas”, where all social distinctions are canceled.<sup>12</sup> In the aim of overcoming the conceptual dichotomy of structure and antistructure implied in both the functionalist and Turnerian models, much of the research work of the last decades has shifted the focus from the social relations established through ritual journeys to holy sites to the latter’s perception as “realms of competing discourses”<sup>13</sup>: indicative of this tendency is the wealth of new contributions concerning the shifting negotiations of sanctity and the associated political discourses in connection with trans-confessionally and trans-religiously worshipped holy sites of the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, in their effort to work out general interpretive frames to an understanding of religion in its spatial dimension, such studies tend to use the notion of the “sacred space” in a rather unspecific way and are not specifically interested in the conceptual distinction between ritual/congregational spaces and holy sites, which proves to be of crucial importance for the investigation of the roles played by religious materiality in post-Antique societies. This distinction, already foreshadowed in 1953, by Sigmund Mowinckel,<sup>15</sup> lays at the core of Jonathan Z. Smith’s work, who speaks of “locative” and “utopian” (or basically ritual) forms of experiencing the divine.<sup>16</sup> In many religious traditions, yet most evidently in the three “Abrahamic” ones, congregational spaces meant for the performance of institutionalized collective rituals, such as synagogues, churches, and mosques, coexist with sites deemed to be holy on account of some qualities perceived as immanent or intrinsic (such as memorial associations, presence of hallowed matter, or an identification of the site itself as imbued with supernatural qualities). Whereas the former set the stage for a ritual or sacramental evocation of the divine, the latter are conceived as enabling more direct access to the supernatural, godly, or transcendental dimension, independently from any human mediation. In this respect, Alphonse Dupront describes holy places as site-bound manifestations of the transformational, sanctifying power and distinguishes those associated with the natural phenomena from those carrying narratives and others imbued with eschatological or cosmical meanings.<sup>17</sup>

Important contributions to our understanding of such basic distinctions were worked out in the frame of Jewish, early Christian, and Islamic studies.<sup>18</sup> New studies showed that the three traditions stand out for their promotion of different, and often ambiguous, forms of “locative” worship. In ancient temples, including the sacred precincts of the old Israelite “house of God”, both functions – locative and ritual – were combined and experienced in the same contexts: in this respect, the peculiarity of post-Exilic Judaism was that, other than in ancient Greece or the Israelites’ neighboring cultures, God’s presence (*shekhinah*) was located exclusively in a geographically fixed, holy area on the Jerusalem Temple Mount. Here holiness was conceptualized in terms of purity and its sacred precincts were meant for the performance of rites and sacrifices, which were deemed to take place in the proximity of the Lord, concealed behind the *parokhet* veil in the Holy of Holies in the inner chamber of the Temple.<sup>19</sup> With the latter’s destruction in 70 A.D. and again in 133–135, the ban of Jews from Jerusalem, and the impossibility to further observe the ritual prescriptions associated with it, the original unity of Jewish religious experience was lost<sup>20</sup>: much more emphasis was given to congregational spaces, such as synagogues and yeshivas,<sup>21</sup> whereas site-bound forms of worship developed especially around the tombs of prophets, famous rabbis, and other places whose worship-worthiness was traced back to their memorial associations, as in the case of the Jerusalem Western Wall.<sup>22</sup>



To some extent, the holy center of Islamic worship, the *ḥaram* of Mecca, comes closer to the type of simultaneously locative and ritual holiness associated with the Israelite Temple, inasmuch as it is described as an inviolable, pure, and separated area housing the archetypal “House of God” erected by Abraham and Ishmael, and used as performative space for the fulfillment of the rituals connected to the *hajj*. The extension of this privileged “noble” status to Muhammad’s first mosque and grave in Medina and the *ḥaram al-Sharīf* (the ancient Temple Mount) in Jerusalem, as well as, in Shi’a tradition, the burial sites of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib in Kufa and al-Ḥusayn in Karbala was not without arousing anxieties among the interpreters of Qur’anic law, who debated about the legitimacy of “site-bound” forms of religious experience, which seemed to be at odds with the principle of God’s omnipresence. Nevertheless, this debate did not prevent some Islamic groups, especially the Sufis, from giving shape to a much wider network of secondary holy sites, including *mashhads* (tombs and memorial structures of eminent people) and *maqāms* (monumental indicators of some important event). The lawfulness of *ziyarat* (visitations) to tombs and memorial sites is still a major issue in the interpretation of Islamic tradition, as is dramatically shown by the negative approach of modern Salafis and the repeated destructions of mausoleums in Syria and other countries, including Saudi Arabia.<sup>23</sup>

In Christianity, the “placed-ness” of the holy was a major matter of debate even more than in Islam. The Pauline notion that God is absent from earth and the new Temple is located in Christ’s body – i.e., spiritually in Heaven, sacramentally in the liturgical bread, and morally in the community of believers or *ecclesia* – implied that no “locative” forms of experiencing the divine should be admitted in the age of Grace.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the reality of the Incarnation implied that, at least in a specific moment of history and in a determined area of the world, the Son of God had taken on a material body inscribed in space and had been visible in a circumscribable form. In the formative period of the Christian tradition, culminating in the making of the Palestinian Holy Land during the fourth century, the places carrying narratives of the holy events reported in the Holy Scriptures came to be regarded as worship-worthy primarily on account of their memorial associations: they worked as “mnemotopoi” or material indicators of holy persons’ earthly presence, sometimes marked with visible traces of their physical passage.<sup>25</sup> Less explicit, yet no less crucial, was the belief, which was to become prominent in the course of time, in which those same sites worked as receptacles of divine power because of their sanctification through contact with Christ’s body.

This process was parallel to the emergence of pilgrimage to living ascetics, saints’ tombs, memorials of martyrs, and other holy people.<sup>26</sup> As testimonies to Christian faith, the latter was granted direct access to Heaven and were vested with a spiritual body, whose supernatural energy was reflected, by metonymy, in their mortal remains. Not unlike the memorial sites of the Gospels, the burial sites of saints enabled a form of religious experience that could take place only *in situ*, in a geographically recognizable location corresponding to a spot-like site firmly grafted onto the soil. Pilgrimage to saints’ tombs and *loca sancta* was never described as mandatory, and many Christian thinkers manifested their anxiety vis-à-vis the diffusion of practices that risked introducing a nonsacramental and nonliturgical access to the divine.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, despite this negative approach, the legitimacy of “locative” sanctity and the holy matter was implicitly, and somewhat contradictorily, admitted when, already by the end of the fourth century, the church introduced the practice of consecrating altars with relics.<sup>28</sup> The constant semiotic tension between the terms “sacred” and “holy”

(*sacer/sanctus*) when applied to the experiential contexts of religious life can be also understood as evidence for the ambiguous conceptualizations of church spaces and holy sites in Christian thought. In the course of Christian history, site-bound cult-phenomena tended to multiply and take on new forms: these include, e.g., memorials of apparitions, votive buildings erected in thanksgiving for an obtained grace, collections of Christological and Marian relics, structures housing miraculous hosts, enshrined miraculous images (the most commonplace type of shrine in modern and contemporary Catholicism),<sup>29</sup> as well as analogical, mimetic, and topomimetic surrogates of the Holy Land, and other major memorial sites.<sup>30</sup>

The history of such phenomena in the *longue durée* has still to be written. Much research work has focused on specific areas and chronological phases, such as, e.g., the emergence of *loca sanctorum* in late antique Africa,<sup>31</sup> or early medieval Gaul,<sup>32</sup> the major places of worship associated with the Archangel Michael,<sup>33</sup> the promotion of civic cults in Italian communes,<sup>34</sup> or the origins, consolidation, and decline of particular holy sites.<sup>35</sup> Issues relevant to this topic were raised in the frame of interdisciplinary studies on medieval pilgrimage, even if the emphasis was laid more on the latter's social, economic, cultural, and literary backgrounds than on the materiality of holy sites.<sup>36</sup> Scholars interested in the historical analysis of medieval hagiographic literature laid special emphasis on the circumstances under which saints' cults were fostered and the legendary construction of the saints' cultic physiognomy.<sup>37</sup> A major difficulty in assessing the "phenomenology" of holy sites is represented by the lack of adequate terminology to define all the manifold forms in which site-bound cult-phenomena manifest themselves in different chronological, geographic, and cultural contexts.<sup>38</sup> The English word "shrine" only partly corresponds to the Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian *santuario*, the French *sanctuaire*, the German *Heiligtum* or the Greek *προσκύνημα*: though widely accepted even in anthropological literature (Nolan and Nolan 1989), it can be misleading, as it hints at a kind of institutionalized pilgrimage site that is basically postmedieval and was especially developed in the Counterreformation period. The investigations made in the frame of a project promoted in the 1990s and 2000s by the *École française de Rome* on Italian *santuari* revealed that the latter was established, for the major part, in the modern era.<sup>39</sup>

A challenging, hitherto never systematically investigated issue is the extent to which "locative" and "sacramental" forms of experiencing the divine had an impact on space, and more generally on the shifting ways in which religious life was constructed through things. Emphasis has been laid on the formative period in Late Antiquity, and the gradual emergence of *loca sanctorum* and memorial sites whose sanctity had to be spatially and architecturally defined in its distinctiveness vis-à-vis the congregational spaces meant for the performance of liturgical rites: as the role of the Eucharist as the reenactment of the Lord's incarnation, death and resurrection was conceptualized during the Middle Ages, the relationship between sacramental and site-bound forms of access to the divine needed being constantly renegotiated. Architectural historians have long since recognized that specific building types were worked out, in early Christian times, for churches and saints' mausolea (*martyria*) and memorial sites (*memoriae*), and have raised questions as to which specific structural and stylistic features were worked out to mark pilgrimage sites during the Middle Ages,<sup>40</sup> and to what extent the conceptual distinction between churches and tombs or memorials also implied their spatial separation.<sup>41</sup> More recently, scholars started exploring the multiple ways in which ritual spaces and holy sites were juxtaposed, superimposed, or combined in

the same context, even if believers were constantly aware of their functional distinctiveness.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the diffusion of the practice of inserting relics into altars and other architectural elements did not really transform churches into *loca sancta*: relics were then used as objectified bodily remains that contributed to enhancing the prestige of some specific ritual spaces, but this was not enough to turn them into cultic foci and goals for pilgrimages. Holy sites and ritual spaces could be variously juxtaposed, connected, located one close to or above the other, but they rarely merged. The various ways in which they happened to be associated should be considered as a fundamental topic for hierotopic investigation: a case in point is the Nativity church in Bethlehem, where the visual and spatial dialogue of the diminutive, tiny, and dark holy site – the underground cave with its worshipped spots of Christ’s birthplace and manger – with the sumptuously decorated, upper space that frames the *locus sanctus* and mediates the pilgrim’s approach to it was constantly renegotiated in the course of time to meet the expectations, religious sensibility, and devotional needs of the believers.

The site-specific quality of *loca sancta* implies that their worship could take place independently from any definite strategy of spatial or architectural arrangement. Yet, a spatial “mise-en-scène” could be used to orientate and mark the physical experience of a site-bound, locative manifestation of the holy. In such contexts as the early Christian complex of the Jerusalem Holy Sepulchre architecture worked as a monumental frame whose function was not to delimit the boundaries of the Christian *ecclesia* participating in the Mass and communicating with God, yet rather to structure the pilgrims’ access to holy sites deemed to be grafted onto the soil. A number of “hierotopic” devices could be used to manifest the “placedness” of the divine in the holy site: for example, the accumulation of ornaments and votive offerings, the presence of specific lighting devices, and the use of baldachins and frames to enhance and stimulate the contemplation of the holy site. In some contexts, “hierotopic” strategies could contribute to lay emphasis on the site’s diminutive size and unattractive appearance: the lack of ornaments and a scant illumination could turn out to be the most efficacious way of evoking the holy *per absentiam*. A case in point, among others, is the rock of Golgotha, which originally stood in an open-air context, in a corner of the triporticus laid between the Anastasis and the Martyrium basilica. It looked like a thin, vertically standing dark stone whose red veins could be interpreted as traces of the blood poured out from Christ’s side during the Crucifixion. Its exposition in a public space was instrumental to its use as a cultic focus and an object of contemplation. In the course of time, a number of ornaments contributed to orientate its perception: the monumental *crux gemmata* erected on its top by Theodosius II visualized the triumph of Christ (and Christianity) upon death and the glory of resurrection. Later on, the cross was included within a marble baldachin and a number of precious mementos, including the horn used for the unction of King David and King Solomon’s ring, hanged from it. This sort of “installation” enabled viewers to associate Golgotha with eminent figures of the Old Testament and immediately acknowledge the role of Christ as the real King of Israel. Finally, the erection of an altar in its vicinity was not so much instrumental to the use of the nearby space as a ritual context, yet rather to its perception (as witnessed by the Piacenza anonymous around 570) as a memorial site marking the very place where Abraham had tied his son Isaac: this contributed to making visible the characterization of the rock of Golgotha as the new stone of Alliance. The subsequent step was the transformation of the site, on the initiative of Patriarch Modestos in the early seventh century, into a chapel working as an architectural frame to the top of the rock, made accessible via a flight of steps carved in its surface. When the Crusaders

reconstructed the Holy Sepulchre, between 1100 and 1149 the whole stone was hidden within a massive, elevated, two-storied building that worked as a simulacrum of the holy mountain it encircled and evoked, in its use of two double arcades, the appearance of yet another holy landmark of Jerusalem, the Porta Aurea of the Temple Mount. In this way, visual and spatial devices were combined to efficaciously evoke the very site-specific qualities of Mount Golgotha.<sup>43</sup>

The study of how holy sites functioned and were involved in the religious – and social – experience is hampered by the still ambiguous terminology used in the humanities to categorize such cult-phenomena (with its various combinations of “holy”, “sacred”, “site”, “place”, and “space”, often employed as synonyms). In the lack of a universally accepted notion at the anthropological and sociological levels, references can be made to the definitions by induction proposed in the frame of juridical studies on the protection and safeguard of cultural heritage,<sup>44</sup> which characterize specific sites as holy and distinct from ordinary the “sacred” or “ritual spaces”, when one or more of the four following factors is present: a site-bound manifestation of the divine dimension; a memorial association that makes a place unique on grounds that are immediately evident to a community of believers; the site’s capacity to attract worshippers belonging to different parts of the world and other confessions or religious traditions; the fact that a community or more human groups acknowledge the site’s inherent holiness.

This approach implies a shift from a theorization of the ontological nature of holy sites to the investigation of the different spatial, visual, and finally aesthetic strategies by which the exceptional status of specific places and their different degrees of sanctity were communicated to and actively experienced by material users. The specific forms of *mise-en-scène* exploited to evoke site-bound holiness have been only occasionally investigated in the frame of the ethnographic research on present-day pilgrimage<sup>45</sup> and, embryonically, in the analysis of image-shrines of the modern era,<sup>46</sup> which profited from the wider theoretical debate on the act of framing as a strategy for positioning a material object in space and binding it with other levels of reality and perception.<sup>47</sup>

In this connection, I believe that the hierotopical approach can still be useful, provided that it may overcome the conceptual ambiguity of the notion of “sacred space” and look more closely at the different ways in which human cultures deal with the spatial and material dimensions of religious life. With its focus on the performative and sensorial strategies by which the supernatural dimension was made present in the human environment, it can contribute not only to better assess how liturgical environments worked and were experienced in Medieval times, but also to more deeply understand the multiple ways in which the holiness attributed to some specific, exceptional sites came to be negotiated and materialized in visual and spatial terms, in its constant tension with the surrounding landscape and the artificial environment shaped by the architecture, furnishings, and the general setting of the built structures used as monumental frames to the cultic foci of a collective phenomenon of worship.

## Notes

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## 2 Image-paradigms

### The aesthetics of the invisible

*Andrew Simsky*

*Hierotopy, spatial icon, and image-paradigm* are three formative notions within the hierotopic discourse. In this chapter, we shall focus on the *image-paradigm*, the most recent and, at the same time, the enigmatic member of this trio of hierotopic fundamentals. It was introduced by Alexei Lidov as an instrument to analyze the imagery of sacred spaces. Although the *image-paradigm* has already been used in a number of case studies, its definition and theory have received as of yet little attention. Its ontology, functioning, and aesthetical aspects remain to be clarified. In this chapter, I endeavor to shed some more light on this novel concept. However, before we give it our undivided attention, we shall first trace the historical course of hierotopic thought, which started with the conception of the *spatial icon* and concluded (at least at this moment of writing) with the *image-paradigm*.

#### **The birth of the image-paradigm from the spirit of hierotopy**

When Wikipedia articles on hierotopic subjects were first written in November 2010, the principal one was *hierotopy*. It contained *spatial icon* and *image-paradigm* as sections. This made it look like it followed a standard pattern in which, at first, a branch of science or a theory is defined, and then key subsidiary concepts are introduced. But such a view would be too simplistic. The semantic tree of *hierotopy* was, in fact, invented a-posteriori. Historically, these three principal notions were introduced by Lidov in the following order: *spatial icon* (1992),<sup>1</sup> *hierotopy* (2001),<sup>2</sup> and *image-paradigm* (2006).<sup>3</sup> This order of their successive emergence is important. The chronological approach will help us to understand the context in which each new notion was created and to see why exactly each was needed and what would be missing without it.

#### ***Spatial icon***

The *spatial icon* came up first in the hierotopic sequence. This means that one could talk about spatial icons without knowing anything about the other two terms. Indeed, the *spatial icon* is fairly self-explanatory: it simply introduces a kind of icon, which is not depicted on a flat surface in a usual way but is represented by a number of elements distributed in space.

The *spatial icon* has become part of the general language. Let us open, for example, the tourist museum guide to the Istra New Jerusalem monastery-park near Moscow. The text refers to this famous re-creation of the Holy Land as “a spatial icon of the Holy Land.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the guide says nothing of *hierotopy*. This telling

example suggests that the term *spatial icon* is self-sufficient and does not need to be integrated into an entire systematic structure of a new theoretical approach. Reading further in the museum guide, it becomes clear that constituent elements of this spatial icon are typological and symbolic references – in fact, just names. The Istra river is exalted as the river Jordan, and an unpretentious wooded hill is elevated to Gethsemane. Simple renaming does all the magic: an ordinary tract of the Central Russian plain becomes the Holy Land in the minds of those aware of its sacred topography. Churches, chapels, and sketes scattered here and there come together to complete this spatial icon and contribute to its atmosphere of holiness.

In the context of this museum guide, the term *spatial icon* sounds more like a good descriptive term than a novel scientific notion. Indeed, from the standpoint of its purpose and use, this is still an icon, i.e., an object of religious contemplation and a window toward the divine world. But its creation differs from wooden panels customarily referred to as icons. Hence, a modifier word “spatial” is needed to help us better grasp the idea. An icon, instead of being a picture, is constituted by a landscape of symbolic objects distributed in space. Well, still an icon, but drawn in another way. Why not? We, moderns, are used to all kinds of weird art forms. Indeed, *spatial icons* even somewhat resemble *installations* of modern visual arts.<sup>5</sup>

A scholarly dimension of the *spatial icon* becomes apparent the moment one wonders about its ontology and, particularly, the process of its creation.<sup>6</sup> We are brought to embrace a novel type of artistry: it is not a painting, nor a sculpture, nor architecture, nor even a landscape, although all these art forms might be involved. The goal of this artistry is to create an artwork of a new kind: a spatial icon. If we are to study such a form of artistry, we have to give it a name. This name is *hierotopy*.

### ***Hierotopy as the creation of spatial icons***

We could try to define *hierotopy* as art that produces spatial icons. But Lidov himself prefers to call it a “creative activity.” Rightfully so, as no one knows for certain what *art* really is. If the *spatial icon* is all about the results of this creative activity, *hierotopy* is more a question of the process of its creation. It describes how diverse genres of art meet together in a hierotopic project with a unifying purpose: to make up a spatial icon. But whereas the term *spatial icon* was adopted not only by professionals but also by art tourists and religious communities, “*hierotopy*” was met with greater reserve. As a matter of fact, *hierotopy* is mostly limited at the moment as a specialized academic term, a name of a new discipline. Want to know what *hierotopy* means? Go take a course!<sup>7</sup>

Our understanding of sacred spaces is largely based on the phenomenology of the sacred, which helps us to grasp what they are on a descriptive level. But the process of their creation is invariably shrouded in mystery and mysticism. Unearthing aspects of creativity in religion has never been easy because religion tends to conserve and eternalize things. It claims to hold and convey eternal teachings and implement immutable traditions that reflect timeless values. Those with degrees in religious studies are, of course, aware of any given religion’s historical course. However, they would be inclined to see this process as a kind of natural evolution, driven either by a variety of historical circumstances and socioeconomic factors or by divine Providence but not as a conscious human activity akin to art.

Well, hierotopy sees it exactly this way: it takes one fundamental aspect of religious practice – the sacred space – and describes its genesis as a creative activity. Lidov approached a subject of religious nature as an art historian and seized hold of an important aspect of truth: sacred spaces (as well as sacred books and sacred rituals) take shape as a result of human activity. Take a Byzantine church as an example: its architecture, ceremonies, music, art of various kinds – all this was ingeniously orchestrated to create a special art product: a spatial icon. But how? No simple answer can be given. One has to study concrete hierotopic projects case by case. In other words, what hierotopy offers is an approach rather than a ready-made theory of the sacred. It defines a discourse, a common ground for interdisciplinary discussions. Hierotopy is anything but trivial. Even after almost two decades, it still retains an aura of a revolutionary concept, a highly innovative blend of art history and religion. An art-theoretical approach applied to the genesis of sacrality gave birth to a novel concept of cultural history.

But why then does hierotopy focus so emphatically and directly on the *creation* of sacred spaces? Why it is not enough simply to describe them? Well, it is precisely because they are seen as art products. Don't we observe the same measure of attention to the process of creation in the history of art more generally? Instead of just sitting back and enjoying a landscape or a portrait, we take pains to study all kinds of information relevant to the process of its creation: the biography of the artist, the spirituality, philosophies, and cultural trends of the time, as well as fashions, tastes, aesthetical preferences, political, and economic factors, etc. Simply seeing is even not enough anymore: x-rays are now commonly employed to get behind the visible colors and see how the underlying layers of paint were laid! A piece of artistry, to us, is by no means just an object in itself, but rather a hub of information streaming from different corners: a nexus where all kinds of motives and influences come together to inform a cultural matrix wherein an oeuvre is born.<sup>8</sup> By enquiring HOW it was made, we find a partial but seemingly satisfactory answer to the question of WHAT it is.

When applying a similar approach to the sacred space, we also focus on the circumstances of its creation. How was it made into what it is now? What was its spiritual mission in the context of its time? Who designed it and why? What was its central design idea? In order to get practical and proceed to case studies, one needs to find and hone instruments of hierotopic research. The most important one is the *image-paradigm*.

### ***The working tools of art history and hierotopy: “obraz” and image-paradigm***

The analogy between hierotopy and art history can be further exploited by comparing their respective working tools. Explanatory and hermeneutic instruments of art history feature a broad range of mental structures and concepts associated with images, such as “visual ideas” or “mental images.” In some languages, much of this semantic area is covered by a single word. Being a literal equivalent of *image*, this word intimately links a picture with its design idea as well as with mental imagery evoked by its viewing. Such are the German “Bild,” the Dutch “beeld” and, particularly, the Russian “obraz.” The latter is of some significance to our story because, well, Lidov was thinking in Russian. His *image-paradigm* (originally *obraz-paradigma*) carries for a Russian mind a remarkably richer train of connotations than a mere sum of two English terms, *image* and *paradigm*, would for an English-speaking art historian.

Indeed, the English term *image* means primarily a picture, whereas associated mental constructs are identified by other terms such as “representation,” “type,” “figure (of),” “vision,” or with the help of derivatives, such as “imagery,” “mental image” or “imagination.” In Russian, much of all this is encapsulated inside the single term *obraz*. This powerful term is a veritable workhorse in Russian art history. One can sense in it the influence of German classical philosophy with its dialectics of *Bild* and *Idee* as well as reverberations of the Platonic *eidos*. The best English equivalent to Lidov’s *obraz* that I can think of is *a unit of imagery*.

The main function of *obraz* in relation to a painting is to represent its visual design idea. It is a mental image that inspires an artist and, at the same time, is evoked in the minds of the viewers. Just to pick a simple example, one could think of the *obraz* of Mona Lisa immortalized by Leonardo. The *image-paradigm* is also, in the first place, a visual design idea, but in quite a different sense. In the framework of hierotopic discourse, sacred space is viewed as a unified performative whole composed of material artifacts, constituent multimedia, embedded imagery, and symbolic meanings. All its various elements come together to inform its overall aesthetic and spiritual impact in much the same way that brushstrokes give shape to a painting or notes form a melody. The creation of the sacred space as a single composite whole suggests the existence of a unifying generative design idea. If we were dealing with music, we would be talking about the theme of a musical piece. When it comes to sacred spaces, we can say that such an overall design theme is its *image-paradigm*.

An image-paradigm is essentially nonillustrative. It does not emanate from a picture but is rather evoked by way of association, much in the same way that recollections are called to mind by something that we see or hear. Take an especially important example: the Heavenly Jerusalem as an image-paradigm of Medieval Christian churches.<sup>9</sup> This splendid vision of the future Paradise from the Book of Revelation was well known to believers. When entering a church, it would spontaneously take shape in their mind’s eye, even though it was nowhere directly depicted.

It should be stressed that the *image-paradigm* in hierotopy works quite differently from *obraz* in conventional arts. Leonardo’s Mona Lisa emerges from a canvas. Our mental image of her is based solely on her painted likeness. This is what we mean when we say that her *obraz* is illustrative. This is not the case with image-paradigms. *Though there is no picture of Heavenly Jerusalem* in a church, its vision was evoked in the minds of believers by the entirety of symbolic associations throughout the sacred space. A believer was prepared. He already had this vision in his memory before entering the church, so he just needed some pointers to recall it to the surface of his mind. Although the vision of Heavenly Jerusalem was rooted in the Christian tradition as a whole, it would be actualized inside a specific sacred space and is associated with it in quite a new sense, which calls for a new term. The *image-paradigm* of a sacred space is this new term.

### ***Experiencing image-paradigms: the aesthetics of the invisible***

To approach the aesthetical aspects of image-paradigms, I suggest we have a look at an example so dissimilar in nature that it might seem almost sacrilegious. Let us leave the church and move to the world of fancy modern home design. Let us visit an American “ideal home” exhibition, particularly a section of bedroom theme design for the rich. We are likely to find there something like a “Jamaica bedroom.”<sup>10</sup> This

room, being part of a custom-designed country house or even an urban apartment, will skillfully represent the inside of a seashore cabin. It would contain a multitude of details that, taken apart, could be found anywhere and everywhere, but, when assembled together, invariably point to the stereotypical beachside dwelling: a wicker chair, chambray comforters, a carefully chosen type of bed and sheets, wall paneling, and towels. Just imagine yourself relaxing in such a bedroom. Can't you feel the salty sea breeze in your lungs? Can you hear the surf? The feeling of being at the seashore is made possible by means of purposeful use of multiple minor detail-pointers, which evoke your recollections of previous seaside vacations. If you have never been there, you are likely to remain untouched.

The installation created in such a room can be characterized as a spatial icon, which evokes an essentially nonillustrative "image-paradigm" of the seaside. Indeed, there are no photos of the seashore in our Jamaica bedroom. In fact, such a photo would have annulled the overall impact, for it would have shown that you are NOT at the sea, whereas the purpose of the design is to conjure up a real presence. The photo of the sea or a beach would be more appropriate in an ordinary urban living space or even in an office. It would remind one of the seaside without attempting a full immersion into its atmosphere. Such a photo would belong to a conventional **aesthetics of the visible**. It would not take you out of here and now. Instead, it would just point to another reality existing elsewhere. The Jamaica bedroom suggests a deeper experience, which goes beyond simple viewing. It transports you to the seashore. It activates your memories and your imagination. You close your eyes and relax and you are in a beach cabin you are at sea. This "image" involves not only visual aspects of the imagination but also the other senses, as well as the emotions, memories, wishes, and dreams associated with them. You "see" a great deal more than you otherwise could have seen in a photo or a painting. In this highly personal experience, the past merges with the future. It is not a picture, external, and remote but a vibrant part of yourself. Your dream-vision of the sea is idealized, personified, and intimate. Such is the **aesthetics of the invisible**.

The image-paradigm of the Heavenly Jerusalem worked in a similar way. The fact that it was nowhere depicted was not an omission but a necessity. If it were depicted in a fresco or a wooden icon, believers would only be able to contemplate it as something external and remote. In other words, they would know with certainty that they were NOT there. The experience of a spatial icon goes much deeper: it really takes you there. The Holy City would descend from heaven and invisibly fill the sacred space. Though physically unseen, it would be all around. For such a miracle to take place, it was important both that the believers were prepared and that they were longing for it themselves. They received what they desired. Though all the while aware, on the surface of their minds, of still being here on earth, in the deeper layers of their consciousness they were, at the same time, in the City of God. Explicit representations of the Heavenly Jerusalem could only undermine one's sense of rapture. They could not be nearly as majestic or divine as what one imagined. This Heavenly Jerusalem was a dazzling apparition and, at the same time, the most personal, even intimate, dream-vision.

### *Image-paradigm as a tool: case studies*

Lidov introduced his concept of *image-paradigm* as an *instrumentum studiorum*.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of the new tool was to apply it to the analysis of specific hierotopic projects. Although Heavenly Jerusalem was recognized from the outset as the image-paradigm

par excellence,<sup>12</sup> the first case where the new methodology proved itself was the image-paradigm of the Blessed Christian City.<sup>13</sup> It is remarkable that, in this case, the spatial icon was explicitly composed, as the very title of the paper suggested, from iconic, textual, and architectural components: the Holy Face (Mandylion), the Holy Script (Christ's letter to Abgar), and the Holy Gate (the gate of Edessa). The image-paradigm of the blessed city of Edessa was identified in a few seemingly unrelated hierotopic ensembles including even the Russian Mirozh Monastery near Novgorod. The new *instrumentum* worked as a nontrivial optical tool presenting to sight the things and relations hitherto hidden from view.

Another important case was the Temple Veil (katapetasma).<sup>14</sup> Tradition has it that the Veil of the Third Temple ended up in the Great Church where it was used to curtain off the main altar. But this fascinating adventure of katapetasma was just the starting point of its new journey through sacred spaces. Lidov argued that intensive use of real and painted veils and curtains in Medieval churches pointed to the existence of a potent image-paradigm of the Veil broadly understood as the semi-transparent cosmic boundary between the earthly and heavenly realms, which was also associated with the body of Christ (Heb. 10:19–20).

Two new members have recently been added to the constellation of “officially recognized” image-paradigms: those of the Rivers of Paradise<sup>15</sup> and the Holy Mountain,<sup>16</sup> the latter being primarily represented with monumental ambos. The image-paradigm of the Divine Fire has also recently come to light.<sup>17</sup> Although the image-paradigm of the Divine Light, particularly applicable to the Great Church, seems self-evident, the case for it has, to my knowledge, never been explicitly articulated.<sup>18</sup> The spatial imagery of another famous Hagia Sophia – the one in Kiev – has also been taken up as a subject of hierotopic research.<sup>19</sup>

It is noteworthy that the concept and the term “image-paradigm” was also used to characterize the sacred spaces construed in works of literature. Let us take one example: Dmitriy Balashov's novel “Praise to Sergius,” based on the hagiography of St. Sergius of Radonezh.<sup>20</sup> The events of the novel are staged in the sacred space of the monastery – where the saint performed his ascetic exploits as well as his miracles. Particular attention is given to image-paradigms, which become principal structural elements defining the literary representation of the sacred space. Whereas a usual task of hierotopy is to transfer “the Holy Place” into “a sacred space,”<sup>21</sup> here the sacred space itself is recreated in the pages of the novel.

### ***Two definitions of image-paradigm: ontological and functional***

When introducing *image-paradigm* to the hierotopic lexicon, Lidov emphasized its elusiveness and the difficulty of its positive definition. His first explanation is full of negations and sounds somewhat apophatic:

...in many cases discussion of visual culture can be reduced neither to a positivist description of artifacts, nor to the analysis of theological notions. It requires change of vision and of the language of description. Some phenomena can be properly interpreted only on the level of images-ideas: I prefer to term them ‘image-paradigms’, which do not coincide with the illustrative pictures or ideological conceptions. This special notion seems a useful *instrumentum studiorum*, which helps to explain a certain layer of historical sources. That image-paradigm

was not connected with illustration of any specific text, though it included a lot of literary and symbolic meanings and associations. It is hard to see in this paradigm just an embodiment of a theological concept, although the depth and complexity of its structure is quite obvious. The image-paradigm belonged to the visual culture, it was visible and recognizable, but at the same time it was not formalized in any stable state, either in a pictorial scheme or in a mental structure. In this respect the image-paradigm looks similar to the metaphor that loses its sense in re-telling, or in its division into parts.<sup>22</sup>

In this quotation, the author of the concept answers the question: “What are image-paradigms?” In fact, he suggests an ontological definition, which can be briefly summarized as follows: “The *image paradigm* is neither a purely visual mental image nor a pure idea, although it does combine both aspects.” In what follows, we shall use a more “cataphatic” approach to investigate ontological characteristics of image-paradigms in more detail.

In the previous discussion of the Heavenly Jerusalem, we stressed that its vision was already known to believers and was evoked from memory. In fact, the same vision could come to mind in other situations, e.g., while reading the Book of Revelation or praying. This means that, ontologically, *image-paradigms* belong to a general class of religious imagery that lives autonomously in the religious mind. In the next section, we shall attempt to define this class of mental images and describe their multifaceted nature. We shall characterize them in terms of “*image-concepts*.” As this term suggests, such mental structures comprise *both* a vision and a pure idea. We shall try to understand how the sensual and the abstract connect to each other in image-concepts.

Next, we shall characterize image-paradigms in functional terms, i.e., according to the way they manifest themselves in hierotopic projects. We will see that, owing to their unique properties, “*image-concepts*” function as *image-paradigms* of sacred spaces and work to articulate their spiritual messages. The image-paradigm of a specific sacred space “acts”<sup>23</sup> as its central design idea. It informs the sacred space and defines its perception. The two aspects are, of course, interrelated: in order to successfully function as image-paradigms of sacred spaces, these mental structures must possess certain ontological characteristics. In a nutshell, our approach is to study ontological and functional aspects of image-paradigms jointly but also separately.<sup>24</sup>

### **Ontology: image-concepts in the religious mind**

Mental imagery receives far less attention than other aspects of religious experience. It is typically seen as an unnecessary companion of faith or as an auxiliary component of religious thought, rather than part of its nucleus. Moreover, individual imagination is often censured in Christian literature. Both mystics and scholastics seem to shun, albeit for different reasons, the sensual luxuries offered by the imagination.

Religious imagery is nevertheless an inherently fundamental part of religiosity. Although the essence of religion is epitomized, for most people, in texts and verbal doctrines, both are typically the products of a later formalization of what was originally an ineffable, barely expressible revelation, often born in the bosom of an older tradition and clothed in the vibrant and colorful texture of a myth. In Christianity, living memories of Jesus and his teaching became intermixed with the rich imagery of the Old Testament, the latter being appropriated in a new way as a foretaste of things to



come. The Bible itself contains, for a great part, a textual recording of diverse visual evidence, so it required significant work on the part of the imagination and visual memory of its writers as well as readers and listeners. A huge body of hagiographic literature was an endless source of inspirational imagery as well.

Leaving behind the formative years for an era of “second hand religion”<sup>25</sup> (as it appears to a vast majority of ordinary believers), we see again the imagery of the original myth taking root and sprouting to a new life in the minds of successive generations of adepts. Any reader of the Book of Revelation could rightfully exclaim: “in the beginning was the image!” Indeed, the text of this book is a kind of ekphrasis, a description of a magnificent vision (in many parts a re-make of the Old Testament visual prophecies), the principal purpose of which was to evoke the same vision in the minds of its readers.

In Medieval culture, which is the primary focus of current hierotopic research, the significance of images and imagery was solidified in the triumphant victory over iconoclasm and the further formation of highly visual styles of *ars sacra*, such as Gothic art, with its emphasis on “believing and seeing,”<sup>26</sup> and “the Gospel in icons” of Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>27</sup>

Being rooted in the tradition in its entirety, religious mental images are quite different from mental images in art associated with specific works of art; hence, they comprise a special subject of study worthy of dedicated attention. In the following section, we shall endeavor to characterize the distinctive properties of religious mental images and to show how intimately they are connected to the current discourse of the ontological aspects of image-paradigms.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Images in art and images in religion***

One way to summarize the characteristic features of religious imagery is to contrast it with mental images derived from visual art. Take again the Mona Lisa as a typical example of an art-image. It has a single source, which fully defines what it really is. Being forever attached to the portrait, it is kind of “static” and can’t really develop in our minds: it just stares at us from where it is. It is invoked by a picture and, hence, can be referred to as “illustrative.” It is actualized in a purely individual act of contemplation. Once we turn to look at religious imagery, we can’t help but notice how strikingly it differs in all the previously mentioned respects.

Religious imagery originates from multiple sources, such as training, social communication, liturgical life, prayer, reading, mysticism, and art. Though rooted in the entirety of the religious experience, these images have the power to separate from their origins and take on a life of their own in the religious mind. In fact, they come to constitute a peculiar form of spiritual knowledge. From the believer’s point of view, these are visions of spiritual reality seen in the mind’s eye with the aid of divine inspiration.

An individual “gallery” of religious images evolves and matures in the course of spiritual life. Its initial origins are typically in the past and are often long forgotten. For example, though the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem existed in the minds of Medieval Christians as the true vision of an otherworldly reality, few believers probably ever analyzed why and how such a vision had come to take shape in their minds. Another obvious example is the image of Jesus, which lives in the mind of each and every Christian, regardless of one’s confession. Most Christians would not be able to say why or how they came to imagine Jesus in this specific manner. Was it drawn from

a movie? Or from reading the Gospel? Or from praying to Him? Or from looking at a Renaissance painting in a museum? All of these variegated influences join together to inform what is felt on a personal level as “my” Jesus; it being only slightly different from that of a parishioner sitting further down in the pew.

Nonpictorial religious images are often evoked by means of association. A typical example would be the relics of saints. A piece of St. Peter’s bone does not look like St. Peter, but the saint himself, his likeness and his deeds, came to the mind of a pilgrim venerating the bone. Using Elsner’s apt turn of phrase, it “pulsated with the presence of the saint.”<sup>29</sup> The shroud of the Virgin is simply a piece of cloth with nothing depicted on it, but behind it, the Virgin herself can be “seen.” The image of the Virgin thus evoked belongs to the whole tradition rather than to the relic itself. The relic is just a pointer, an “indexical sign.”<sup>30</sup> The use of images that pointed or hinted instead of directly depicting was typical for Medieval art: a couple of trees was sufficient to evoke an image of the Garden of Eden. Such indirect, nonillustrative ways of actualizing imagery stimulated creative imagination.

Made manifest in a collective experience, religious imagery clearly belongs to the religious tradition as a whole rather than to the imagination of any one individual. It belongs to an entire community of the faithful as a vision of an objectively existing otherworldly reality. Just as we all see the same visible world with our physical eyes, the believers, similarly, see congruent visions of the same reality of the higher world with their mind’s eye. Believers coming to venerate a shroud of the Virgin in Chartres imagine St Mary in slightly different ways, but such differences are as unimportant as the differences in the recollection of a late grandmother by family members.

Now, let us return to art-images and consider them from another perspective. Typically, we see art as something emanating from an artistic individuality. In art, the person of the creator-artist comes to the fore. All that he has personally created is held as being authentic and deemed as art. In artwork, we value – even require – uniqueness and originality.<sup>31</sup> Copies have little value, and mass-reproduction just loses the status of art altogether.

The case of religious imagery is again quite different. Its genesis is essentially traditional and innovations are mistrusted. A religious image must be the same as it always has been – otherwise it risks losing its value and being degraded to the level of a product of individual phantasy. Copying and even mass production of religious images increase their value and elevate their standing. A well-known story of the Holy Mandylion is a good example.<sup>32</sup> In the world of sacred art, the person of the artist is of secondary importance: the images are thought of first and foremost as emanations of the divine, whereas the artist merely helps to give them material form.

The example of the Mona Lisa was quite representative. Imagery in the art world originates, as a rule, in concrete artwork. Its sources are clearly defined and localized: a book, a screen, a canvas, or a slide projector. The viewer, for his part, is in a position of more or less an external observer. Religious imagery, conversely, appears from within the sacred medium and directly engages a believer, making him an active participant in a “spatial icon.”

### *Vision-ideas and image-concepts*

Religious images are complex mental constructs in which visual and abstract components are closely intertwined. In them, visions are inseparable from pure ideas. The

imagery grows around central theological ideas much like vegetation in a tree (its leaves and branches) grows around the trunk. The trunk gives the tree stability and support, whereas the greenery sustains its life – without green leaves the tree would wither. Together, they make a living tree.

The proportion of significance defining the relationship between “vegetation” and “trunk,” that is, between imagination and rational theology, can vary from case to case. If the theology dominates, the imagery plays a subsidiary role, like that of a mere illustration. This is sometimes the case for abstract concepts, such as salvation or atonement. In other cases, the imagination would be more likely to sit at the steering wheel. For example, we learn from a classic work of Jacques Le Goff that the doctrine of Purgatory originally took shape in visions.<sup>33</sup>

It is, of course, possible to think in pure abstractions, but in real life, we experience ideas in combination with visions, visual aids, and recollections, day-dreaming, etc. We wrap our ideas in the clothes of imagery in order to anchor them in the more substantial stuff of our imagination. Even in mathematics, the process of understanding often boils down to committing a helpful visual example to memory. Moreover, even in simple cases, it is difficult to separate ideas from images. For example, a cow, as a species, is an abstract category, but everyone would associate it with visual recollections of actual bovines. A farmer’s son would undoubtedly imagine a big and warm milk-giving cow from his childhood, whereas an urban dweller would think of herds in the fields, which he had seen from a train.

Both notions of *idea* and *visual form* can be traced back to Plato’s *eidos*.<sup>34</sup> Since, in antiquity, the thinking was inseparable from perception, abstract concepts were inseparable from images and took on a character of vision-ideas. It is remarkable that, until the eighteenth century, geometry was a principal mathematical discipline. Geometry-based reasoning, rather than being numerical or speculative, was considered an ultimate proving technique (whereas today it is the other way around). Geometry offered the purest possible means to realize the synthesis of images with ideas. It directly suggested thinking in terms of Plato’s “eternal forms,” which, in this case, were really forms in the straightforward sense of the term. Today’s sciences do not require the visual interpretation of their abstract statements, but in a more traditionalist religious mind, which tends to conserve ancient forms of thought, a synthesis of visions with ideas penetrates deeper and is better preserved.

The search for a fitting verbal formula capable of encapsulating this organic unity of the abstract and the visual brought me to the term, “image-concept,” which was already in use in linguistics.<sup>35</sup> The image-concept is an epistemological category, which combines rational and visual (or, more generally, sensual) aspects. Let me stress that the image-concept is a unified compound mental structure. The sensual “filling” stuffs it with vibrant living content, whereas a rational, doctrinal kernel ensures its stability and timelessness.

We shall see later that the unique, defining properties of religious image-concepts secure for them a key role in hierotopy: they function as the image-paradigms of sacred spaces. In this capacity, they constitute a semantic code of a special kind in which the kernel meaning of the sacred space is communicated to its target audience.<sup>36</sup>

The close link between the visual and the abstract in the *image-concept* provokes a question: “Is a new term really needed? Isn’t it simply a *symbol*?” The answer is “no.” In the *symbol*, direct values of image and idea stand far apart. This is exactly the reason why they must be interconnected with a special noncausal link referred to as a

“symbolic link.” Huizinga has cogently compared symbols with short circuits in the brain insofar as they connect things, which normally stand apart.<sup>37</sup> A national flag, for example, is a symbol of a country; whereas, in reality, it is just a dyed piece of cloth, i.e., an object with properties that have little to do with the notion of *country*. We assign it a symbolic significance by convention. The internal working of religious mental images is also quite different from symbols: in them, ideas and visions are joined together as tightly and as naturally as a figure in a scientific paper is linked to its caption. In it, the fusion of an idea and vision is complete and organic.

Image-concepts and the related image-paradigms of sacred spaces must also be distinguished from Jung’s archetypes. Whereas the latter can be referred to as “the collective subconscious,” religious imagery could be called, by the way of contrast, “the collective conscious.” Religious images are part of openly existing and explicitly defined religious beliefs. Generally, Jung’s archetypes can be used to interpret religion through primeval subconscious motives. However, we assume that religious views and their related imagery are given to us through their actual historical development and are conditioned by a sociocultural context rather than by ancient instincts.

### ***Image-concepts and icons***<sup>38</sup>

Image-concepts are not pictures, though they can be shaped under the influence of pictorial sacred art. Eastern icons of Western religious paintings alike may become points of departure for the genesis of image-concepts, which are inherently more multifaceted and structurally complex entities than so-called *iconic images*.

The pluriform of Jesus’ iconography, thoroughly surveyed recently by Michele Bacci, provides a remarkable example.<sup>39</sup> We find very different iconic types, such as the Pantocrator, the Ancient of Days, and Emmanuel, even within the same iconographic program. This diversity does not cause confusion, but rather helps believers form a unified and variegated mental image of the Savior, which far surpasses a mere likeness.

The deeply rooted Christian interest in the visual is manifest not only in the diversity and richness of sacred art but also in the very nature of Biblical texts, many of which, as I noted earlier, are either narrations or direct descriptions of visions. Both solicit an intensive use of the reader’s imagination. Moreover, while reading the Bible, Christians of all kinds, even the most iconoclastic, deal with the same imagery, which is simply based on the text: they would all visualize a good Samaritan traveling on his way to Jericho, the enthusiastic Zacchaeus climbing a tree, the four beasts from the vision of Daniel, or Elijah ascending to heaven in the fiery chariot. Illustrated Bibles have been popular among all Christian denominations and even in Jewish culture.

### ***Image-mediators and an “invisible iconostasis”***

In the believing mind, religious imagery fulfills a mediating function, connecting the mundane world with the divine. These images stand up on the pages of sacred books, walk off the surfaces of frescoes and icons, are evoked in moments of prayer, animate the sacred spaces of churches, are associated with relics and holy objects, and are made manifest in liturgical life. Using Lidov’s terminology, one could say that religious imagery belongs to the realm of the iconic in a broad sense of the word.<sup>40</sup>

Medieval Christian discourse on icons focused on the question of whether or not it was possible to access the invisible by means of the visual?<sup>41</sup> The intermediate layer of mental visual images received little attention in this debate. It seemed to have no ground of its own in the divide between matter and spirit, but, if anywhere, it gravitated toward the former. Similar to icon-pictures, mental images essentially belong to the realm of the sensual, being ontologically quite distinct from the divine. In the spirit of the Neoplatonic teaching of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, they can be counted together with “dissimilar images,” which, however crude and inadequate, are nevertheless able to point to the ineffable, divine phenomena.<sup>42</sup> If a conventional Byzantine icon functioned as a window into an otherworldly reality, then, perhaps, mental religious images can be viewed, in the same spirit, as “mental icons,” whereas religious mental imagery, taken as a whole, can be thought of as an “invisible iconostasis” opening up the mind’s eye to the world of the divine.

Fr. Pavel Florensky, a mystic philosopher of Neoplatonic inclinations, explained the genesis of mental imagery with the help of his theory of “descending images.” According to Florensky, the boundary between the two worlds (mundane and “other”) traverses the human soul. Having soared to heaven, the soul contemplates the higher reality in a mystical image-less manner, and, on its way back down to the mundane, wraps the spiritual treasures it received in symbolic images – which either remain in the interior as mental images or are expressed in the form of art. In this way, “descending images” are formed: authentic mystical experience is crystallized at the boundary separating the two worlds. These images encapsulate the true spiritual experience and must be distinguished from “ascending images,” born of human phantasy.

The image of ascent, ... even if bursting with artistic coherence, is merely a mechanism constructed in accordance with the moment of its psychic genesis. When we pass from ordinary reality into the imagined space, naturalism generates imaginary portrayals whose similarity to everyday life creates an empty image of the real. The opposite art — symbolism — born of the descent, incarnates in real images the experience of the highest realm; hence, this imagery — which is symbolic imagery — attains a super-reality.<sup>43</sup>

Belief in the divine origin of religious imagery is essential to a correct understanding of its nature. What a believer sees in religious imagery is not a play of individual imagination, but a stable reality, both truer and more ontologically solid than one’s mundane daily environment. For most of us, the words, “spiritual reality,” have a connotation of something ephemeral and immaterial, hence unreal. But, for believers, the spiritual reality is as solid and as eternal as a stone temple, and mental religious images are a reflection of this higher reality in their minds, a reflection as normal and as natural as the images engendered by the perception of the physical world with our normal senses. Being both stable and firm, they play a key role as design elements in sacred spaces.

### **Image-paradigms in action**

All the previously described properties of image-concepts are instrumental in their functioning as image-paradigms of sacred spaces. First of all, it is quite important that religious images exist in the believer’s mind autonomously and are typically actualized

by association. They are not directly generated by the sacred space but are evoked quasi-spontaneously, as a recollection. They inspire the creators of sacred spaces and are easily transmitted to the believers initiated into the same tradition. Due to their collective and even universal nature, they facilitate a spiritual resonance among believers thinking in terms of similar mental images. Owing to their iconic quality, these images point beyond themselves to divine realities and thus endow the sacred space with its sacral dimension.

Next, I will discuss in more detail how exactly image-paradigms work. If they are not directly visible, what is the nature of the connection that links them to sacred spaces? A sacred space is clearly not a sign, nor is it a Newtonian emptiness. On the contrary, it much more closely resembles an Aristotelian space of ancient physics, where an extension was equivalent to materiality and where there was no room for the void. I argue that sacred space is made up of typological and symbolic elements and that image-paradigms are generated by an organized ensemble of these elements. For our purposes here, let us call such an organized ensemble “a symbolic landscape.”

If we attempt to analyze the composition of sacred spaces, we immediately find that everything in it has symbolic significance. Its shape is symbolic and so is the dramaturgy of light that takes place within it. It is filled with symbolic objects and human actors acting out symbolic roles in mystical rituals, as well as sacred sounds and odors bearing symbolic significance. The images of sacred spaces are woven together from individual symbolic links, just as a piece of cloth is woven from single strands of thread. We encounter here a peculiar phenomenon in the domain of symbolism, which has as of yet received little attention and has yet to be accorded a clearly defined place in scientific classification: a symbolic ensemble as an originator of mental images.

In order to clarify the working of an organized collection of symbols, let us begin with a simpler example: an organized collection of signs, which is, a schematic. Take, for example, a topographical map. Such a map is composed of a limited set of signs; all of them are listed in the map’s legend. Each of these signs signifies a separate object, but the map as a whole represents an entity of a higher structural order, namely, a landscape. A landscape cannot be reduced to a simple sum of trees, houses, and rivers; instead, it bears an image of its own, a meaning irreducible to the elements of which it is composed. A landscape’s theme is of a specific kind, be it that of a city, a village, a forest, or a seacoast. A landscape is composed of various elements, but it cannot be reduced to them, just as a sentence cannot be reduced to a set of words, and just as a word is more than a mere sequence of constituent sounds. What makes a landscape a landscape is the organization of its elements. This is what informs its entire composition and imbues it with a meaning and a beauty of a higher structural level than the meaning and beauty of a single tree or a single house.

A sacred space can be seen as a kind of “symbolic landscape,” the organization of which revolves around the actualization of its image-paradigm(s). An image-paradigm is thus an image of higher structural order than an individual symbol. It is “woven” from symbols as a map is composed of its elements. It is engendered in much the same way as the key theme of a musical symphony is given shape through an orchestrated array of melodies created by the unified work of many instruments, such that it, as a musical whole, leaves in our minds a lasting impression.

In closing, let us return to the example of Heavenly Jerusalem and try to imagine how this paradigmatic image was formed in sacred spaces of Medieval churches. Although nowhere depicted, it was invisibly present in an organized ensemble of symbolic

elements. We would find it in the gleam of gold, glass, and gems<sup>44</sup>; in the figure of the Priest, which symbolizes Christ at the center of the Holy City; in the mystical presence of the saints invoked by the liturgy; and also in the majestic architecture, which formed a heavenly setting for the angelic choir. All of this was united in a kind of a choir performing a single, unified melody of the Heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>45</sup> The presence of the Holy City was experienced as the most intimate and interior of dreams and, at the same time, the most overt and majestic vision filling and animating the sacred space.

### **Concluding remarks**

If the image-paradigm is a new instrument for the study of sacred spaces, this essay is an attempt to write a manual for it, or, at the least, a theoretical introduction to it. My aim has been to convey my understanding of what image-paradigms are and how they function. I have argued that image-paradigms are rooted in the religious tradition as a whole and can be characterized ontologically as “image-concepts,” or compound mental structures in which sensual components are fused together with pure ideas. I have also argued that they are evoked via the collective action of organized ensembles of symbols that constitute a sacred space and give shape to its spatial icon.

Is that all there is to the image-paradigm? Well, not likely. The notion, I have to admit, still remains somewhat elusive to me. It evades “positivist analysis.” It is neither an image nor a paradigm – although it does possess both these aspects. In fact, in this paper, we have mostly been concerned with the “image” side of it. Indeed, we have drawn attention to its expressive and communicative role as well as how it is evoked. I have also attempted to bring to light their peculiar “interior” aesthetics. Being physically invisible, they appear as ideal and majestic visions before the mind’s eye, more majestic and more ideal than any brush could ever paint. Being essentially nonillustrative, they are experienced as an aura of the real presence of divine reality.

What we have not addressed in this paper is the “paradigm” aspect, which has more to do with the creation of sacred spaces than with their perception. We did not discuss the important figure of the creator of sacred spaces.<sup>46</sup> Instead of looking at sacred spaces through the eyes of their creators, we have adopted the perspective of their beholders. However, while we interpreted the sacred space as a “symbolic landscape,” we left aside the art of “symbolic landscaping.” The role of image-paradigms as guiding design-ideas, or “paradigms” of the complex process in which a sacred space is born, only peeked indirectly through the case studies we touched upon. The paradigmatic function of the image-paradigm is particularly evident in the processes of the “serial” reproduction of sacred spaces based on canonized patterns (such as re-creations of the Holy Land). Perhaps, these are issues to revisit later on in the future. The ongoing work on hierotopic case studies provides ample food for thought and evidence for further theoretical analysis.

### **Notes**

- 1 Alexei Lidov [Алексей Лидов], “Одигитрия Константинопольская,” in *Чудотворные иконы в восточнохристианской культуре* (Moscow, 1992).
- 2 The term hierotopy was originally christened at Lidov’s lecture, “Byzantine Hierotopy. Miraculous Icons in Sacred Space,” delivered at the Bibliotheka Hertziana in Rome on

- January 14, 2002; see Alexei Lidov, "The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006a), 32.
- 3 Lidov, "The Creation of Sacred Spaces...", 42.
  - 4 Galina Zelenskaia [Галина Зеленская], *Воскресенский Ново-Иерусалимский ставропигиальный мужской монастырь: Путеводитель* (Moscow: Palomnik, 2014), 6. The term *spatial icon* recurs on the website of the New Jerusalem Monastery; see, e.g., Dimitrii Shmelev [Дмитрий Шмелёв], "Палестина русская на Истре," URL: <http://www.n-jerusalem.ru/essays/article/text/30455.html>.
  - 5 The analogy between Byzantine spatial icons and modern multimedia installations is frequently explored in Lidov's work, for example in Alexei Lidov, "The Temple Veil as a Spatial Icon: Revealing and Image-Paradigm of Medieval Iconography and Hierotopy," *IKON* 7 (2014), 100.
  - 6 Ample research on *spatial icons* is readily available and will be reviewed in other parts of this book.
  - 7 In Russia, hierotopy came to be included in the list of officially recognized disciplines for universities. The first course of this kind, entitled "Христианская иеротопия. Создание сакральных пространств в средневековой Европе [The Christian Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Medieval Europe]," was offered at the High School of Economics, Moscow starting in 2013.
  - 8 Here I draw on Gell's concept of the Art Nexus; see Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12–49, in particular p. 29.
  - 9 Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987); Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1950). The latter book faced criticism on methodological grounds, but the very idea that Medieval churches represented the Heavenly Jerusalem in some way has gained general acceptance; see, e.g., Roland Recht, *Believing and Seeing. The Art of Gothic Cathedrals* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and Laurence Stookey, "The Gothic Cathedral as the Heavenly Jerusalem: Liturgical and Theological Sources," *Gesta* 8/1 (1969), 35–41.
  - 10 I am indebted for this example to Witold Rybczynsky, *Home. A Short History of an Idea* (Penguin Books, 1986), 6–7.
  - 11 Lidov, "The Creation of Sacred Spaces," 42.
  - 12 Op. cit., also Alexei Lidov, "Heavenly Jerusalem. The Byzantine Approach," in Jewish Art, eds. A. Cohen-Mushlin, Bianca Kühnel (Jerusalem, Center for Jewish Art of the Hebrew University, 1998), 340–353. Lidov has lately taken up this topic again in Alexei Lidov [Алексей Лидов], *Иконы. Мир святых образов в Византии и на Руси* (Moscow: Theoria, 2013), 95–168. A. Simsky has studied the image-paradigm of the Heavenly Jerusalem in Gothic hierotopy: Andrew Simsky [Андрей Охоцимский], "Образность готического храма: опыт иеротопического подхода," *ПРАΞΗΜΑ. Проблемы визуальной семиотики* 3 (2016), 9–24.
  - 13 Alexei Lidov, "Holy Face, Holy Script, Holy Gate. Revealing the Edessa Paradigm in Christian Imagery," in *Intorno al Sacro Volto. Genova, Bizansio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI-XIV)*, eds. Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti, Colette Dufour Bozzo and Gerhard Wolf (Venezia, Marsilio, 2007), 195–212.
  - 14 Alexei Lidov, "The Temple Veil as a Spatial Icon: Revealing and Image-Paradigm of Medieval Iconography and Hierotopy," *IKON* 7 (2014), 97–108.
  - 15 Alexei Lidov, "Sacred Waters in Ecclesiastical Space. The Rivers of Paradise as an Image-Paradigm of Byzantine Hierotopy," in *Holy Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2017a), 159–183.
  - 16 Alexei Lidov [Алексей Лидов], "Амвон как святая гора в иеротопии византийского храма," in *Святые горы в иеротопии и иконографии христианского мира*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2017b), 41–44.
  - 17 Andrew Simsky, "The Image-Paradigm of the Divine Fire in the Bible and Christian Tradition," in *Hierotopy of Light and Fire*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2013), 45–81.
  - 18 It has been shown that, thanks to sophisticated optical mastery, the icon of the Glory of God, appearing in the form of a cloud of light, was formed under the dome of Hagia



- Sophia: Wassim Jabi and Iakovos Potaminos, "Geometry, Light, and Cosmology in the Church of Hagia Sophia," *International Journal of Architectural Computing* 5/2 (2007), 303–319; A. Yu. Godovanets [А. Ю. Годованец], "Свето-пространственная композиция Софии константинопольской и позднеантичная наука о свете," in *Иеротопия огня и света*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2017b), 136–146. Alexei Lidov [Алексей Лидов] argued that the icon of Light in Hagia Sophia is just one example, however extraordinary, of Byzantine iconography of the Glory of God: "Иудео-христианская икона света: от сияющего облака к вращающемуся храму," in *Образ и символ в иудейской, христианской и мусульманской традиции*, eds. А. Б. Ковельман and Ури Гершович, (Moscow: Indrik, 2015), 127–152. Light effects in ecclesiastical architecture have also been reviewed by Vsevolod Rozhniatovsky [Всеволод Рожнятовский], *Рукотворный свет* (St-Petersburg: European University, 2012).
- 19 Sergei Avanesov [Сергей Аванесов], "Сакральная топика русского города (3) Семантика интерьера Софийского собора," ПРАЭНМА. Проблемы визуальной семиотики 2(12), 30–78; Ruslana Demchuk [Руслана Демчук], "Софія Київська як ієротопічний проект. Sophija Kijevska yak ierotopichnyi proekt [Kievan St. Sophia as an Hierotopic Project]," in *Софійські читання. Матеріали IV міжнародної конференції [Sophijskija chennija, Conference proceedings]* (Kiev: ADEF-Ukraine, 2013), 40–54; Olena Osadcha [Олена Осадча], "Ідея choros як основний принцип організації сакрального простору храму на прикладі собору Софії Київської. [The idea of the 'choros' as an organizing principle of the sacred space of the Kievan St. Sophia]," *Українська академія мистецтва. Дослідницькі та науково-методичні праці* 24 (2015), 109–119.
  - 20 Dmitriy Burchkov [Дмитрий Бычков], "Топографія сакрального плану в художественній картині мира агиоромана Д. М. Балашова «Похвала Сергію» (ієротопічний аспект)," *Вестник АГТУ. Соціально-гуманитарні науки* 2 (2013), 40–54.
  - 21 A typical avenue of hierotopic creativity passes from the Holy to the sacred, e.g., a sanctuary representing a place of hierophany: Lidov, "The Temple Veil . . .," 98–100.
  - 22 Lidov, "The Creation of Sacred Spaces . . .," 42.
  - 23 Seminal iconological studies of the late twentieth century emphasize the activity and power of visual images. See Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994); David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Gell, *Art and Agency* . . .
  - 24 This approach was first used in my study of the image-paradigm of the Divine Fire which started out from a broad review of imagery of fire in the Christian tradition as a whole, especially in the Bible. This analysis helped to characterize diverse aspects of the image-concept of Divine fire and to identify its various modes of actualization as an image-paradigm in Christian churches. See Simsky, "The Image-Paradigm of the Divine Fire."
  - 25 This term was coined by William Jones in order to juxtapose creative and learned religiosity; see Jones, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Kindle, ch.1.
  - 26 Recht, *Believing and Seeing. The Art of Gothic Cathedrals*.
  - 27 Valerij Lepakhin [Валерий Лепехин] has made a convincing case for the all-embracing iconic nature of Eastern Orthodox theology, and the worldview stemming from this, in his book *Икона и иконичность* (СПб: Успенское подворье Оптиной Пустыни, 2002).
  - 28 The ontology of image-paradigms has been studied in this way by Andrew Simsky [Андрей Охоцимский], "Образы-парадигмы в религиозной культуре," *Вопросы культурологии* 8 (2016), 36–44.
  - 29 Jas Elsner, "Relic, Icon and Architecture: The Material Articulation of the Holy in East Christian Art," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. Cynthia J. Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Pub., 2015), 16.
  - 30 Robert Nelson made use of this Peircean term to characterize an-iconic signification by convention. See "The Discourse on Icons, Then and Now," *Art History* 12/2 (1989), 144–157, and also Arthur Burks, "Icon, Index, and Symbol," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9/4 (1949), 673–689. Bodily relics are not signs in the usual sense of the term, but rather an example of *synecdoche*, that is, a kind of relationship, in which a part fully represents the whole.
  - 31 G. Bachelard has emphasized the "ecstasy of the newness" and "essential novelty" of poetic images in his book *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M. Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969), xv–xx.

- 32 The proliferation by copying is inherent in the very nature of the Holy Mandyllion, it being a direct imprint of the Holy Face. Moreover, legend has it that the relic was copied for the first time (Mandyllion to Keramion) already on its first journey to Edessa. Herbert Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face,” in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, eds. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuovo Alpha Editoriale, 1998), 129–151; Alexei Lidov [Алексей Лидов], “Святой Мандилион. История реликвии,” *Спас Нерукотворный в русской иконе*, eds. Lilia Evseeva, Alexei Lidov, and Natalja Chugreeva (Moscow: Dm. Pozharsky University, 2008), 12–39. Other papers in both books also contain useful insights on the subject.
- 33 Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).
- 34 Alexei Losev has noted a close link between mental visual images and Plato’s concept of *eidōs*. In antiquity, “ideas had markedly visual nature. They were visual and abstract at the same time.” Alexei Losev [Алексей Лосев], *История античной философии в конспективном изложении* (Moscow: Mysl, 1989), 20.
- 35 Larisa Nikitina [Лариса Никитина], “Языковый образ-концепт. О природе сложного термина,” *Вестник челябинского университета. Филология, искусствоведение* (24: 57, 2011), 97–99. The term “image-concept” was introduced into hierotopic research in Andrew Simsky [Охоцимский, А.], “Образы-парадигмы в иеротопии: онтологические и функциональные аспекты,” *Фонарь Диогена. Человек в многообразии практик* 2 (2016), 357–373.
- 36 Avanesov discussed image-paradigms in the wider context of visual semiotics. He emphasized the essence of image-paradigms as communicative constructs and characterized them as the “generative kernels of meaning” [производящее смысловое ядро] of sacred spaces. See Sergei Avanesov [Сергей Аванесов], “Сакральная топика русского города,” ПРАΞΗΜΑ. *Проблемы визуальной семиотики* (1, 2016), 71–114. The communicative role of image-paradigms featured as the focus of my talk “Image-paradigms in Hierotopy: Sacred Spaces as Communicating Media,” delivered at the Annual Conference of the European Association of the Study of Religion, EASR-2017, 18–21 September, Leuven.
- 37 Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney. J. Payton and Ulrich. Mammitzsch, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997, orig. pub. 1919), ch. 15.
- 38 The role of icons in hierotopy is discussed in more detail elsewhere, see A. Simsky. *The Discovery of Hierotopy // Visual Theology* (2020, No 1), 9–28.
- 39 Michele Bacci, *The Many Faces of Christ. Portraying the Holy in the East and West* (London: Reaction Books, 2014).
- 40 The *iconic*, understood in this broad sense, is the meeting ground of the earthly and the divine; see Alexei Lidov, “Icon as ‘Chora’: Spatial Aspects of Iconicity in Byzantium and Russia,” in *L’icône dans la pensée et dans l’art*, eds. Kristina Mitalaitė and Anca Vasiliu (Turnhout: Brepols Pub., 2017c), 423–447; and Alexei Lidov [Алексей Лидов], *Иконы. Мир святых образов в Византии и на Руси* (Moscow: Theoria, 2013), 9–38.
- 41 This question was never to receive a simple answer. According to Kessler, “even the great Augustine could not comprehend fully the relationship between corporeal seeing and spiritual vision.” See Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004): Preface.
- 42 Dionisius the Areopagite, “The Celestial Hierarchy,” in *Pseudo-Dionisius: The Complete Works (The Classics of Western Spirituality)* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 143–192.
- 43 Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 44–45.
- 44 Sergei Averintsev [Сергей Аверинцев], “Zoloto v sisteme simvolov rannevizantiyskoy kul’tury,” in *Поэтика ранневизантийской литературы* (St. Petersburg: Azbuka-Klassika, 2004), 404–425.
- 45 Particularly when the Easter troparion is sung: «Shine! Shine! Oh, New Jerusalem...»
- 46 Alexei Lidov, “The Creator of the Sacred Space as a Phenomenon of Byzantine Culture,” in *L’artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*, ed. Michele Bacci (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2007), 135–176.

### 3 Dazzling radiance

#### A paradigm and a quiz in Byzantine chorography and hierotopy

*Nicoletta Isar*

##### **Dazzling presence – a metaphysical paradigm**

The radiance of God and its shining as a manifestation of the divine presence is a topos from the Near East world to the Byzantine world throughout the Mediterranean. God is stunning in its radiance (Ezekiel 1–24). The radiant splendor of the Akkadian gods, a *pulhu melammû*, is a terrible epiphanic radiance.<sup>1</sup> The body of the Greek gods is also a wonder to behold – *thauma idestai*. No human eye could bear their vision. The sight of the idol and the holy mysteries is a fearful reality. Fear and awe in front of the mystery and the holy image are symptoms engrained in the very word designating the sacred.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Christian theology gives us as well, in St. Paul's formulation, the measure of the divine body of Christ as pure radiance:

The Son is the *radiance of God's* (my emphasis) glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

(Hebrews 1:3)

Dazzling vision has been for many years part of my research, exploring its consistency as a concept as it comes out from the Byzantine *ekphrases*. Aspects of sense perception engaged in these visions have been addressed as part of the theory of the beholder's share or the theory of response. A systematic study on the subject still needs to be thoroughly done, although quite a proliferation of studies of sensoriality in premodern cultures became recently a most active field of research. This paper attempts to make a *mis au point* of my own research on the subject with an attempt to strengthen its theoretical frame concerning sensoriality and other relative concepts applicative to these phenomena, for example, the saturated phenomenon.

Sensoriality in Byzantium, specifically the sense perception that should be applied to divine radiance, and the symptom of dazzling, requires a particular approach relative to the sense apparatus involved in this operation and the specific space of the experiencing body. The scope of this paper does not allow me to present the grounds on which the position toward sense perception changed throughout Byzantine history. I will limit myself to name one important event in its history with direct consequences not only for the radical and definitive definition of a sacred image in Byzantium but also the redefinition of senses and sense perception engaged in its contemplation. This event was the unquestioned victory of the iconodule party against the iconoclasts, which resulted in the definitive restoration of the holy icons, with significant

implications in the rehabilitation of the senses. What has been impossible for the iconoclasts, namely, the association of senses and the icon (art) with the divine has found now a new ground in the argumentation of the defenders of the holy icons. The iconoclast view was based on the belief in the poverty of the senses and the reduction of art to mere pragmatic value, implicit to all kinds of iconoclasm. The iconoclasts could not see the icon as a bearer of divine energies or grace (*cháris*), which was confused with the divine substance (*ousía*); in so doing, they restricted the possibility of participation in the divine energies by means of the veneration of icons. The iconodule approach was more “charismatic,” denying any division of God’s creation into sacred and profane parts. For the Byzantines, the icon, relic, holy man, and monk were channels through which the world was permeated by the holy, so that man could become himself “god by grace.”

The decree of the Synod of Constantinople from 843 affirming the recognition of the holy icons marked the life of the Christian church and immediate effect on the Christian metaphysics and the new aesthetics. The incarnation provided not only the argument for the legitimacy of the use of *sacred images* but helped the iconodules to reconsider the interpretation of the created matter. As a result, the aesthetic field expanded his agency without compromising the Byzantine discipline and its apophatic character. The sacred image acquired a theology, and the worship could argue for the rehabilitation of the visual, and of the senses in general, viewed now as “senses sanctified.”<sup>3</sup> Far from denying the physical senses, Christianity encouraged the faithful to trust the evidence of the senses, since “through the use of our bodily senses (*aisthêtôs*) we perceive his express image (*ton autou charaktêra*) everywhere.”<sup>4</sup> This attitude was reflected in what Damascene called “a twofold worship” (*diplê prosynêsis*), in accordance with the human nature understood as “a synthesis between the intellectual and the sensate (*noêtês kai aisthêtês syntheimetha*).”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in Byzantium, the sensorial (*aisthêsis*) could not be dissociated from its counterpart, the spiritual (*noêseis*), viewed as constitutive parts of the Byzantine worship. The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the complexity and the specificity of sensoriality in Byzantium reflected in this uncompromising synthesis between *aesthêsis* and *noêseis*. In order to exemplify how this synthesis operates, I will look into the Byzantine sources, especially *ekphraseis* of Hagia Sophia composed between the sixth and twelfth century, and search to identify various modes of perception, somatic and mental responses to stimuli experienced in the space of Hagia Sophia. Based on my previous research, I expect to identify specific tropes of sensoriality, patterns of moving and of being moved, as well as extreme sensory responses, like a dazzling vision. A theory of response of the Byzantine beholder reacting to the aesthetico-liturgical challenges that occurred in the sacred space of Hagia Sophia will be eventually sketched out.

In exploring the Byzantine *ekphraseis*, I take Ruth Webb’s view of the nature of these Byzantine sources, especially the quality of *enargeia*, or “vividness” of these texts, and the role of imagination, which according to her makes this specific genre a study of ancient psychology as well as of rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> Exemplary seems to be in this respect Paulus Silentiary’s *ekphrasis* poem of the imperial church of Hagia Sophia, in which the poet himself is not only the writer but also the human subject engaged in the experience. Few remarks will justify my premises. The *ekphrasis* poem written by Paulus the Silentiary<sup>7</sup> in 563 at the consecration of the imperial church is not a mere description of the church; thus it is not objectively detailed, I argue, but rather it is liturgically implicated. Paulus’s poem *ekphrasis* is liturgically implicated, at least for

two reasons: firstly, Paulus' description-poem is a living utterance read aloud at the consecration of the church; secondly, his vision has the quality of a personal mystical experience conveying emotional effects. His oration reflects his own sensorial experience, which engages his personal empathy and the faculty of imagination. My argument is that his text, as well as all the other *ekphraseis* composed between the sixth and twelfth century, must be examined not only as a source of historical and archaeological information but also as valuable sources of aesthetic theory, eventually of aesthetics of sensoriality.

Facing the spectacular vision at the ceremonial of the consecration of the imperial church, Paulus Silentiary is thrilled by the magnificent view generated by the visual effect of precious stones, porphyries, and Proconnesian marbles, as well as of gold intensified by the ceremonial of light. This creates a mirage of glitter that makes the poet exclaim:

Thus is everything adorned with splendour (*aglaïe*). Thus may you see (*noeseis*) all that fills the eyes with wonder (*pánta noéseis ommasi thámbos agonta*). But to sing with clear voice this vesperal dawn no words are sufficient.

(806–808)

This wondrous vision engages not only the optical apparatus of the poet but challenges him to acknowledge something beyond visibility manifested in a contemplative manner (*noéseis*) during the experience. This perception is conveyed, for example, through the poetical expression “vesperal dawn” (*phaesphorien hespérien*), which read linearly appears as a juxtaposition of impossibilities. But for the poet of the noetic vision (*noéseis*), this is the expression of what is beyond comprehension and language, the testimony that one has reached a limit beyond which thought cannot go. Language is in stalemate; the eye must prepare for an extramundane and extrasensory vision. The poet was compelled to apply to a different linguistic tool: this was an oxymoron, which he applies several times. Likewise, the process of transmutation of the stone and marble in the space is oxymoronic: “It [the marble] has spots resembling snow next to flashes of black: its grace enlivens the stone” (*miktè dè charis sunegéreto pétrou*) (646) (Figure 3.1). The effect derived from this paradoxical association of terms suggests an ineffable presence operating in the space. This presence animates the architectural forms, and, as we will see, stirs up a human response. The spiral disposition of veins in the marble seems to give life to the inert matter that appears to be “full of grace” (661–663) (Figure 3.2). Thus is “(... glistening the enchanting grace of stone” (*stílbonta charin thelxíphrona pétre*)<sup>8</sup> (663). In Paulus' poem *ekphrasis*, the enchanting grace of stone gives life to the inert matter, but the author himself is being moved. The same presence that animates the surface of things transfiguring everything in the space induces a powerful sensory perception upon the human body. The response of the Byzantine human subject is made manifest in his somatic – emotional reaction. From the moment when stepping into the church, the beholder is confronted with the amazing picture. As the poet depicts this awesome moment, the beholder is so deeply astonished so that “with enchanted eyes (*thelgoménois dè ommasin*) he turns his neck in all directions” (296–299). This emphatic bodily motion reflects his bewilderment in front of the unexpected vision. It is a topos in Byzantine *ekphraseis*.<sup>9</sup> In response to this visual challenge, the soul of whoever sees this vision is charmed (*thélgetai*), his spirit leaps out (*térpei*) (890–894). Here is how aesthetics and noetics as two modes of apprehension seem to clash, yet they remain interlinked in a conspicuous way. This is

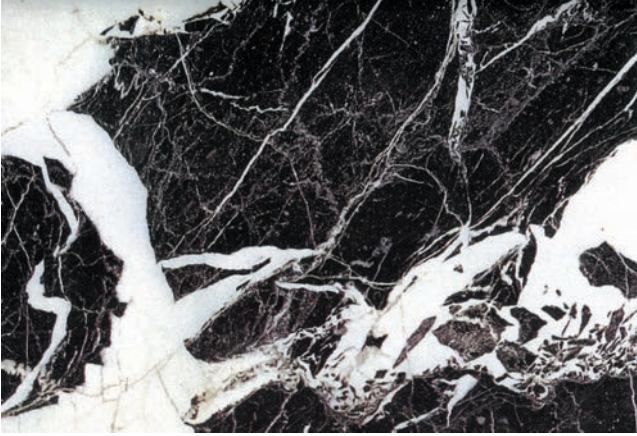


Figure 3.1 Marble in Hagia Sophia. Photo: Description de Sainte-Sophie de Constantinople, Raniero Gnoli, Marmora romana, Edizioni dell'Elefante, Rome, 1988.

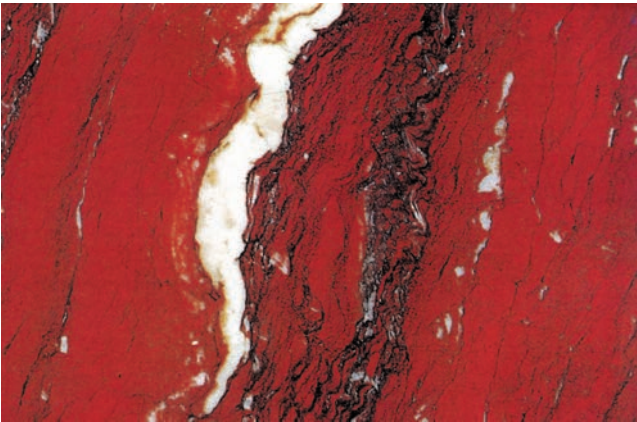


Figure 3.2 Marble in Hagia Sophia. Photo: Description de Sainte-Sophie de Constantinople, Raniero Gnoli, Marmora romana, Edizioni dell'Elefante, Rome, 1988.

where presence is contained and sensed by the Byzantine human subject. Anticipating the experience of the sacred space of Hagia Sophia, the poet gives us the real quality of the experience in continuous unfolding:

It is a miracle (*tháumbos*) in perpetual *whirling* (*aeidíneton*)<sup>10</sup> that you are going to contemplate.

(399)

Vision spinning around as if in a round dance is for the beholder an image to contemplate, as well as a space to inhabit and to be inhabited by its circular dynamics (Figure 3.3). The choral pattern of vision becomes quite explicit in other *ekphraseis* of the imperial church. In Procopius' *ekphrasis*, a bewildering sight of plans is constantly shifting around, with architectural elements retreating and receding (*hupochôrousa*),<sup>11</sup>

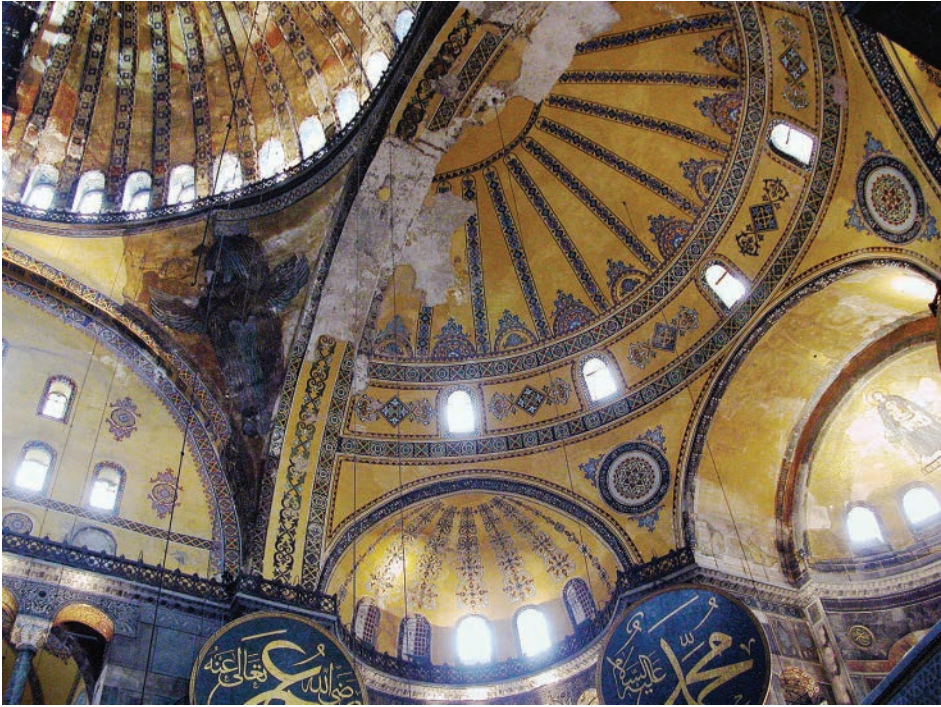


Figure 3.3 The whirling space of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Photo: Isar, *The Dance of Adam*.

most famously, the metaphor of the dancing columns graciously moving their bodies in dancing steps and counter-dancing turns (Figure 3.4). This creates a space in process of moving and of being moved by the powerful stimuli created around the beholder. The experience might have no doubt generated a powerful emotional and psychic response on behalf of the Byzantine beholder. Likewise, Photius' of Constantinople's sermon preached around 864 at the inauguration of the Pharos church in the palace too reveals the paradigmatic vision of the church circling around, by now familiar, which illustrates the consistency of this performative pattern of sacred spaces in Byzantium. However, the patriarch's oration is particularly invaluable for testifying the beholder's reaction, his strong emotional response facing the marvelous vision. This passage is worth quoting completely:

But when with difficulty one has torn oneself away from there and looked into the church itself, with what joy (*charâs*) and trepidation (*tarachês*) and astonishment (*thâmbous*) is one filled! It is as if one had entered heaven itself with no one barring the way from any side, and was illuminated by the beauty in all forms shining all around like so many stars, so is one utterly amazed. Thenceforth it seems that everything is in ecstatic motion, and the church itself is *circling round* (*peridoneisthai*). For the spectator, through his *whirling about* (*peristrophais*) in all directions and being constantly astir, which he is forced to experience by *the variegated spectacle* on all sides, imagines that his personal condition (*pâthema*) is transferred to the object [all my italics].<sup>12</sup>



Figure 3.4 Columns in the exedra at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Photo: Isar, The Dance of Adam.

Photius' ecstatic vision of the church with its multifarious *panaché*-like spectacle induces a vivid response of the Byzantine beholder. He reacts with joy (*charâs*), trepidation (*tarachês*), and astonishment (*thaûmatos*), which proves the intensity of the aesthetic experience, drawing on a long and rich tradition of Greek writing. Interesting is the use of the term *thaûmasion* (wonder, awe), which occurs several times in other Byzantine *ekphraseis*. In association with another term *ekstasis*, it conveys the effect of elevation or sublimity (*hypsos*), and both terms have a special resonance in ancient Greek thought; they are properly called affects.<sup>13</sup> What's more interesting, and symptomatic for the Byzantine *ekphraseis*, is that Photius does not record just the emotional response of the beholder exclusively due to an external stimulus. He describes how the shining vision of the church circling around (*peridoneisthai*) induces a similar whirling (*peristrophais*) perception onto the mental apparatus of the spectator. The term used by Photius to describe the empathetic impression on the beholder's mind is *peristrophè*. This is an important concept, used by Pseudo-Dionysius to describe the disposition of the soul<sup>14</sup> in its movement, itself a Platonic paradigm present in the *Republic* to express the swift motion of the conversion of the soul. Thus, I assume that Photius applies here to a tropism of the soul. This tropism becomes clearer further in Photius' description. We learn that the spectator imagines himself empathetically to be part of the object of



his vision, eventually becoming one with the object of his contemplation, to which his personal affection (*páthema*) is transferred.

In the midst of this circular vision, not only the optical vision but also the body and mind (imagination) are affected. The personal condition (*páthema*) of the beholder is transferred to the object of contemplation. The human body becomes, metaphorically speaking, the phenomenological ground of an overwhelming experience projected in the imagination. The Byzantine beholder finds himself constantly astir, in a state of absolute bewilderment, as if inebriated. The sensational motion that overcomes him, I argue, is the response of the human subject to the undisclosed presence that pervades the space and induces the sensation of dizziness. Facing the ontological gap between the Creator and the creation, the person is subject to vertigo (*iliggos*) says Nyssa. Overcome with dizziness, the beholder stumbles all over the place because his mind cannot lay hold of the transcendent reality. The affinity between the sensible and intelligible things<sup>15</sup> is here paradigmatically expressed in the whirling pattern of motion unfolding in Photius' church. Therefore, perhaps Gregory Nyssa once stated: "God makes a person dizzy."

This particular episode from Photius' oration illustrates the specific mode of operation of sensoriality, which engages the extrasensorial apparatus. As it comes out, the sacred space in Byzantium is not a mere physical extension of the space in which the body is contained, but rather it is a space of experience that enables man to participate in the Being. Byzantine sensoriality seems to obey this operation of sacred spaces. Therefore, in order to properly answer the question "How could one define the sensoriality in Byzantium?", one should first be able to answer the question "What place could one ascribe to the Byzantine beholder in this performative experience?" The answer has been already given long ago in an almost aphoristic way in my book: the dancer cannot be separated from the dance.<sup>16</sup> Photius' empathetic experience is the expression of this living space in the act, the realization of the sacred space. Therefore, sensoriality exceeds by far the limits of aesthetic expression. It manifests itself fully as a synthesis of sensory perception and the contemplative mode of perception (*noêtês kai aisthêtês syntheimetha*), the twofold worship (*diplê prosynêsis*) ingrained in the Christian anthropology.

### Being moved by light: choral vision in Hagia Sophia

In his comprehensible study on senses sanctified and the rehabilitation of the senses in Byzantium, Jaroslav Pelikan makes us aware that the most fruitful line of argumentation to approach the depth and the complexity of Byzantine aesthetics and sensoriality would be to look into its metaphysics of light.<sup>17</sup> This will be my further concern in this paper. Paulus Silentiary's *ekphrasis*, especially the 114 verses (lines 806–920) dedicated to lighting, offers the richest Byzantine testimony concerning the ceremonial of light in the imperial church of Hagia Sophia in the sixth century and the effect upon the Byzantine faithful. A vast dramaturgy of light in motion unravels in the sacred space of Hagia Sophia, designed as an overwhelming chorography of circling choirs of bright lights (*kúklios ek phaéôn choròs*), hanging on twisted brazen chains that float above the heads of men (Figure 3.5). But in their choral path, the circling lights form a choir in unison (*kai ekteléousin homógnion*) (818) that gathers together in concord all the "ever-changing beauties" and the multitude of lights unfolding in the space. One important idea comes out clearly from this poetic stanza, which is symptomatic for Paul's poetry that has been perceived as a synthesis of philosophical Neoplatonic



Figure 3.5 View of the interior of Hagia Sophia with the brazen chains falling down.  
Photo: Isar, The Dance of Adam.

thinking. This idea is poetically expressed in the vision of the imperial space of Hagia Sophia viewed as a harmonic unity conferred by the light agency unfolding in the choral movement. *Chorós* is the Platonic and Neoplatonic concept borrowed by Paulus from Proclus, Plotinus, or the mystics of Pseudo-Dionysius, and adapted to the Christian thought. This vision is a fine echo of the Areopagite's image of the preparation of the soul for the rites to be celebrated in harmony with the divine realities through "the unison of the divine songs as in one single concordant choral dance of holy beings (*miai kai homologôi tôn hierôn choreiai*)" evoked in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* III. 3–5. Light is not understood by the poet as an additional element in the space, a mere medium in which things were contained, but rather as a dynamic force and a constitutive element of the sacred space, a space-organizing principle reflecting a cosmological model. Hagia Sophia was the embodiment of this model, a vast theological model of the Christian world. As I will argue, this complex apparatus of lighting was an important sensory trigger, providing the beholder with an eventful experience. The function of Paul's circling lights and fire carried by the long bronze chains becomes clearer with the help of Pseudo-Dionysius. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, the abundance of terms evoking light brings the divine closer to the faithful. It is why the Word of God seems to honor above all the depictions of fire.<sup>18</sup> The fire is a mode of being uplifted to God because "the power of fire causes a lifting up to the godlike."<sup>19</sup> It is my assumption that the abundance of Paul's light imagery belongs to the theological context of the sixth century concerned with spiritual worship. His emblematic vision of the *choroi* of light hanging on the brazen chains is shared by a whole intellectual world of Neoplatonism from the fifth and sixth centuries, as well as by Christian theologians,

from Saint Paul, and Pseudo-Dionysius, to Saint John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa. The brazen chain, a metaphor of the golden chain, which goes back to pagan philosophers and even to Homer, was perceived as the bond that binds the creatures to God. In his *The Divine Names* (DN 3. 1 680AD), Pseudo-Dionysius calls out the Christian to stretch upwardly to God in prayer, to let ones being lifted up to the brilliance above, to “the dazzling light of those beams” (*tôn poluphôtôn áktínôn marmarugás*), rather than pulling down the shining chain. The specific Greek term *marmaruge* serves Pseudo-Dionysius to describe the mystical encounter with God as an experience that outshines all brilliance with its intensity. This image goes back to Plato’s aporetic vision of the last things evoked by Socrates as the exceeding brilliance of light (*lamprotérou marmarugês empéplestai*) (*Republic* book VII 517b-c, 518a-b) that bedazzles the prisoner at his exit from the cave. It is worth noting that there are episodes in which specifically this particular term (*marmaruge*) occurs not only in Paulus the Silentiary’s poem, but also in some other Byzantine *ekphraseis* to evoke phenomena of light, flashing, gleaming, and sparkling. The function of the term and the significance of these extreme phenomena of light in our descriptions remain yet to be explored, as well as the sensory effect upon the Byzantine beholder.

Thus, Paulus the Silentiary evokes how the abundance of light coming out from the gilded tesserae of the walls of Hagia Sophia tests the limits of ocular perception.<sup>20</sup> A glittering (*marmairousa*) stream of golden rays pours abundantly and strikes men’s eyes with irresistible force. As a result, the beholder is deeply affected by the effusion of gold. The ray of light is enforced energetically and abundantly upon the eye, and it “strikes” (*epeskirtese*)<sup>21</sup> the eye with irresistible force “as if one were gazing at the midday sun in spring” (672). The eye could scarcely bear to look. The dazzling (*marmairousa*) effect created by the abundance of light is evoked once again in the 12th century *ekphrasis* of Hagia Sophia written by Michael the Deacon, which depicts a comparable sensory impact of the light upon the eyes: “Thus has the stone, [...], yielded, [...], it sparkles (*marmairai*) brilliantly and agreeably to the eyes” (162–164).<sup>22</sup> The vision is abolished. Obstructed by the brightness of gilded walls like a mirror (*kátoptra*), it brings tears in the eyes, and the vision is simply liquefied:

the brightness of the gold almost makes the gold appear to drip down; for by its refulgence making waves to arise, as it were, in eyes that are moist, it causes their moisture to appear in the gold which is seen, and it seems to be flowing in a molten stream.<sup>23</sup>

(70–73)

At this point, the self seems to dissolve into the moist vision of the flashing light, which is dazzling (Figure 3.6). The separation between the subject and the object becomes indistinct as if unifying the seen and the seer. These episodes from the Byzantine *ekphraseis* put forth a dazzling imaginary that connects with Pseudo-Dionysius’ mystical vision, with the Neoplatonic circle, especially with Plotinus *Enneads* VI. 7. 36 and the Platonic vision from *Rep.* 507c ff. In his dialogue *Timaeus*, Plato specifically treats the mechanism of dazzling vision (68a) as an extreme sensation within the fourth kind of sensation called color (67c–68b). The affinity of this text with the Byzantine *ekphraseis* is remarkable. According to *Timaeus*’ theory, this phenomenon of dazzling occurs when the fire is “leaping from the eye,” and at the same time, fire emitted from the object is forcing its way into the eye. This process heats and dissolves the substance of



Figure 3.6 Angel of light – golden stream in Hagia Sophia. Photo: Isar, The Dance of Adam.

the passages (*ékchéousan*, 68a2) turning them into a conglomerate of fire and water, a warm wet thing that is called a tear. Then, in a state of confusion (*kúkesis*), one could see all kinds of colors that are said to be “dazzled;” the object causing this process is called *lamprón* or *stilbon*, “brilliant,” or “bright.” The similarity between this Platonic sensation described above and the experiences enforced upon the eye of the Byzantine beholder makes us think that the Platonic model of vision was still alive and carried out in Byzantium.

It is impossible to reconstitute the original lavishing space of Hagia Sophia described by the Byzantine *ekphraseis*, especially Paulus’s chart of the liturgical apparatus engaged in the ceremonial of the choral light-evoked in his poem. Yet, it is my assumption that one could still recognize Paulus’ old paradigm of lighting in one of the most eloquent examples of Byzantine and post-Byzantine ceremonials of light performed at Mount Athos, which became the center of Orthodox monasticism in the fourteenth

century. With its fiery corona hanging on long chains in the middle of the church, the Athonite lighting device, conspicuously called *choros*, is a new Hesychast vision of the old Paulus' choral vision, which one could still contemplate today (Figure 3.7). The most spectacular part of the monastic drama of the *agrypnia*, with its complex dramaturgy in which darkness and light alternates, is the moment when one of the monks, by pulling the corona with a pole, turns it into some sort of propeller (X) to skim the ground and raise it up (Figure 3.8). The movement of the fiery *choros* is centrifugal and invasive; it spreads the circular glow of the multitude of flames in the space making one simply dizzy. Everything vibrates in the space, saturating the air, inflating it, dissolving matter, and signifying sound (Figure 3.9). The effect of the whirling circle of light is overwhelming. The vision of the fiery *choros* is part of the ascetic exercise of the soul spiraling toward the union with God. The shining *choros* is the image of the soul. The mystical vision of Light (God as Light) was the end of the journey for the Hesychasts. Few clarifications around the meaning and the disposition of this mystical vision of the Hesychasts seem instrumental. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), the theologian of Hesychasm, describes the mystical experience in a metaphorical way,



Figure 3.7 Choros from the monastery at Vatopedi, Mount Athos. Photo: Isar, *The Dance of Adam*.

comparing it with the vision of the sun reflected as in a mirror that overwhelms the sight to the point that the blessed beholder would be able to see God. He would be able to see the invisible archetype but not through invisibility, but through vision, albeit a mirror image of the invisible archetype, a vision in excess:

If somebody would see the solar disc in the mirror more luminous than the sun itself, so that the sight would be overwhelmed by the lightning of this disc, he would



*Figure 3.8* Choros in motion at Vatopedi monastery. Photo: Isar, *The Dance of Adam*.



Figure 3.9 Lighting choros in the church of Dečani. Photo: Dragan Tanasijević.

see, *in excess*, the invisible archetype, but not through invisibility, but through vision. Likewise, those who can see the blessed vision not through negation, but through vision above vision in Spirit, know this divine work.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, argues Palamas, there are phenomena that are “not something, but something in the sense of excess;” (*houk ousa, kath hyperochên*) such is the glory that is not, but in the sense that it exceeds the existence. It is in this paradox of the mystical vision that man could meet God, and this mystical vision belongs to the aesthetics of spiritual things (*noerà aesthesis*).<sup>25</sup> This vision, metaphorically described by Palamas as the lightning of the solar disc,<sup>26</sup> recurs not once in his writings, and it is identified as the light the disciples saw on Mount Tabor. The pure in their heart saw “the body of Christ vibrantly radiating as from a disc wrapping their hearts with this dazzling light.”<sup>27</sup> A singular illustration in the Byzantine iconography of the abstract theological reflection of Palamas might be provided perhaps by the burnished-gold panels of the twelfth century from Sinai, particularly one specific detail in the icons. Their “technique of optical radiance”<sup>28</sup> derived from the burnished gold creates such an impact that needs to be addressed beyond its visual effect. The particular iconographic detail that interests me here, placed on top of the icons under the guise of what appears to look like a whirling disc (Figure 3.10), is inserted in the abstract golden background creating its own space within space, apparently aniconic, but catching insistently the eye with its glory, just like the haloes of the saints. Its form and presence in the icons is a challenge and a quiz for hierotopy. Alexei Lidov associates this specific iconographical pattern of the



Figure 3.10 The Icon of Transfiguration with the whirling discs, Sinai, 12th century.

“whirling disc” with performativity in Byzantium, within the paradigm of the “whirling church,” which is a pertinent idea and an important contribution to hierotopy.<sup>29</sup> But no specific image seems to emerge out of the whirling discs, which project their space outwardly as the pure circular radiance. Yet, in the dazzling vision overwhelmed by the motion created by the spread of gold, a mute drama seems to unfold; something that Bissera Pentcheva sees as “an opposition of light-reflecting versus light-absorbing areas,”<sup>30</sup> which generates a polarization between the radiance and the shadow.

But unlike Bissera Pentcheva, I believe that the radiance produced by the light on gold, in the burnished-gold haloes, especially the solar discs, which is indeed performative, could hardly be seen as fully nonmimetic.<sup>31</sup> Their space is the ground of a theophany (*periaugē*);<sup>32</sup> indeed, a special theophany emerging out as a disc of light,<sup>33</sup> as a solar disc.<sup>34</sup> Focusing one’s eye on these golden discs, image and space merge together in a single vision, a spectacular vision in which everything moves, spinning around as a helix. It is my contention that rather than to be seen as a mere effect of some aniconic beam of light, the golden spread allows the adumbration of a hidden image; it inscribes a visual event whose ground and the source is mystical. Vision emerges as a chiasmus,<sup>35</sup> the abbreviation of the holy name of Christ. In the Serbian church of Lomnica, the disc is specifically accompanied by the epigraph *slovo bzhē (logos)*.<sup>36</sup> The movement “circling around” or “whirling about” of this iconic vision shaped as the Greek  $\chi$  has obviously some parallel with the chiastic shape of the biblical text.<sup>37</sup> The sacred space thus created appears to be a chiasmus in action. Its movement cannot be defined but as *perichoresis*, a double movement (motion and repose/rest).<sup>38</sup> I would argue, the presence of these solar discs carries an important ontological meaning, and as I will show, an important lesson for hierotopy. For Maximus, *perichoresis*



signifies a reciprocal indwelling. He argues that through such indwelling, each person could become a carrier of Christ according to his/her degree of faith. Thus, for Maximus the Confessor, *perichoresis* is the way to *theosis*. As Vladimir Lossky argued in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, this was the divine function of the first man, according to St Maximus: “to unite in himself the whole of created being; and at the same time to reach his perfect union with God and thus grant the state of deification to the whole creation.”<sup>39</sup> Hieranthropos (the deified man) or we could call him, the Hierotopic Man should be an intimate part of the Hierotopy project as it is a chapter in Christian anthropology that understood the deification of man as the final goal of the Christians, a double movement of reciprocal indwelling, God’s movement toward men through the incarnation and man’s movement toward God in the imitative process of deification. part of the reciprocity between God and man (Maximus the Confessor).

The technique of burnished gold has this extraordinary quality to create a performative vision, a kind of “landscape,”<sup>40</sup> which I would argue is a hierotopic “landscape,” a *chôra* space. Its choral (perichoretic) performance is rather than a flat depiction of radiance, a spatial manifestation of the history of Christianity in its condensed form as the revelation of a luminous presence. At this point of the analysis, I must introduce the gold analogy of the *chôra* from Plato’s *Timaeus* to help address the effect of the spread of gold in the icons. What is it so special about these golden spreads in the Sinai icons and icons in general? Plato invites us to perform an exercise of imagination, which I will further follow in Ashbaugh’s interpretation.<sup>41</sup> Just imagine that a skillful metallurgist, God, has molded the shape out of gold (*ek krusou*), and having done so, he continued unceasingly to remold (*metaplassô*) each figure into the others (Tim. 50a). This Platonic analogy holds a great lesson for us. Gold is something out of which containment is wrought, wherein the verb takes the prefix *ek* in a productive sense but not like making a shoe out of leather, and in no way relates *chôra* to the matter, but the preposition simply presents the notion that gold (*chôra*) sustains in the production.<sup>42</sup> In his gold analogy to approach *chôra* of the cosmologic process, Plato argues that in a similar way as gold assures the stable form of appearances, so does spatiality (*chôra*) makes possible the perception of moving bodies. Reading Plato, Sallis argues that the gold of the analogy is about molding or modeling, as with the gold that is remolded and remodeled into another image drawn from *tèchnè* that of impressing or stamping an impress or imprint on a matrix (50c). What happens, Sallis explains, is that one should imagine the imitation of those forms that always are, that is, the perpetual beings, as if they are being stamped, applied like a stamp to a matrix, and leaving in the matrix an impression similar to the stamp itself.<sup>43</sup> The choice of gold as the analog of *chôra* is to assure stable support for the possibility of visible transformations. The choice of gold as a background for sacred icons is by no means arbitrary. The thing “out of which” appearances are wrought on their golden spreads is simply the seat of unceasing motion.<sup>44</sup> This description of gold is to be found in the section Tim. 59b-d as a fusible variety of water that is quite dense because it is composed of fine, uniform particles that give the appearance of something shining (*stilbon*). The spatiality of the golden ground in the icon, a spatiality of *chôra* type, is a stable spread for mirroring appearances, a potential recipient of impressions (*ekmageion*, Tim. 50c2), and containment of the images of intelligible things (Tim. 50c5).

Going back to Palamas’ vision of the solar disc, one could conclude that what is at stake in Palamas’ vision is something beyond the visible and the invisible, something that is neither visible nor invisible, but what Palamas calls a “vision in excess.” The

access to the invisible archetype is achieved not through invisibility but through vision, which exceeds visibility due to the brilliance of light. The path of the mystical “vision in excess” evoked by Palamas resembles Pseudo-Dionysius’ uplifting by the superabundance of light, as well as Plato’s dazzling vision of the last things, thought as a *scarcely* accomplished vision. Concerned as we are with the sense perception, we might ask ourselves how could we ponder the dazzling vision in terms of sensoriality? What does one see or sense while glancing at such a *scarcely* vision? The immediate answer could be found in the term itself, “scarcely,” which translates the adverb *mógis* used by Plato to describe the perception that requires “toil and trouble.”<sup>45</sup> Looking at the last thing might be thus a troublesome affair. A possible answer for this troublesome vision shared by Plato, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Palamas could be perhaps found in Socrates’ own words in which the metaphor of the sun recurs:

Then finally I suppose he would be able to look upon the sun, not in its appearance in water or in some alien abode, but the sun itself by itself in its own place (*chôra*) and to behold how it is.

(516b)

At this moment, the truth is revealed, albeit not as an image, but as the truth itself in its own place (*Rep.* 533a). As Plato points out, the abode of the ultimate vision is nothing else than the *chôra* space, the abode of all generated things, visible and invisible, identified in his dialogue *Timaeus* as space in between and in betwixt, the space in which the paradigm breaks, at once revealing and concealing the epiphanic vision. Looking at the last thing is thus possible only for a momentary glance, just as one would look at the sun since it deflects vision and temporarily injects blindness to it.<sup>46</sup> At this point, the soul is thrown into *aporia* (*aporeô*).<sup>47</sup> Sensation, like language, is at loss. One moves decisively beyond senses since, as Socrates explains, “the perception doesn’t reveal one thing any more than its opposite” (*Rep.* 523c).

### **Saturated phenomenon: vision in excess**

The answer to our question, concerning the sensoriality of the dazzling, could be eventually refined if we reformulate the question in terms of phenomenology and ask whether and how the invisible might be perceived as a phenomenon. The answer to this question follows in the steps of the phenomenology of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion who asks himself whether it is possible to describe metaphysics from a “metaphysically neutral” ground, i.e., phenomenology. Taking up the same paradigm of the dazzling vision from *Rep.* book VII 517b-c, 518a-b, Marion claims that phenomenology could open access to the invisible by saturation, manifested as a saturated phenomenon. His argument is that the invisible gives itself not by default or by lack but by excess. The dazzling vision leads to a saturation of the horizon, where the exceeding brilliance bedazzles the beholder.<sup>48</sup> Marion describes the violent impact of this experience upon the beholder in his *In Excess*.<sup>49</sup> The invisible gives itself as an event, as a projection on a screen upon the recipient, *l’adonné*. It comes with all the power to crash down upon the screen, like an explosion, as a burst out shattering its recipient. Concerned with phenomena of revelation, Marion asks himself punctually “what does the *I* see” while experiencing such dazzling? If one would ask such a

question, the answer would be, according to Marion, a paradox: the *I* sees nothing, no objectifiable given, but is simply dazzled by brilliance. The paradox is that not the *I* constitutes the object, but is constituted by it.<sup>50</sup> This answer holds an important lesson for the beholder of our Byzantine *ekphraseis* since we could build up a typology of the Byzantine beholder, which has been eloquently illustrated by Photius' beholder: the personal condition of Photius' beholder is being constituted by the object of his contemplation in a gesture of ecstatic identification. Dazzled by the excess of light and the spectacular variegated vision, the Byzantine beholder finds himself in the middle of things, right in their own *chôra*.<sup>51</sup> As it comes out, to be in the *chôra* is to be moved by the choral movement, to be enchanted by a swirling presence. The Athonite monks themselves are being moved too, transported by the glowing vision and the *phôtopháneia* – the light emanated from their antiphonal chants.<sup>52</sup> They partake too in the vision and become part of that vision.

At this point, it is interesting to bring into the fore an important point from Plato's *Republic*, which might be relevant for my final address. Plato states that in order to reach "the brightest region of being" (*tou ontos to phanótaton* (518c), the region that we have just identified as *chôra*, it is necessary to acquire, what Plato calls, an "art of shifting (*tês periagôgês téchne*) or conversion of the soul" (518d). This is something "like the scene-shifting *periact* (*periaktéon*)<sup>53</sup> in the theatre"<sup>54</sup> (518c). This is to say that, following Plato's line of thinking, in order to attain the ultimate vision one must first possess the skill of performing the scene-shifting *periact*, which is the art of conversion of the soul. The climactic moment of the vision of last things exceeds perception giving way to the concealed presence to emerge out. As it comes out from our Byzantine sources, to attain the sacred vision means to be moved by the *chorós*, to be enchanted/inebriated by its swirling motion. From this perspective, the exquisite Byzantine spectacle appears to be a vast stage of the shifting *periact* (F 33–34), a *chôra* space of transformation and conversion of the soul by the agency of the whirling motion and the dazzling light, two important tropes of sensoriality induced upon the Byzantine beholder.

## Conclusion

Sensoriality in Byzantium is a challenging problem, and as I have argued, the sense perception challenged by dazzling radiance could be quite a troublesome problem, especially when confronted with its power. The subject has been approached in its genuine context, the context of Byzantine sacred spaces, in which bodily actions and an entire complex sensorial apparatus are constitutive parts of the performative space. Symbols of worship in the guise of the gifts (the gifts such as frankincense, oil perfume, and gold) are distributed over the faithful's intellectual power (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* on the *Rite of Ointment*). Tokens of memory, visible and invisible, are exchanged and remembered. Their grace sanctifies the senses.<sup>55</sup> This is the logic of sensoriality in Byzantium: from matter to transfigured matter, through sense perception and worship, and in a mindful turn of recollection toward illumination. This tradition descends, according to Margaret Barker, to the second temple, and it was carried on by the Christians and preserved in their worship. For the Byzantines, the entire liturgical apparatus, objects and incense, vestments, and adornments have been engaged in the liturgical space in the process of anamnesis, in which the icon itself, just like the holy relic or the holy man, has been perceived as the channel through which

the world was permeated by the holy. Therefore, as I have argued, the Byzantine approach of sensoriality was charismatic.

Byzantine *ekphraseis* of the imperial church Hagia Sophia was written between the sixth and twelfth century, including the oration composed by the patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century, and dedicated to the church Pharos, offered notable examples of sensory perceptions experienced by the Byzantine beholder. The sensations went from awe and admiration to stupefaction even to strong bodily reactions such as vertigo that the beholder experienced when confronted with the whirling vision of the church described by the Byzantine authors. The lavishly adorned spaces with their walls covered by gold and polished like mirrors have been a real wonder (*tháuma*) to look at (Figure 3.6). The specific Greek term *marmaruge* in the Byzantine *ekphraseis* evoked the phenomena of light, flashing, gleaming, and sparkling, which moved the beholder from astonishment to bedazzlement, testing the limits of his perception. When seen through the dense air imbued with smoke and fragrance, these interiors dissolve into a fluid vision, a sheer mirage. Finally, approached phenomenologically, the Byzantine dazzling vision proved to be not truly invisible but visible in excess, hence the saturation of the beholder's horizon. At once a revelation and concealment, the dazzling vision was paradigmatic. Instrumental in discarding this quality of vision was the consistent use of the same Greek term *marmaruge*, present in our Byzantine *ekphraseis* as well as in Pseudo-Dionysius and Plato, with the effect of capturing the magnitude of the vision at the point when the vision itself reached the high peak of its contingency, the moment when the revelation occurs saturating the horizon of the beholder, overwhelming him. John Sallis has a very simple and eloquent way to describe the circumstances of this experience in terms of sensoriality, what happens with sensory perception. He says that it is as if one would turn away from the dazzling sun, and the blind spots remain before one's own eyes. These spots are the most immediate images that the sun would make of itself.<sup>56</sup>

The Sinaite icons, with their whirling discs, unveiled to us however another sustained holy vision, something like what Christ has shown his disciples on the mountain: His radiant Face. When Christ took his disciples to the mountain, he said he will show them something mysterious and great. What he has shown them was something very difficult to put in words or imagine. It was Christ's abbreviated hierotopic form, a chiasmus of Light. It was His Revelation – *Meta-morphosis*. This was a matter of both (metaphysical) expression and perception, but with a special eye to apply to that mystery. As Fr. Breck<sup>57</sup> has argued in his book, the literate of the ancient world was trained for this sacramental task, namely, to grasp the hidden vision. They were taught not only to read but also to “see”<sup>58</sup> the text; they were taught how to look at it in a chiasmic manner by approaching it “from the centre outwards and from the extremities towards the centre.”<sup>59</sup> The vision of the whirling solar disc (just as of the sacred text) was structured around a center, the shape of chiasmus being properly a “helix.” The consistency of the Byzantine culture allows us to compare the disposition of the sacred text or the sacred image with typology, both typology and chiasmus being structured around a center.<sup>60</sup> In the process of reading or seeing the image, a specific space apparently emerged rather than being a mere surface on which image and words were displayed in linear succession. Like the sacred text, the image could spiral around from A to B, and the eyes could move inward and upward to the center of the conical helix<sup>61</sup> revealing the invisible sacred space. This mode of approaching vision was paradigmatic for the sacred space in Byzantium, which ultimately reflected a

doctrinal, and as I tried to demonstrate in this paper, an ontological principle as well, especially through Maximus's understanding of *perichoresis* as a reciprocal dwelling, a way to *theosis*. This dwelling (*chôra*) could only be perichoretic as it assures a dwelling embrace, which permeates human nature, and it is reciprocated. The iconic vision, being, and typology appeared thus to be similarly structured, as a chiasmus. They were structured around the midpoint of a conical helix (the incarnation), the moment when the prophecy becomes the revelation,<sup>62</sup> and it was shared. In the drama of light and darkness, radiance and shade, one could at once contemplate, as in a mirror of the solar disc, "His (Christ) face shone like the sun"<sup>63</sup> as his disciples saw it once, as well as "A bright cloud overshadowed them."<sup>64</sup> "Was it not the unapproachable light in which God dwells, and with which He covers Himself as with a garment? (Ps. 104:3)."<sup>65</sup>

## Addendum

### Dazzling face (*Mandyllion*) and its adumbration

There is however in the history of Byzantium another poignant episode in which the same pattern of manifestation of the divine radiant Face of Christ occurs, from which what it remained was just an adumbration. In some respects, it could be considered the model or the paradigm of the radiant divine Face. The effulgence of the divine Face of Christ was terrible and blinding when Ananias failed to capture with his mortal hand the divine countenance, due to its radiance. It is why perhaps the messenger of King Abgar was unable to portray Christ, because of the radiance of His Face. The ancient Greek gods needed to conceal their divine forms by veiling, enveloping their divine body in a cloud, or by some sort of divine metamorphosis in order to appear to mortals. Unlike these gods, in a gesture of kenosis, Christ covered his face, revealing its trace as an imprint on the linen cloth. That is the story of the *Mandyllion*, the story of concealment (through the vision in excess and blindness) and revelation of the holy image of God, that is, Christ. In a text describing the event, "the impression of the face made in the linen cloth was without coloring or painter's art" *Narratio* (PG, 113.423ff.; trans., 235ff.). It was a *skia*, reads the same text (PG, 113.429): a divine *skiagraphia*. If this was understood to be a shadow, this shadow must have captured the glow of Christ's Face in the grain of the fabric, directly into its matter. As Kessler well put it, "the shaded image fixed the evanescence of Christ's visibility." The revelation of Christ's Face in the *Mandyllion* breaks down the paradox and the paradigm of the dazzling radiance of the sacred, creating a new paradox. It makes God accessible fulfilling the Scripture, making His image, as Kessler put it, "an instrument of continuing revelation."<sup>66</sup> This image (the imprint on the acheiropoietic veil) will become the foundational model of all holy images in Byzantium, a paradox and a solution facing divine radiance.

## Dedication

The essay is dedicated to Alexei Lidov, a man of many mysteries, a colleague and a good friend, with whom, I thought, I shared not once a glimpse of what one might think to be a mystery – something he called *hierotopy*. In our urge to give a name to something we definitively lost but eager to recuperate it from the Byzantines, we embraced at once Lidov's *hierotopy*. I joined with much enthusiasm, yet in full reverence

to the mystery that must remain hidden, and in full awareness that what will however remain, it will be perhaps just our scholarly pain, and the ineffable moments inscribed, not in the paper, but somewhere else, in the Parisian air of the warm summer of 2001.

## Notes

- 1 “The body of the gods shines with such an intense brilliance that no human eye can bear it. Its splendour is blinding ...if the god chooses to be seen in all his majesty, ... the splendour of the god’s size, stature, beauty and radiance can be ... already enough to strike the spectator with *thambos*, stupefaction, to plunge him into a state of reverential fear” (Jean-Pierre Vernant, “Dim Body, Dazzling Body,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part One, eds. Michael Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi [New York: Zone, 1989], 37).
- 2 Since Homer the verb *házomai*, with the adjective *hágios* (sacred), was linguistically constructed as a verb of fearing (Benveniste). Experiencing the sacred is a fearful vision. It strikes the viewer with *thambos* and stupefaction. It is dazzling. “The idol is not made to be seen. To look at it is to go mad” (Vernant, “Dim Body, Dazzling Body,” 154).
- 3 Jaroslav Pelikan, “The Senses Sanctified. The Rehabilitation of the Visual,” in *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia of Images* (Princeton University Press, 2011), New Jersey, 99–120.
- 4 John of Damascus, *Oration on the Holy Icons I* 6-17 (PG 94: 1248).
- 5 Pelikan, “The Senses Sanctified. The Rehabilitation of the Visual,” 108.
- 6 Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Ashgate: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5.
- 7 For an English translation see Cyril Mango, trans., “Paulus the Silentiary, Descr. S. Sophiae,” in *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents*. Toronto; London (University of Toronto Press, 1986), 80–96. For a French translation see Marie-Christine Fayant and Pierre Chuvin, trans., *Paul le Silentiaire. Description de Sainte-Sophie Constantinople* (Paris: Éditions A Die, 1997).
- 8 My translation following the French translation by Marie-Christine Fayant and Pierre Chuvin, trans., *Paul le Silentiaire. Description de Sainte-Sophie Constantinople* (Paris: Éditions A Die, 1997).
- 9 The expression “[l]ift up thine eyes round about” is a topos and it occurs in Photius’ homilies twice with reference to the bewilderment at the arrival of the New Jerusalem. By extension, we can think of Hagia Sophia as the New Jerusalem to which one is bewildered to look by turning around one’s neck in a state of dizziness. (*The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, English translation, introduction and commentary by Cyril Mango [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958], 293, 310).
- 10 The verb *díneúô* with the meaning *to whirl* or *twirl round*, or *spin round*, Hom.: *to drive round a circle*, Eur.: *to whirl round* in the dance.
- 11 Procopius, *Buildings I*, trans. H. B. Dewing, vol. VII, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), i.32.
- 12 Photius’ homily X in Cyril Mango, “The Church of the Virgin of the Pharos,” in *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 185.
- 13 Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 44–45.
- 14 *The Divine Names*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (London: SPCK, 1987), 78; 4.9.
- 15 On a theological plan, the whirling motion defines the relationship between the divine persons (God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit) within the Trinity as the eternal dance, *peri-chôrésis* (“interpenetration” or “rotation”).
- 16 Nicoletta Isar, “XOΠOC: The Dance of Adam,” in *The Making of Byzantine Chorography. The Anthropology of the Byzantine Image of the Choir of Dance*, ed. Ioannis Spatharakis (Leiden: Alexandross Press, 2011), 246.
- 17 Pelikan, “The Senses Sanctified,” 113.
- 18 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy* (CH) *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (London: SPCK, 1987), 15 328C to 329C 38.

- 19 CH 305A. See also CH7 205BC; CH 15 328C to 329C 38.
- 20 “The roof is compacted of gilded tesserae from which a glittering (*marmairousa*) stream of golden ray pours abundantly and strikes men’s eyes with irresistible force. It is as if one were gazing at the midday sun in spring, when he gilds each mountain” (Paulus, 668–672).
- 21 I follow Mango’s translation, but it can be also translated as “jumps,” “leaps upon” or even “rejoices,” like in the hymnography of the Annunciation or Luke 1:39–49.
- 22 Cyril Mango and John Parker, “A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia,” *DOP* 14 (1960), 239.
- 23 Mango and Parker, “A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia,” 237.
- 24 Grigorie Palama, *II Triad II Discourse*, in *Filocalia Sfintelor nevointe ale desavirsirii VII*, 298. My translation in English and my emphasis.
- 25 Idem.
- 26 This is present in his two *Homilies on the Transfiguration*, respectively, XXXIV, *PG CLI 424B-436B* and XXXV, *PG CLI 436D-449A*. French Translation Grégoire Palamas, *Douze homélies pour les fêtes* (Paris: YMCA – Press, 1987), 192, 201.
- 27 Grigorie Palama, *Triad against Varlaam*. In *Dumitru Staniloaie, Viata si invatatura Safntului Grigore Palama, Editura Scripta*, Bucharest 1993 (reprint from first edition Sibiu 1938), 208 (in Romanian, my English translation in the article).
- 28 Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Aesthetics of Landscape and Icon at Sinai,” *RES* 65-66 (2014/2015), 196.
- 29 Alexei Lidov, “The Whirling Church. Iconic as Performative in Byzantine Spatial Icons,” in *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), (Rus/Eng), 40–51.
- 30 Pentcheva, “The Aesthetics of Landscape and Icon at Sinai,” 203.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 203, 207.
- 32 Pentcheva, “The Aesthetics of Landscape and Icon at Sinai,” 203, referring to divine epiphany manifested through concentric and centripetal radiance in Exodus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Anastasios.
- 33 For the term “whirling discs,” see Ellen C. Schwartz, “The Whirling Disc: A Possible Connection between Medieval Balkan Frescoes and Byzantine Icons,” *Zograf* 8 (1977), 24–28.
- 34 As we read before, Palamas is quite explicit about the solar disc in his doctrine of mystical vision, although the icons might predate his texts, but as Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “Oriens Augusti. Lever du Roi,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), 117–177 has shown, a whole tradition of the solar disc associated with Christ lies back in the history.
- 35 Chiasmus, named after the Greek letter *chi* (X), indicates a “criss-cross” arrangement of terms in discourse. It is a figure of speech by which the order of the words in the first clause is reversed in the second and takes the shape of X.
- 36 Schwartz, “The Whirling Disc,” 26, referring to Radojčić’ reading of the presence of the whirling disc at Mileseva, interpreted as a figure of Logos by following the finding from Lomnica.
- 37 In his book *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminar Press, 1994), J. Breck has shown how chiasmus works as a principle of composition and reading of Scripture.
- 38 The activity of perpetual stasis (rest) or state of ceaseless activity appears in the angelic dance in *Celestian Hierarchy* vii.4, and in *Divine Names* iv.8 of Pseudo-Dionysius.
- 39 “It was the divinely appointed function of the first man, according to St Maximus, to unite in himself the whole of created being; and at the same time to reach his perfect union with God and thus grant the state of deification to the whole creation.” V. Lossky argued in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Cambridge and London 1957, 109
- 40 Pentcheva, “The Aesthetics of Landscape and Icon at Sinai,” 204.
- 41 Anne Freire Ashbaugh, *Plato’s Theory of Explanation. A Study of the Cosmological Account in the Timaeus*, New York, 1988 (State University of New York Press), 115–128.
- 42 Ashbaugh, *Plato’s Theory of Explanation*, 118.
- 43 John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999), 147.
- 44 Ashbaugh, *Plato’s Theory of Explanation*, 119.

- 45 John Sallis, "The Place of the Good," in *The Verge of Philosophy* (The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 46.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 51.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 48 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), 36–37.
- 49 Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies in Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner (Bronx, NY: Fordham UP, 2004), 50.
- 50 Robyn Homer, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 144.
- 51 In the words of Michael of Thessalonika: "their moisture (of the eyes) appear in the gold which is seen" (Mango and Parker, "Twelfth-Century Description," 237). Describing the beholder's experience, Photios too point out to the same idea: "For the spectator, through his *whirling about* (*peristrophais*) ... he is forced to experience by *the variegated spectacle* on all sides, imagines that his personal condition is transferred to the object" (Cf. Photius Homily X 185).
- 52 The term *phôtopháneia* applies to the mystical light emanating from the chant *Theòs Kúrios* (*Typikon du Saint-Sauveur* 446), or the psalms suggestively called the "psalms of the light."
- 53 *Periaktéon* is probably a reference to the *periaktoi* or triangular prisms on each side of the stage. They revolved on an axis and had different scenes painted on their three faces. Cf. O. Navarre in Daremberg-Saglio s.v. Machine, p. 1469.
- 54 "Even so this organ of knowledge must be turned around from the world of becoming together with the entire soul, like the scene-shifting periact in the theatre, until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of essence and the brightest region of being" (518c).
- 55 "Senses Sanctified: The Rehabilitation of the Visual" is the title of the chapter from Jaroslav Pelikan's book *Imago Dei*, which summarizes the doctrine of John of Damascus exposed in his book *The Orthodox Faith*, Book II Chapter 18 'Concerning Sense-Perception (*peri aisthêseôs*)' (Jaroslav Pelikan, 113).
- 56 Sallis, "The Place of the Good," 51.
- 57 John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1994).
- 58 "Seeing" is to be understood here as *θεωρία* – the mode of contemplation of the sacred in ancient world. Greek metaphysics conceives the essence of *θεωρία* in terms of what is contemplated. But *θεωρία* means also true participation, sharing in the total order itself, namely being purely present to what is truly real, being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees. The beholder is a *θεωρός*, the spectator in the proper sense of the word, since he participates in the sacred act of contemplation (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. [London: Sheed & Ward, 1993], 124, 125, 454). The concept of *θεωρία* also played a key role in Christian mystical thought, particularly of Gregory of Nyssa. According to Gregory of Nyssa, a relation between *θεωρητικός* and *θεοειδής* can be made because the word *θεός* comes from *θῆσθαι* "to see" (Eun. II. 585), and it signifies "the one who sees." In *Quod non sunt tres dii*: "We name the divinity from vision (*θεά*) and we call god (*θεός*) the one who contemplate us (*θεωρός*)" (Jean Daniélou, "La *θεωρία* chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972), 131).
- 59 Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 29.
- 60 Charles Lock, "Some Words after Chiasmus," afterword, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, by John Breck 362.
- 61 Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language*, 57.
- 62 Lock, "Some Words after Chiasmus," 362.
- 63 Matthew 17:2.
- 64 The "bright" (*φωτεινή*) cloud (Mathew 17:5).
- 65 Palamas, *Hom.*, 35.9.
- 66 "As when Moses read Torah to the Israelites, Christ too was veiled while addressing his followers, "but only for an instant," "and when his face was uncovered, the veil bearing his image was proffered as an instrument of continuing revelation" (Kessler, note 62).



## 4 The concept of temenos and the sectioning of light

*Iakovos Potamianos*

### Introduction

This paper attempts to draw connections between two areas that although quite different seem to be empowered by similar underlying assumptions. The first is the ancient Greek word *temenos*, which is both of linguistic and philosophical interest, and the second is the form of a light shaft in Byzantine churches. The affinity between the two is rather capricious and intangible, originating from historical periods often considered entirely strange to one another. It seems nonetheless that these two emanate from a similar train of thought as well as analogous associations. This similarity rests on the sense that there seems to be a certain sensation of the divine, which is both sudden and penetrating and tends to transform the space, in which it presents itself, imbuing it with a transcendental quality. What is particularly interesting here is that such a fleeting sensation seems to be supported by means that are equally ethereal, yet sensed or visible. They seem to belong to the ancient art of designing the intangible.

### The concept of the temenos

In ancient Greek the word “*temenos*” denotes a sanctuary, a sacred enclosure or precinct especially one containing a temple or dedicated to a god.<sup>1</sup> Etymologically, “*temenos*” comes from the word “*temnein*,” a verb (in infinitive), which means “to section” or “to intersect.” The choice of such a word appears rather peculiar for a place of this type, considering the multitude of words that exist to denote a sacred space (sanctuary, shrine, sanctum, chancel, temple, church, and precinct). It is also quite odd that this word has been kept intact, both in form and meaning, when transferred into English.

Another English word, “*temple*,” which is akin to “*temenos*,” is defined as “a part of space or time marked out or cut off.”<sup>2</sup> *Temenos*, therefore, does not refer to any other type of cut but exclusively to that related to the sacred. It is not connected to any kind of subdivision of space for secular use. There is a special gravity embodied in this concept which is solely related to the sacred; the process of subdivision of sacred spaces differed fundamentally from that of the secular land parceling, so much so that there had to be a distinct word denoting it. It refers to a specific type of sectioning for the sole purpose of setting a portion of the space apart from the spatial continuum denoting transference to a different, sacred world, distanced from that of daily secular life. Consequently, by operating on several conceptual levels, the word *temenos* refers exclusively to a place, a superior “*topos*,” of supernatural significance.

This concept, intriguing as it may be, would remain in the realm of linguistic curiosities if it did not somehow transcribe into a concrete perceptual counterpart. In order to turn its profound meaning into tangible imagery it would be necessary to incorporate perceptual features, capable of bringing about an unequivocal sensation denoting the presence of the sacred.

A visual analogy of this sort must have engaged characteristics suitable for the generation of an atmosphere revealing what is enshrouded within the experience, which gave rise to this very word. Historically, the progress in understanding the optical refinements appearing in ancient Greek temples has been particularly slow. The modern world began to acquire an awareness of those not before twenty-four centuries after they were last applied. Consequently, it is safe to assume that it is rather hard to discern such design aspects because they are in fact so subtle that they tend to exert an impact, which, while imperceptible per se, is somehow sensed subcutaneously.

In a similar vein, attempting to understand the visual influence of a temenos on the visitor, the architectural historian Vincent Scully asserts that the reason for the, often called “anarchic,”<sup>3</sup> method of placement of the buildings in Greek temene was the intention for a “plastic action.” He maintains that “the environment was defined by a counterplay of forces.”<sup>4</sup> By the placement of the buildings within the site, this special meaning and sacredness of the space were coming alive connecting each building to the rest as well as to the landscape, forming a cosmos.<sup>5</sup>

Examining thoroughly a number of Greek temene, the architect and urban planner Konstantinos Doxiadis developed a remarkable theory regarding the method of placement of buildings within a temenos. He claimed that the entire space was subdivided into angles forming a ten-part or twelve-part system in the plan. The buildings were made to fit precisely within these angles, and he argued that parts of the landscape were also fitted within such angles. The fundamental idea underlying his system was that the entire site was laid out both in plan and section in order to be perceived properly by the visitor from one main point: the point of exit from the Propylaeum building and entry into the temenos.<sup>6</sup>

From another point of view, studying the orientation of Greek temples, the archaeologist William Dinsmoor, among several other scholars, revealed yet another dimension in their planning; their orientation toward the rising sun of the deity’s feast day in the year of the temple’s dedication.<sup>7</sup>

Should one dispute the above-alleged intentions of the ancient Greek architects as ex post interpretations, he may be assured of their ubiquitous sensitivity and knowledge on matters regarding the meticulous placement of objects in respect to visual angles. Such methods are described in Euclid’s (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> c. B.C.) “Elements.” As to the motion of light, the extant writings of Heron of Alexandria (10 A.D.–70 A.D.), entitled “Catoptrics,” testify to their expertise. In this latter work, sophisticated methods are described employing an illusionistic apparatus for the purpose of generating deceptive images of divine actions within ancient temples, through the use of reflectors.<sup>8</sup>

These studies provide strong evidence to Scully’s concept of the “play of forces,” previously mentioned, which appears not to be limited to mere plastic forces among buildings but to expand to time and motion-dependent qualities involving light and image transformation. Thereby, these forces seem to relate not only to the site but also, on a larger scale, to the surrounding environment and on a smaller scale to building interiors.

Even though the word “temenos” may have been used to denote Greek and Hellenistic sacred sites, it seems that as a concept, it was quite pervading and persisted in time.

It was summed up in the idea of cutting away a portion of space, which was already associated with supernatural qualities and meanings, and was subsequently enhanced by man-made planning. This planning was necessary in order to heighten the sense of supernatural presence in the actual visual sphere.

In the course of realizing this visual equivalent, a process of transition from the secular to the sacred realm must have been employed; otherwise, the desirable impact would not have been produced. The visual environment would have to transform to its new *raison d'être* in the process of entering. This would be achieved by the passage through an intermediate space into which the visual noise of the secular world would subside and this necessary pause would be followed by silence and a state of receptivity. In the Greek *temenos*, such a pause was implemented by means of the Propylaeum, a building, which one entered from the side of the secular world, crossed it, and exited on the opposite side into the sacred realm.

### The Byzantine church

Even though the word “*temenos*” may not have been used for the Christian church or its surrounding site, a similar concept seems to have been present in laying out the interior. The entrance into it presupposed a transition during which one crossed a space regularly if not amply lit called *narthex* (Figure 4.1). On its surrounding surfaces, there were usually expressive images from descriptions of the *Inferno* and the *Apocalypse* (Figure 4.2).

The *narthex* is a transitional space which might be thought of as the equivalent of the transitional space of the Propylaeum of the Greek precinct, acting as an intermediate

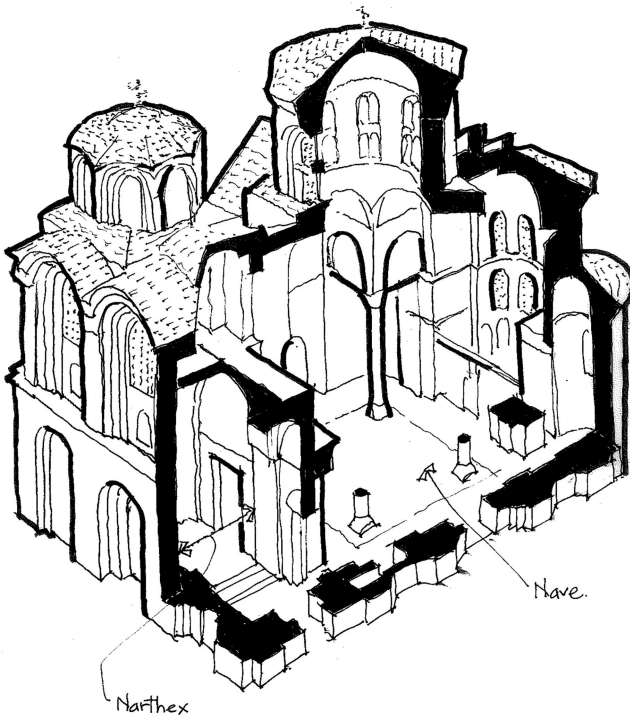


Figure 4.1 An axonometric section of a typical Byzantine church indicating the location of the narthex. Sketch: author.



Figure 4.2 A typical narthex of a Byzantine church with frescoes from the Apocalypse. Photo: author.

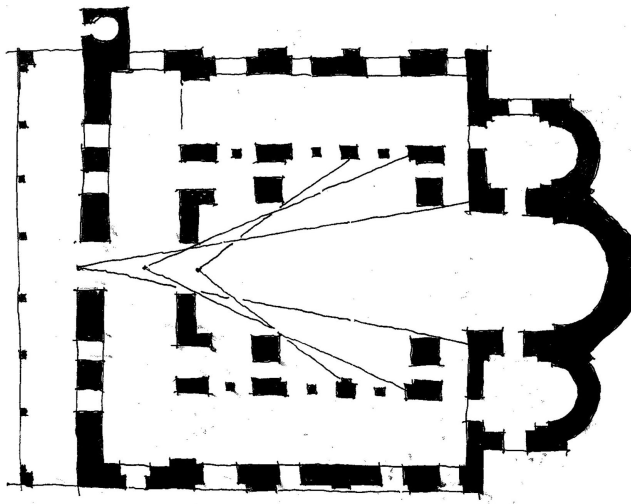
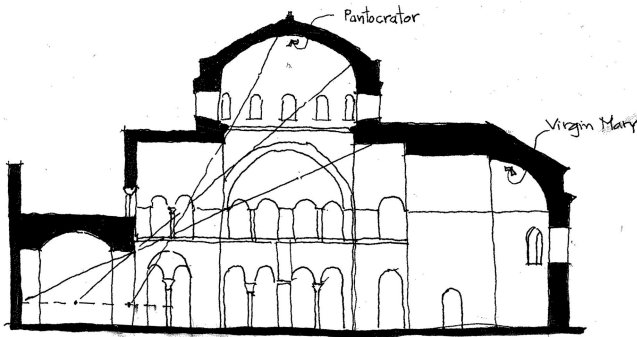


Figure 4.3 A plan of Hagia Sophia of Thessaloniki (7th century A.D.), indicating the design of the church interior as dependent on what was intended to be visible by the incoming visitor. Sketch: author (after M. Kalligas).

space of adjustment to the sacred modus operandi. Moving forward and deeper into the church, one exited the narthex and entered the nave. The nave, again, might be considered as the equivalent of the fenced, open-air space of the temenos. Here, within the church proper, the perceptual situation became rather complex. The complexity was owed to the visual structure of the interior. According to a historian of Byzantine architecture, Marinos Kalligas, the layout of the church interior followed visual reasoning,<sup>9</sup> that is, of how things ought to be seen by the visitor and to what extent from each position, which required a skillful organization of visual angles (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). It appears thereby that analogous strategies were in effect as those claimed by Doxiadis for the temenos layout.



*Figure 4.4* A section of Hagia Sophia of Thessaloniki (7th century A.D.), indicating the design of the church interior as dependent on what was intended to be visible by the incoming visitor. Sketch: author (after M. Kalligas).

The dependence of the layout method of the church interior upon visual angles was not the only similarity to that of the Greek *temenos* that this paper seeks to draw attention to although this constitutes an intriguing analogy of planning methods that might form a distinct research undertaking.

Here, the focus is placed on the verb “*temnein*,” which, as already mentioned, represents the etymological root of “*temenos*.” This concept of cutting and setting apart a space considered sacred is accompanied by the idea of artificially intervening to transform it into something that also looks sacred, thereby, affording a passage from the notional to a perceptual level. It is argued that an analogous concept was applied into the church interior in order to produce yet another “counterplay of forces;” this time involving not only the “plastic forces” induced between voids and forms but, at a deeper level, the interaction of “aethereal forces,” such as those of light and shadow as well. In particular, this study focuses on the form of light shafts, attempting to provide evidence that this interaction of forces plays an essential role in the mounting of the sensation of the sacred.

### **Light and shadow in the Byzantine church**

The light conditions in the Byzantine church are not uniform. In fact, the visitor is faced with a conglomeration of bright and shadowy spaces that present a peculiar disorderliness (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). A similar sense of an accumulation of disparate volumes, some of them being orthogonal whereas others round, is observed in the configuration of the exterior as well.<sup>10</sup> It should be recalled that an analogous feel of layout disorderliness led several modern scholars to describe the Greek *temene* as “anarchic.”<sup>11</sup> In the Byzantine church, though, this sensation did not apply to the ordering of entire buildings in the open air but to volumes and spatial segments, and particularly to regions of light and shadow.

A question that arises is, whether this assemblage of light and shadow was in fact disorderly or whether it was planned; and whether disorder could actually be planned. Perhaps, what appeared disorderly at first sight might have been planned at a subtler, not immediately evident level as was the case with the planning suggested for the Greek *temenos*.<sup>12</sup>



*Figure 4.5* The church of Panagia Kapnikarea, Athens, Greece, 11th century. Multiple forms and voids of different geometries and sizes ranging from bright to dark with largely varying tonalities generate a sense of disarray. The watercolor slightly accentuates the apparent disorder. Watercolor: author 2020.

From our previous investigations, there has been undeniably a great amount of planning of immense subtlety for the lighting of the dome<sup>13</sup> as well as of the apse.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it has been argued that the very form of the Byzantine church could not have been justified in aesthetic terms as an evolution of the Roman basilica except on grounds of lighting.<sup>15</sup> The philosophical bases onto which these lighting designs were founded have also been presented and analyzed in a significant depth.<sup>16</sup> One of the latest associations that have been drawn was that of the distinct character of the Byzantine church space in relation to a process of character acquisition of a space which otherwise remains inert advanced by Plato.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, in the works cited above, ample evidence has been provided, unnecessary to repeat here, which establishes the fact that the lighting of the interior constituted a crucial design problem; ingenious solutions which led not only to the experiencing of a unique atmosphere in each space but even to pioneering scientific discoveries in regards to the geometry of light motion.

### **Light shafts**

In previous investigations regarding the lighting in the apse, the issue of the light shaft has been thoroughly discussed. It was mentioned that it has been repeatedly observed



*Figure 4.6* Katholikon of monastery, Mount Athos. Multiple forms and voids of different geometries and sizes ranging from bright to dark with largely varying tonalities generate a sense of disarray. Photo: author.

that visible light shafts did occur during certain essential parts of the liturgy. The direction, in terms of altitude and azimuth angles, of each light shaft in relation to the position of the windows on the polygonal wall of the apse has been carefully studied for certain examples. It has been concluded that, in the apse, the shaft aimed at a particular point on the altar as well as the priest, standing before it, during a crucial liturgical moment, the polygonal prism was chosen so that the windows placed on it served precisely this purpose on the most important celebration dates for each church.<sup>18</sup> The cited study might have sufficed to justify the shaft's existence, in terms of direction and aim, but it did not probe into a much more complicated and challenging aspect of the design: the visual presence of the shaft itself. And this is what this paper is set out to do: to investigate in which way a light shaft might have been constructed and what might have been the constituent factors for its visibility to take place. The word "construction" may sound overly corporeal to apply to such an intangible phenomenon but if something is designed to occur it presupposes a certain constructive method to be applied. Consequently, the various aspects and factors of such a design will be examined in order to determine their impact on the final outcome.

## The visibility of light

From the point of view of the physiology of vision, the human eye does not usually see light per se. One cannot see the light of the sun; one sees an intensely luminous object. The same is true for the moon. One does not see the light that it emits, as it travels through space. He only sees a luminous object in the night sky. It appears that our eyes are biologically equipped to see the results of light as it touches upon and reflects off objects, rather than light itself. One may visualize the degree of confusion caused if he were able to see not only the objects but also the rays traveling toward them from the light source as well as the rays reflected off the object toward his eyes. Such a state would produce an inconceivably complex image to perception. The photograph below may provide an idea of what the world would look like if the above description was realized (Figure 4.7). Rare incidents such as this may suggest the utterly confusing complexity of an image, which is barely comparable to the one just described.

In the process of seeing only the final lit object, a certain abstraction is taking place, which helps to focus attention on what is biologically essential rather than dispersing the attention to all the intermediate courses taken by the traveling light. The seeing of a light shaft constitutes a stark exception to the rule: an exception, though, quite stirring to the eyes precisely because they are unaccustomed to it.

In the air, there are particles of various gases onto which the sunrays bounce and reflect. But this procedure either is not visible or is usually visible as diffusion. This is what occurs when sunrays hit the air particles of the atmosphere generating the sensation of a blue sky. Contrariwise, on the moon, there is no blue sky because no atmosphere exists there. Getting back on earth, occasionally, light shafts do happen to become visible in nature when sunrays penetrate through holes in a cloudy sky or a dense forest (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).



Figure 4.7 Visible rays radiating toward all directions coming from the light source and its reflection on the water. Photograph. Wikimedia Commons. 2008. File: Crepuscular Rays in ggp 14.jpg.





*Figure 4.8* Visible light shafts in nature, through openings in a cloudy sky. Photograph. Wikimedia Commons. 2014. File:2014041 465556 21255545 161244.jpg.



*Figure 4.9* Visible light shafts in nature, through the tree foliage. Photo: author 1993.

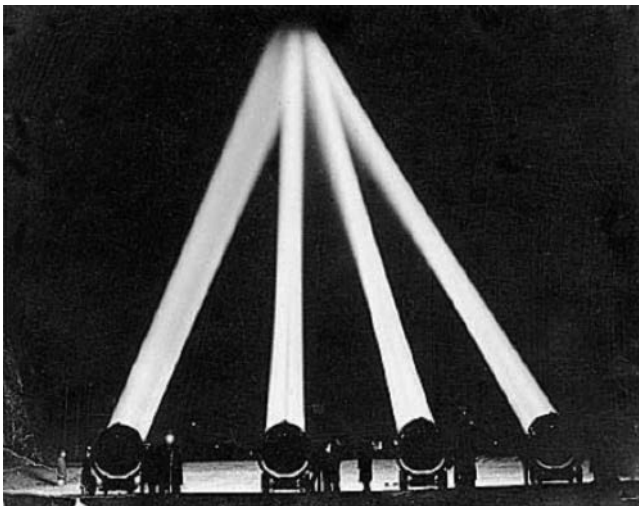
One might argue that it is rather common for light shafts to be seen in any interior space in daily life. What is it that makes it so special when seen in a church? It may simply be a chance event, like countless others, which go unnoticed. It might very well be. However, if it were, it should happen, on the one hand, with a frequency equal to such occasions in secular environments or in nature. On the other hand, it should possess similar visual characteristics to those. However, light shafts seem to occur in churches more regularly and consistently, and independently of weather conditions.

### **Types of light shafts**

A prominent feature that light shafts share in a church with those found in nature or other man-made environments is their outlines. If deprived of outlines, the light shaft is either less visible or outright invisible. In some cases, a specific kind of beam is met forming a surface entirely filled with light, looking as car headlights in a heavy fog or military antiaircraft searchlights (Figure 4.10). The difference is that the common type appears transparent with clear outlines (Figure 4.11) whereas the former looks opaque, its outlines merging with its uniformly lit surface (Figure 4.10). A third type is a transparent one but with diffuse outlines (Figure 4.12). This produces a feeling of softness and gentleness as it penetrates the space whereas the hard outlines produce a feeling of harshness and utter resolve (Figure 4.13).

Occasionally, various types may combine into bundles (Figure 4.14), or rarely a single shaft may present hard and soft outlines on its opposite sides (Figure 4.15).

In the case of an opaque beam, it becomes sensed that what is seen is the lighting of a substance filling the air. Contrariwise, in the case of a hard-transparent shaft, it appears as if such a substance may not exist, yielding a more ethereal yet resolute feel (Figure 4.13). This impression changes into a rather fleeting, weak, and hesitant feel when the outlines turn soft. When a shaft of light is of neither kind then it may hardly be called a shaft since it only presents a point of entry and a spot on a surface (Figures 4.16 and 4.17).



*Figure 4.10* Antiaircraft searchlight demonstration in World War II. The beams present an intensely lit opaque surface to the eye. Photograph. Matthew Luckiesh, *Visual Illusions*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1922.



*Figure 4.11* A transparent clearly outlined shaft. St. Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) Church, 14th century, Areni, Armenia, Photo: author.

But how do these outlines come to be? What variables do they depend on? A number of issues may be involved in the creation of the particular form and quality of the shaft, which will be discussed below. These range from physical, such as the presence of particles in the air and the direction of sunrays; to perceptual, such as the perceived length or transparency; to construction variables, such as the form of the openings or the diameter of the dome, etc.

### **The issue of contrast**

One of the factors involved is contrast. Do light shafts require a contrast against the darkness to show up? It constitutes a common experience that light shafts may occur without a background of complete darkness. Darkness helps, though. Often, in theater, a beam of light is formed when only one lantern is lit, aiming toward a certain direction (Figure 4.18). As more lanterns light up, especially when dispensing diffuse light, the chance of shaft generation decreases. The theater is a special case because it is a completely dark space where no daylight is permissible. So, in a stage setting, the equivalent of the diffuse light coming from the sky, in a typical building with windows, has to be provided by special light fixtures called “diffusers.”

### **The presence of air particles**

In an interesting discourse on anti-aircraft searchlight beams, the physicist and illuminating engineer, Matthew Luckiesh, discusses the apparent brightness, which is more intense at the end of a beam. In these searchlights, the angle of their rays can be changed so that they may seem parallel to an observer standing near the source and looking at the beam as it moves away from him. Thus, the rays emitted, although the bulb is actually a point source, appear to be parallel. Usually, a beam defined by a clear



Figure 4.12 A cave opening letting through a soft light shaft. Photo: author.

outline is justified in terms of the scattering of light on air or moisture particles. In accordance with this logic Karrer, who is cited in Luckiesh, said that the apparent abrupt end of a searchlight beam was previously attributed to the reduction of the density of the atmospheric haze at higher altitudes (Figure 4.10). He notes however that this phenomenon persists when the beam is thrown horizontally. Therefore, such an explanation is untenable, and he asserts that the phenomenon is due to the artificial adjustment of the light beam to counteract perspective convergence.<sup>19</sup> So, if this same beam is seen from the sky, it will appear to open up as if the end rays were diverging upward from the source (similar to Figure 4.19). If a clearly visible beam does not depend on whether it is thrown horizontally or vertically, as mentioned, this suggests that it may also be independent of the density or even the existence of haze. Along the same lines, whereas certain physicists claim that the formation of outlines is due to the presence of floating particles in the air, this does not justify the enhanced intensity and clarity of the outline as compared to the main body of the beam, especially in cases in which there is no significant drop of light intensity between the light shaft and the background.



*Figure 4.13* Hard outlines in a transparent shaft. Photo: author 2010.



*Figure 4.14* Various types of light beams bundled together. Photo: author.



*Figure 4.15* Hard and soft outlines on the same shaft inside a cave. Photo: author.



*Figure 4.16* An almost nonvisible light shaft. A point of entry at the dome. Katholikon 18th century, a photo taken in Lete (intermediate space between the narthex and the nave), Gregoriou Monastery, Mount Athos. Photo: author 1993.



*Figure 4.17* A spot on the floor. Katholikon 18th century, a photo taken in Lete (intermediate space between the narthex and the nave), Gregoriou Monastery, Mount Athos. Photo: author 1993.

During the daytime, when the sun is shining and the sky is clear no light shafts are generated in the open air, even though the atmosphere does contain air and moisture particles floating and scattering sunlight. Light shafts only occur when sunlight passes through some kind of opening. It is therefore the “passing through” process that is accountable for the generation of the light shaft. What does this process entail? Firstly, it involves limits through which light must pass, and, secondly, a particular form and perhaps texture of such limits, which determine the shape of the beam.

Limits by themselves will not necessarily generate shafts. That is if one pierces a hole into cardboard most likely will not be able to receive an image of a light shaft on the other side. Small openings often generate an image of a radiating spot, which creates the sensation of glare, when seen from the interior space. So, it is not the presence



Figure 4.18 Spotlight shining in a theater space with hard outlines, Kleio University theater, Thessaloniki. Photo: author, 2020.

of opening limits alone that will determine the appearance of light shafts but rather the form and qualities of these limits.

### **Perceived length**

Another important observation by Luckiesh is that the apparent length of the beam varies with the variation of the observer's position; it is related to his distance from the beam and is directly proportional to it.<sup>20</sup> If this statement is true, then a person entering a church nave will perceive the maximum length of a shaft generated in this space, especially when it comes from its side. The psychological impact of an elongated beam is much stronger because it creates a feeling of a much more real presence and penetrating power than a short one. On the other hand, the image perceived at first glance when entering a space generates a significant imprint in memory instilled with character and infused with feelings. Third, and perhaps the most important to the argument of this paper is that the light shaft comes at an oblique angle, thus, generating a highly dynamic image (Figure 4.19 and 4.20).

### **The direction of a light shaft**

A most impressive phenomenon within a church is the divergence of the beams created. In the dome windows, one may observe that the light shafts generated may appear to be aiming toward divergent directions (Figure 4.19 and 4.20).

The same phenomenon may occur when the windows are placed on a wall that is planar (Figure 4.21). It is less (Figure 4.20) or more (Figure 4.19) prevalent depending on the observer's position in relation to the position of the light source. The phenomenon is quite striking since all light comes from the sun whose incident rays are considered to be parallel, from a physicist's viewpoint, because of the great distance of the sun





*Figure 4.19* Hagia Sophia, 6th century, Istanbul. Strongly diverging light beams. Pierre Iskender, Byzantine Institute and Dumbarton Oaks Fieldwork Records and Papers, ca. the late 1920s, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.

to the earth. How then can the light shafts change direction? This change of direction seems to contradict this general scientific assumption. It appears as if the roundness of the form onto which the windows are pierced is essential, and probably the degree of divergence is due to the diameter of the dome and the interval between the windows.

It is reasonable to assume that the direction of light shafts would depend on the direction of the sunrays. At any given moment, the sun sends its rays from a fixed point. When these pass through an opening, they should follow this same path since light travels in a rectilinear manner. If the apparent reality does not comply with this principle, this does not mean that the principle is negated but that some other conditions apply to the apparent path. These conditions do not pertain to universal but rather to local factors. It is noticeable that light shafts coming from different windows present slightly (Figure 4.20) or widely diverging directions (Figure 4.19).

Physically, this may be justified by the position of the sun. If the sun is right in front of the observer, then various groups of rays radiate from a center (i.e., the sun) outward, and along their route, they pass through windows. The fact that the source is not visible makes for the feeling of mystery that arises. This is augmented by the fact that the groups of rays (i.e., the beams) are sequestered and may be located far apart in



Figure 4.20 Hagia Sophia, 6th century, Istanbul. Light shafts traversing diagonally the entire space. Pierre Iskender, Byzantine Institute and Dumbarton Oaks Fieldwork Records and Papers, ca. the late 1920s, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.



Figure 4.21 Light shafts through windows that widen toward the interior. Dayro d-Mor Gabriel (The Monastery of Saint Gabriel), 4th century, Tur Abdin plateau, near Midyat town, Mardin Province, Southeastern Turkey. Photo: author.

space from one another. When the sun is not right in front of the observer but located more toward the one side then the divergence of the beams is reduced (Figure 4.20). If one carefully follows the direction of the light shafts, one will effortlessly reach the conclusion that they meet at a single center, i.e., the position of the sun. Therefore, even though the direction of the beams may have a perfectly rational explanation, their apparent direction seems to be independent of the direction of sunlight as if their sources were different and actually attached to the building shell, as seen from the interior. This independence of the various beams generates a quite penetrating feel of peering eyes actively searching for something within the church. Therefore, this phenomenon is due to the disassociation of the physical from the perceptual reality.

### The cutting edge

One factor that must make a considerable difference is the form of the cutting edge, i.e., the window jambs. Years ago, when visiting churches on Mount Athos in Greece, I noticed a curious detail. The window jambs in the church apse were deep and were either kept parallel or opened slightly toward the interior (Figure 4.22). In the nave, the slant toward the interior was greater still. This type of construction is much more difficult for the bricklayers than keeping the portions of the wall orthogonal between the openings. But if they did keep them orthogonal, then a beam might not be possible to be generated or it would probably be much shorter in length causing rather a sense of glare.

It seems that the increase of the window width toward the interior space plays a significant role in the generation of a light shaft. If the windows were widening toward the exterior, then the very abrupt transition from the dark wall to the bright light would create a glaring effect rather than a beam. Even in cases where the walls do have a certain thickness, but the thickness is not visible from the observer's viewpoint; then, glare may occur. See Figure 4.19 where some windows produce glare whereas others produce light beams. So, it seems that the perceived length is proportional to the jamb depth, related to their slant, and the degree to which the jamb depth is visible from the observer's viewpoint.

Also, the issue of size comes into play. In an interior where there are very small openings, like in Ottoman baths, light shafts do occur, but they are usually short and probably of largely varying direction (Figure 4.23) giving the impression of a rather unruly conglomeration. On the other hand, it appears that the greater the size of the openings the less likely it is for shafts to form (Figure 4.24). Therefore, the cautious determination of the window size is instrumental for the generation of light shafts.

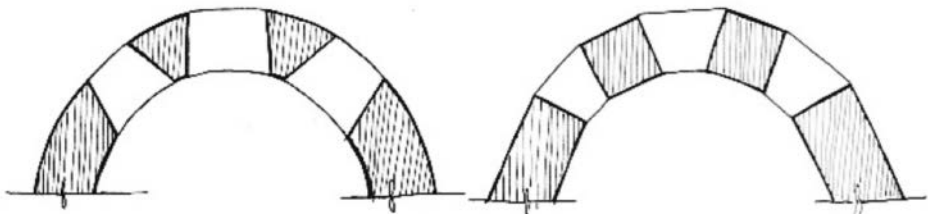


Figure 4.22 Wedge-shaped as opposed to square parts of the wall in the plan. Sketch: author.

An essential factor is the obstruction of the visibility of the light source. If the source is visible, then it is less likely for light beams to be formed. If there are one or more obstructions, then light beams are formed between them (Figures 4.7 and 4.21).



*Figure 4.23* Sinan, The Kilic Ali Pasa Hamam 16th century, Istanbul, Turkey. Photo: author.



*Figure 4.24* D. Baker Architects, Studio C, Clementina Str., San Francisco, CA, U.S.A. Photo: author.



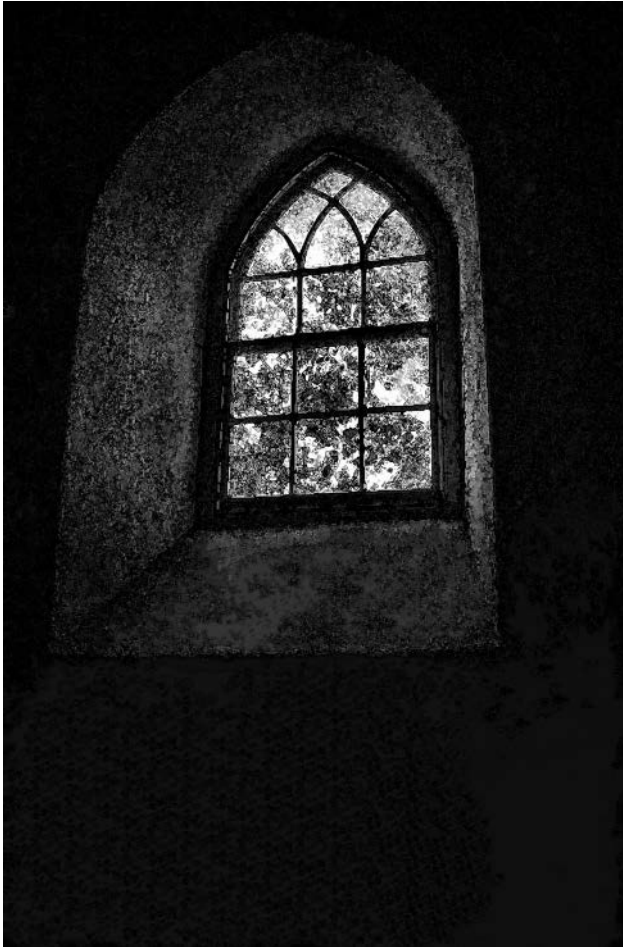
*Figure 4.25* Underwater light shafts. Photo: author 2019.

An additional issue is the quality of the surface through which the light passes. The degree of transparency of the glazing seems to also affect the probability of light shaft generation. Often, one may see light beams when sunlight passes through a light curtain or under water depending on the rippling of the water surface (Figure 4.25). It seems that the clearer the glass surface through which sunlight is transmitted the less probable it is for a light shaft to be generated. On the other hand, while it is possible for a light shaft to be formed on various occasions, this does not mean that it is formed on every occasion (Figure 4.26).

It is possible that in a window with slanted window jambs and sill, no light shaft is generated. The light may enter and be reflected revealing clear plastic surfaces. However, in such a case the exterior light that comes through the window is atmospheric, indirect, or diffuse rather than the direct sunlight. Therefore, it appears that in order for a light shaft to form, it is necessary for direct sunlight to hit the wall surface onto which a window is opened. The angle of the sunrays must be such as to penetrate the thickness of the wall and not be entirely blocked by the window jambs.

### **The sectioning of light and the cutting through space**

From the above observations, it may be deduced that the way in which the cutting off process is applied to sunlight is crucial in respect to the formation of a light beam. That is, the various characteristics of the opening are responsible for the formation of the visible shaft.



*Figure 4.26* A church window without a light shaft. Watercolor: author.

Once it is formed it cuts through space overlapping any dark areas of the surrounding background thus demonstrating the presence of an immaterial yet ubiquitous energizing force powerful enough to overcome the materiality of the building components. From a perceptual point of view, therefore, the light beam, once it appears, becomes prevalent as it cuts through the space rendering the church interior as a world filled with an energy overshadowing the material forms. At the same time, the specific manner in which it cuts through space, whether with strong and clear edges or with soft ones and depending on its length may denote a greater or lesser degree of purposeful will. On the other hand, the piercing of darkness with light shafts produces as an offshoot a sensation that the spatial void is full of substance into which they penetrate with remarkable effort. The greater the perceived effort of cutting through space the more the space acquires a sense of existence as an actual entity rather than a void. God becomes present both through the cutting across the interior of the light shafts and the

ensuing manifestation of space as something dense. It is worth noting that space and light were considered as the two most important qualities of the deity.

### The meaning of light shafts

A peculiar expression has found its way in various texts both in theology and literature. It refers to a visible light shaft that transverses a great part of the sky and is of great symbolic significance, so much so that it acquired a special name already since classical antiquity.<sup>21</sup> The expression in Greek is “Ouranomakes stele” and in English, “Heaven-long stele,” and it has the meaning of a sudden revelation and divine intervention into the earthly world.

In nature, such a phenomenon often occurs when heavy clouds obstruct direct sunlight, which is allowed to enter only through holes between them. Such a light shaft is usually quite long, its perception dependent on the hole size. It appears to transverse a great portion of the sky. In doing so it generates a sense of directionality and seems to aim at a specific region.

These perceptual features generate strong links to underlying meanings delivered subcutaneously. Thus, it appears to be a deliberate act, as if a powerful being was searching for something or designating an important event. The diaphanous quality of the light beam lends it an ethereal, nonmaterial aura. The fact that it appears to be so focused generates a sense that its source is different than the sun since sunlight is evenly distributed in the sky. Since the source is hidden, it is associated with the idea that the point of emanation must remain concealed and secret or is impossible to be seen, all of which are considered to be qualities of God and his peculiar relationship to the earthly world.

### Notes

- 1 Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, entry “temenos”.
- 2 Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, entry “temple”.
- 3 Vincent Scully, *The Earth the Temple and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 53, also Peter Smithson, “Space and Greek Architecture,” *The Listener* (1958), 599–601- also “Theories Concerning the Layout of Classical Greek Buildings,” *Architectural Association Journal* 74/829 (1959), 194 ff.
- 4 Scully, *The Earth the Temple and the Gods*, 53.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Konstantinos Doxiadis, *Raumordnung im griechischen Stadtebau* (Heidelberg and Berlin, 1937), 141. Transl. in English, *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, MIT Press.
- 7 William B. Dinsmoor, “Archaeology and Astronomy,” *Proceedings of the American Philological Society*, 1939, 80, 95–173.
- 8 Wilhelm Schmidt, *Heronis Alexandrini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia Mechanica et Catoptrica* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1900), v. II, Proposition XII, 342–345.
- 9 Marinos Kalligas, *The Aesthetics of Space of the Greek Church in the Middle Ages (He Aisthetike tou Chorou tes Ellenikes Ekklesias ston Mesaiona)* in Greek, Athina, 1946.
- 10 On this issue see Iakovos Potamianos, “The Handling of Light: Its Effect on Form and Space in the Greek Temple and the Byzantine Church,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Light in Archaeology*, eds. Costas Papadopoulos and Holley Moyes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Also, see, Iakovos Potamianos “Design Approaches in the Service of Persuasion in Sacred Architecture” in *Advances in Utopian Studies in Sacred Architecture*, eds. Claudio Gambardella et al. (Aversa, Italy: IEREK, Springer, 2020), 251–264.
- 11 See footnote 3.
- 12 See notes 3 to 8 above.

- 13 Iakovos Potamianos, *Light into Architecture: The Evocative Use of Natural Light as Related to Liturgy in Byzantine Churches*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan, 1996; also his *Light in the Byzantine Church (To Phos sten Vyzantine Ekklesia)* in Greek, University Studio Press, Thessaloniki, Greece, 2000. For later Byzantine domes see Wassim Jabi and Iakovos Potamianos, "Parameterizing the Geometry and Visualizing the Lighting Method of Byzantine Church Domes," in Marinos Ioannides, Eleanor Fink, Antonia Moropoulou, Monika Hagedorn-Saupe, Antonella Fresa, Gunnar Liestøl, Vlatka Rajcic and Pierre Grussenmeyer, eds. *6th International Conference, EuroMed 2016*, Nicosia, Cyprus, 10/31–11/5, 2016, Proceedings, Part I, 171–183.
- 14 Iakovos Potamianos, 1996, 2006.
- 15 Iakovos Potamianos, "The Handling of Light: Its Effect on Form and Space in the Greek Temple and the Byzantine Church," in *The Oxford Handbook of Light in Archaeology*, eds. Costas Papadopoulos and Holley Moyes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 16 Iakovos Potamianos, 1996, 2000. Also see Iakovos Potamianos, "Byzantine Conceptions of Space and Certain Architectural Manipulations" (Vyzantines Syllepseis tou Chorou kai Orismenoi Architectonikoi Cheirismoi) in Greek, in the 5th Seminar Proceedings, Evangelia Xatzitritifonos ed., *He Ennoia tou Chorou ste Vyzantine Architectonike*, University Studio Press, Archaeological Museum, Thessaloniki, June 12, 2009, 89–109.
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- 21 Oratores Attici Et Quos Sic Vocant Sophistae, Tomus secundus, Lysias, 742.



## 5 Byzantine architectural form between iconicity and *chôra*

*Jelena Bogdanović*

In linguistics, semiotics, and iconography, iconicity, as the condition for being iconic, suggests a conceived similarity between the form and the specific meaning of a select object. This thesis opens questions about the mimetic aspects of architectural forms and their copies pertaining simultaneously to intent, execution, and reproduction. That sacred artwork, including sacred architecture, can be understood as both a kind of spatial icon and an icon of space is a theme advanced in *hierotopical* studies. This chapter suggests that iconicity is important for addressing representational and design themes but cannot sufficiently explain the conceptual aspects of Byzantine religious architecture. Instead, the architecturally suggestive concept of *chôra* (χώρα) offers an expanded understanding of iconicity and is more adequate in its approach to understanding the essence of Byzantine architecture. Originally introduced by Plato, the philosophical concept of *chôra*, as will be shown in this chapter, continually occupied Neoplatonists and Byzantine intellectuals, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory of Nazianzus, John of Damascus, and Theodore Metochites. Hagia Sophia and the Church of Christ Chôra as two iconic examples of Constantinopolitan Byzantine architecture will be related to contemporaneous thoughts on iconicity and *chôra*. Yet, to properly situate this topic on iconicity and *chôra* in Byzantine architecture, the paper first assesses architectural iconography as currently established in art history scholarship and highlights how this scholarship intersects with comparative studies in architectural history and theory and with *hierotopical* studies.

### **Iconography of Byzantine architecture and legacy of Richard Krautheimer's work**

The interpretation of Byzantine sacred architecture, or rather the search for the meaning of Byzantine religious architecture, has relied heavily on the methodological approaches used in art history, and above all on iconography and iconology. Framed by the intellectual discourse of the semiotics rather than by the medieval reasoning and practices within their devotional contexts, the major focus of iconographical and iconological studies is on the art form and its content.<sup>1</sup> Icons are usually identified with signs that physically (visually) resemble what they stand for.<sup>2</sup> In Byzantine art almost without exception icons are equated with religious icons, visual images that represent holy figures (such as the Mother of God), sacred events (such as the Baptism of Christ), or holy objects (such as the True Cross). Iconography provides sophisticated tools for describing Byzantine icons and interpreting them based on their specific content, which recurrently develops from biblical references and the religious

life of the Byzantine-rite church communities. Closely intertwined with iconography, iconology—as originally introduced by Aby Warburg, developed by Erwin Panofsky, and further promoted by their followers—additionally aims to give meaning to such works by examining them through the lenses of social, political, or cultural history.<sup>3</sup>

Following the incorporation of an iconographic approach within art history, architectural or spatial iconography became an important method in studies of Byzantine architecture mainly because of the epoch-making role of Richard Krautheimer, one of the most influential twentieth-century art and architectural historians. Krautheimer is commonly considered the creator of “architectural iconography,” due to his two pivotal texts, both originally published in 1942, only three years after the publication of Panofsky’s book on iconology.<sup>4</sup> The article dealing with the iconography of medieval architecture was specifically titled “Introduction to an ‘Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture.’”<sup>5</sup> In this article, Krautheimer investigated the mechanisms for the transmission of architectural forms, by focusing on the concept of the original and the copy. The second article, “The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture,” may be dubbed as a text on the iconology of medieval architecture, because in it Krautheimer aimed to contextualize the type of specific architectural form transmitted by identifying the critical sociopolitical moments for their historical and cultural reception.<sup>6</sup>

Krautheimer conceived architectural iconography as an analysis of religious architecture based on the combination of visual and textual references, whereby forms of buildings may be related to their content, or symbolic meanings, culturally defined. By using the iconographical methodology and related notions of iconicity, Krautheimer linked an architectural structure, studied as a copy, to its original or architectural prototype. His analysis is facilitated by employing three major criteria—floor plan, execution, and dedication of the building. Even if the dedication of the building is not an architectural criterion in contemporary discourse, he justified all selected criteria and related them to visual (material) and immaterial qualities of architecture. These criteria were extracted from select medieval texts that discuss religious architecture and from actual architectural examples.<sup>7</sup> To test his thesis for the major prototype of medieval religious architecture, he chose the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, because as the most iconic building of the medieval Christian world it was also “copied” many times. He examined architectural “copies” of the Holy Sepulchre in Western Europe by looking at both churches and baptisteries; two different types of buildings when studied by applying modern architectural typology regarding the predominant function of a structure. According to Krautheimer, at least until the thirteenth century, these “architectural copies are nothing but a *villis figuratio* [*basic configuration*, note Jelena Bogdanović], limited to a selected number of outstanding elements; their selection is determined by and their visual aspect subordinated to the hierarchic order of their religious importance.”<sup>8</sup> Initially interested in the mechanisms of the transmission of architectural forms, he ultimately recognized that “the ‘content’ of architecture seems to have been among the more important problems in medieval architectural theory; perhaps, indeed, it was its most important problem.”<sup>9</sup>

An intellectual and professional giant, Richard Krautheimer was among the first and most influential scholars who effectively extended iconographical studies into architecture. The full scope and relevance of his approach to studies of the iconography of architecture should be seen in the light of his academic circles and collaborations

with other scholars, including Heinrich Wölfflin, Paul Frankl, Erwin Panofsky, and Rudolf Wittkower.<sup>10</sup> Krautheimer studied with Heinrich Wölfflin, a scholar credited for the introduction of formal analysis in art history. Wölfflin originally grounded his type of formal analysis and examination of style in architecture and its corporeality.<sup>11</sup> Because Wölfflin eventually replaced it with its pictorial treatment and semiotics, Krautheimer ultimately distanced himself from Wölfflin's studies.<sup>12</sup> In 1923, Krautheimer did his dissertation thesis on mendicant churches in Germany under the direction of Paul Frankl. An architect and architectural historian, Frankl remains known for his spatial analysis and pedantic systematic methodology based on architectural typology. Frankl's work informed Krautheimer's life-long interest in architectural typology and the empirical organization of architectural knowledge. In his work, Krautheimer focused on two major aspects of architecture: an analysis of architectural form and the evaluation of its function. As German-born Jewish scholars, Krautheimer and his wife Trude Hess, also an art historian, were forced to emigrate, first to Italy in 1933 and then to the United States in 1935. Rudolf Wittkower, another Jewish scholar, who likewise eventually emigrated to the United States, taught Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture at the Columbia University. In communication with Wittkower, Krautheimer developed ideas about systematic and typological presentation of Early Christian churches in Rome. The detailed architectural analysis combined with the archeological, historical, epigraphic, and graphic evidence for each of the 78 churches analyzed, resulted in monumental, inspirational, and still highly praised corpus.<sup>13</sup> Scholarly communication with Wittkower, the author of the famous book on the principles of Renaissance architecture, where he singled out centralized churches and focused on the dome as a micro and macrocosmic element, though not explicitly mentioned by Krautheimer, in my opinion, is also critical for his own work on architectural iconography and focus on the role of the dome in Byzantine churches.<sup>14</sup> After World War II, Krautheimer established particularly strong studies of architectural history at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York. In New York, he worked alongside other notable émigré scholars whose work he appreciated, including Erwin Panofsky, a student of Aby Warburg and a major proponent of iconographical and iconological studies. Along with his students, such as Cecil Lee Striker, Thomas Mathews, James Morganstern, Slobodan Ćurčić, Dale Kinney, or those influenced by his work such as Eugene Kleinbauer, who all held prominent academic positions in the United States, and then most of their students as well, these three generations of architectural historians promoted and advanced studies of medieval and Byzantine architecture as formulated by Krautheimer.

Krautheimer built his approach to architectural history during his education in art history and his work as an archeologist on numerous sites, above all in Rome. He was not trained as an architect like his mentor Paul Frankl. Regardless, in his studies, Krautheimer remained highly sensitive to the difference between the archeological and architectural approaches and left many questions related to medieval architectural principles open for further investigations.<sup>15</sup> This quality is occasionally lost by some of Krautheimer's followers and scholars of medieval architecture, who remained bound to the exclusivity of textual and archeological evidence, habitually looked at as the end result of architectural processes and often understood in two-dimensional terms. Moreover, Krautheimer's idea of the prototype and copy in architecture was often understood too narrowly and rarely additionally examined and theorized.<sup>16</sup> Krautheimer emphasized that

the architect of a medieval copy did not intend to imitate the prototype as it looked in reality; he intended to reproduce it *typice* and *figuraliter* [by type and symbolically, note Jelena Bogdanović], as a memento of a venerated site and simultaneously as a symbol of promised salvation.<sup>17</sup>

Catherine Carver McCurrach and Kathryn Blair Moore have recently elaborated that by insisting on the exacting mechanical reproduction and visual qualities of architecture, rather than including also the spiritual, experiential, and intellectually active recreation of religiously significant structures, the concept of an architectural “copy” set subsequent studies of medieval architecture in a somewhat negative framework.<sup>18</sup> Because Krautheimer pointed to the inaccuracy of medieval “copies” of the building of the Holy Sepulchre, scholars not only reduced its significance to the level of a common idea but eventually denied deeper intellectual reasoning behind the creation of medieval architecture.

Indeed, Krautheimer insisted on empiricism and positivist studies of architecture, something that his students called “inspired empiricism”<sup>19</sup> and “atheoretical empiricism.”<sup>20</sup> He denied the existence of inherent symbolism and questioned architectural theories bound to concepts of aesthetics and the creation of sacred space in Byzantine architecture.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, he set a research agenda, which is almost dogmatically followed by many students of Byzantine architecture, who rarely reexamine Krautheimer’s assessment of medieval architecture or his method of architectural iconography. Several architects and architectural historians, such as Carver McCurrach and Moore, did bring forward a critical assessment of Krautheimer’s architectural iconography and suggested ways on how to improve upon it.<sup>22</sup> Architect, architectural historian, and conservator, Svetlana Popović expanded the architectural iconography, often related to individual buildings, to the iconography of the entire monastic complexes.<sup>23</sup> Among those who constructively assessed Krautheimer’s architectural iconography is also Richard Etlin, an architect and architectural historian, who in his several publications proposed studies of the iconography of stereotomy, thereby significantly expanding research beyond representational conventions of two-dimensional architectural aspects of floor plans and cross-sections.<sup>24</sup> Then again, Dale Kinney, herself a student of Krautheimer, testifies how Krautheimer discouraged his students to involve with “mystical symbolic qualities” of Byzantine architecture.<sup>25</sup> In particular, he excluded investigations of Neoplatonic philosophy that promoted investigations of aesthetic qualities of space above architectural form, as done by Greek architect and theoretician Panayotis A. Michelis.<sup>26</sup> Among alternative approaches to iconographic studies and how to analyze the visible in art, which also carries with itself the invisible, French scholars and philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Marion posited their research in anthropology and phenomenology.<sup>27</sup> In his work, Russian historian and theoretician of art Alexei Lidov, himself originally trained in iconographic studies, over time developed an innovative and alternative method of *hierotopy*, which examines the creation of sacred spaces both from theoretical and empirical perspectives.<sup>28</sup> In *hierotopical* studies, sacred space is not only an abstract category or a sacred place or location. Rather, it is a combination of the two. As such, sacred space points to a historical, dynamic, and evocative locale, both as a setting and a set of events associated with it. *Hierotopy* relates to and differs from iconography and phenomenology: it does not negate religious mysticism, which is often proclaimed as incompatible with purely empirical studies; it allows for the investigations of divine-human reciprocal

interactions but remains focused on human-created multisensory forms that designate the sacred.<sup>29</sup>

When Krautheimer introduced the concept of architectural iconography, he initially looked at it as a methodology to reveal medieval architectural theory; a method he hoped will be advanced since he proposed it in 1942.<sup>30</sup> By applying his concept to specific architectural examples, many scholars reduced the architectural symbolism of medieval architecture mostly to the symbolism of a church dome, considered as “a culturally specific investment in a neutral form.”<sup>31</sup> Krautheimer briefly referenced and mostly negated the relevance of the works of intellectuals such as (Pseudo-)Dionysios the Areopagite, Maximos the Confessor, or the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Germanos for architectural design.<sup>32</sup> Krautheimer’s critical assessment of medieval building practices, which he contrasted with the perceived fidelity and accuracy of Renaissance and modern architectural practices, implied that some scholars took for granted that after the seventh century and before the thirteenth century educated architects were supplanted by illiterate masons, with consequences that there was lack of architectural theory and, in general, true architecture in the Byzantine context.<sup>33</sup> Yet, we are reminded that Krautheimer distinguished between architects and builders; architects being responsible for church design and builders being those who actually built select structures. The two may have been occasionally the same person, in primary sources often titled “the master builder,” but the two roles of architects and builders are not the same and are not necessarily done by the same individual.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, while many typically think that architects design only buildings, architects themselves would expand this notion and highlight that they design “spaces that the physical structure of a building forms.”<sup>35</sup> This architect’s role to design spaces is particularly highlighted in this chapter.

### **The relevance of the architectural form and its iconic features in Byzantine studies**

Despite being the author of the now classical and continually inspiring text *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Krautheimer maintained that his involvement with Byzantine architecture was least developed, thus opening the doors to future generations of scholars to continue his initial pursuit.<sup>36</sup> The overwhelming authority of Richard Krautheimer and his formative work on Byzantine architecture in American, British, and German academia and scholarly spheres of their influence, however, resulted in somewhat disheartening abandonment of the more nuanced investigations of the architectural theory and more specifically the architectural form in the Byzantine context. The majority of scholars trained in the tradition of Krautheimer’s work turned toward iconological studies of medieval architecture positioned in specific historical moments and examined through the lenses of sociopolitical and economic circumstances of the creation of specific works. By reiterating the typical symbolic meanings of Byzantine churches as being heaven on earth or new Jerusalem, researchers of Byzantine architecture refocus their work on more contextualized studies of individual structures. In the process, the architectural form and its role in the creation of sacred architecture remain under-theorized. Among independent but not necessarily mutually exclusive attempts to tackle fundamental questions about the theory and aesthetics of Byzantine architecture are those done by Alexei Lidov, Nicoletta Isar, Nadine Schibille, and Bissera V. Pentcheva. Lidov initially proposed *hierotopy* as a broad methodology for studying the historical creation of sacred space, based on

multidisciplinary research of relics and miraculous icons.<sup>37</sup> As it develops, *hierotopy* inevitably includes complex themes of architecture and sacred space, inseparable from various related philosophical and ontological layers. Isar reopened the discussion about the role of the Neoplatonic concept of *chôra* (χώρα) in Byzantine accomplishments.<sup>38</sup> Her pursuit was followed and advanced by Pentcheva, Lidov, and Dennis, to name but a few historians of medieval art. Their opinions and findings occasionally confirm but also oppose those reached by philosophers and scholars of religion such as Sallis, Derida, Manousakis, Shaw, or philosophers and theoreticians of architecture in particular, such as Vesely, Pérez-Gómez, Kagis McEwen, Vidler, Landrum, and Tanoulas.<sup>39</sup> Schibille reaffirms the intellectual and technical preparation of Byzantine architects and provides a convincing interpretation of Neoplatonic aesthetics of Byzantine architecture by examining the concepts of light and wisdom in Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia, as the case in point.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, by focusing predominantly on the Hagia Sophia, Pentcheva advances the multisensory and dynamic model of the creation of sacred space and nonfigurative elements of its aesthetics.<sup>41</sup>

In my work, I explain the architectural design of Byzantine churches based on iconic microarchitectural forms and in particular on a canopy as an architectural *part*, a guiding design idea that includes both material and immaterial aspects of architecture.<sup>42</sup> My interpretation of the design of Byzantine church is based on a domed canopy as a spatial and diagrammatic architectural unit hierarchically set within a modular, nine-square grid, rather than the reproducible precise two-dimensional imagery of floor plans, as initially proposed as one of the three major criteria for architectural iconography by Krautheimer.<sup>43</sup> I demonstrate a Byzantine phenomenon of the domed church that its architecture and some of the central features of its interior have the same form (Figure 5.1). The fine merging of the total design of Byzantine churches within canopies was inclusive of their form and associated values. The canopy had an overarching significance of the sacred place. Because of its generic form and imagery, it was readily adapted for diverse contexts, hence allowing for the multiplicity of individually and culturally constructed meanings for the same architectural form. In particular, I elucidate canopy and the space it frames as a kind of icon of sacred space in the Byzantine cultural context (Figure 5.2).<sup>44</sup>

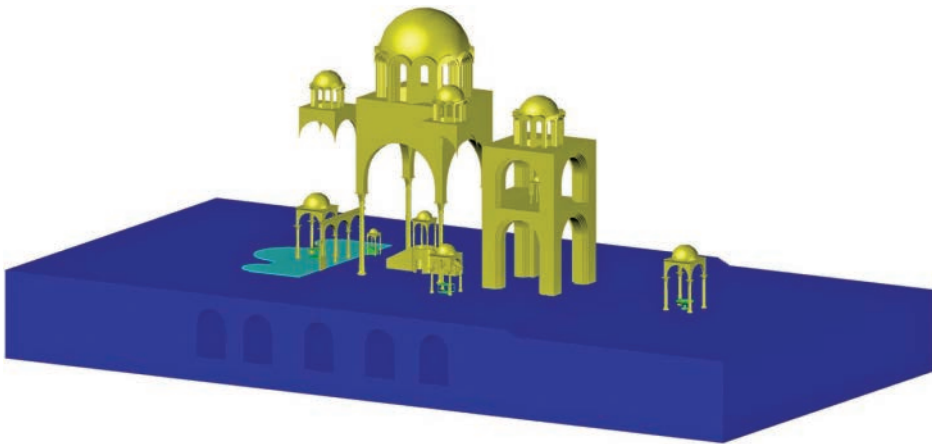


Figure 5.1 Integration of various canopies as modular and spatial units within a Byzantine church. Drawing: Zhengyang Hua.



Figure 5.2 Visual representation of a canopy from *The Entry of the Ever-Virgin Mary and Most Holy Mother of God Theotokos into the Temple* (also known as the *Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple* and *Vavedenije*), golden mosaic, a domical vault of the axial bay of the inner narthex, Church of the Holy Savior, Chôra Monastery, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: author.

It is in this overarching scholarly network that this paper addresses the meaning and form in religious architecture by using the related methods of *hierotopy* developed by Lidov and the methods of architectural iconography that emerged ever since Krautheimer's work. Architecture is here understood both as a process and an object, inseparable from their mutually inclusive material and immaterial aspects, whereas religious structures and installations are considered as predominant means for the creation of sacred space they frame. Two particular themes are discussed: iconicity, which directly stems from studies of architectural iconography, and *chôra*, an ancient Neoplatonic concept, which remained known to the Byzantine intellectual elite and continually inspires scholars of sacred space.

### Iconicity of Byzantine architecture within the context of a “spatial icon” and “icon of space”

Within the wide-ranging context of iconography and semiotics, iconicity emerges as a concept that provides the conceived similarity between the form and specific meaning of the icon commonly understood as a sign and studied as predominantly two-dimensional, visual artwork. Iconicity is, therefore, bound to iconic, memorable formal features and visible aspects of an icon. With a prospect that we could examine Byzantine architecture as “spatial icons” by using “spatial iconography,” methodological tools are essentially based on the approaches of visual and architectural iconography. Spatial iconography then can be related to forms and meanings of specific architectural accomplishments, architectural metaphors, and situations of the body in space.

The iconicity of Byzantine architecture additionally raises at least two immanently critical issues. One, architecture can be likened to icons. Second, it is possible to liken the transmission of architectural form and its meaning to the iconographical interpretation of icons, deeply embedded in textual references, and then by using expanded tools of iconology that it is further possible to point to their intertextuality, frequently presented to be also chronological.<sup>45</sup> In such a principal proposition, the critical premise is on the imagistic nature of iconicity<sup>46</sup>—be it diagrammatic, emblematic, or figurative—even when we extend the visual context of Byzantine religious architecture to its spatial, three-dimensional physical qualities, and immaterial but perceptible aspects. This proposal additionally implies investigations about the nature of icons in architecture as well as relationships between the architectural icon and its prototype.

Scholars are constantly returning to the major question about the nature of icons. Alexei Lidov, Charles Barber, Hans Belting, Marie-José Mondzain, Bissera V. Pentcheva, Jaś Elsner, Katherine Marsengill, and Michele Bacci shifted their focus from examining icons firmly positioned within historical, theological, socioeconomic, political, and strictly speaking art historical domains to epistemological questions on what an icon is.<sup>47</sup> Belting and Lidov particularly examine spatial qualities of various icons in space and image-paradigms.<sup>48</sup> Belting reestablishes the fact that the medieval holy images were not treated as art but as sacred objects. He posits monumental church programs essentially as an applied icon theory. The application and use of icons in church space are seen as a kind of religious control and vehicle of church power and dominance, however. Moving beyond icons as exclusively fixed patterns or flat memorable images that would function as icon-signifiers, but also for multilayered and holistic iconic ideas, inclusive of the lived experience of the faithful, *hierotopical* studies simultaneously moved beyond colonial studies that focus on questions of religion and politics as expressions of privileged knowledge and power. In *hierotopical* systems of knowledge, the spatial icon is more than a *topos* or set of references. Lidov’s concept of spatial icons investigates iconic imagery in space or spatial experience of the sacred, not only the structured space of sacred icons<sup>49</sup> but also the totality of sacred space that allows for the interactions between divine and human agency, which can be contemplated and perceived.<sup>50</sup> Dennis nicely summarized the essence of spatial icons,

whereby heavenly visions can be created or divine presence projected through both the material and immaterial elements of spatial design, whether physical icons of divine or saintly figures integral to the space or more ephemeral, sensory agents such as light, sound, scent, taste, or the effects of haptic interactions with



material forms within the space. In this theological construct, the bodily presence and movement of human devotees are interwoven with the divine agency embodied within the space, each presence permeating and interpenetrating the other as terrestrial and celestial realities collide in a singular locus.<sup>51</sup>

Fundamental questions on religious icons reopened more nuanced investigations of iconicity, thereby advancing the theoretical and philosophical thinking about Byzantine art and architecture. Hence, for example, Bacci and Vladimir Ivanovici focus on corporeal iconicity as “visually manifest the sacred either by becoming screens on which it was displayed or by revealing it through their transfigured corporeality.”<sup>52</sup> In her book on the Constantinopolitan cathedral, Pentcheva advances the thesis of architectural iconicity in Byzantine culture, which she recognizes as being predominantly nonrepresentational, but rather performative including its integrative visual and aural aspects.<sup>53</sup> In my work, I relate architectural iconicity to the essence of architecture and its interiority simultaneously to the inner experience of being and of physical presence inside the religious space.<sup>54</sup> Iconicity remains related to the space of spatial icons itself that architecture articulates, as an image *of* space, not an image *in* space. The ontological capacity of icons in the Byzantine context based on the incarnational argument and the embodiment of divine presence can be related to the framing of sacred space integrated with the sacred body within it.<sup>55</sup> Such a multilayered construct of spatial icons allows for an inclusive understanding of the multidimensionality of the sacred space and body. By focusing on spatial, microarchitectural forms, in particular, I investigate their corporeality and demonstrate that the human body and the architectural body can be understood as homomorphic entities articulating a variety of spatial icons as a kind of “being-place.”<sup>56</sup>

### “Icon of space” and its prototype

The critical aspect of iconicity, as the property of icons, is the relation between an icon and its prototype. Carrying the truth and the essence of the sacred, the icon and its prototype may not be necessarily of the same form or any form. This reasoning was elaborated by (Pseudo-)Dionysius, a Christian philosopher, whose sixth-century preserved texts were influential among the Byzantine intellectual elite and likely influenced the design of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture.<sup>57</sup> (Pseudo-)Dionysius’ explanation that “the sensible sacred things are the representations of the intelligible things” and that “they lead there and show the way to them,”<sup>58</sup> point to the reality of architecture as being spiritual and conceptual. By extension, this position points to the limited level of iconicity of architecture as related to its figurative aspects. Then again, the material architectural symbols, often culturally conditioned, are the means by which these phenomena are communicated. In his text *Concerning the place of God: and that the Deity alone is uncircumscribed*, St. John of Damascus (676–749), another notable thinker and major proponent of the Byzantine use of icons, explained spatial dimensions of iconicity.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, while an image can be a visual concept that resides in the mental space of the beholder, an icon is where this image is present, and an icon is always located in place, he clarified. Krautheimer was extremely sensitive to the concept of religious architectural form in his studies. He emphasized that architects did not intend to imitate the likeness of the prototype but to reproduce it “*typice* and *figuraliter*”<sup>60</sup> while maintaining “the relation between pattern and symbolical meaning ... as being determined by a network of reciprocal half-distinct connotations.”<sup>61</sup> I further analyzed the mechanisms for the transmission of the architectural form and

meaning of the Holy Sepulchre in Byzantium.<sup>62</sup> I propose the critical role of a particular architectural form—a canopy and its iconic image of a domed structure with columns—in the transmission of the meaning of the Holy Sepulchre and also as a guiding architectural design principle for Byzantine-rite churches. In my analysis, the emphasis was not on the reproduction of likeness of a given structure of the Holy Sepulchre, but rather on the expanded meanings of a variety of sacred structures that generic form of a canopy denoted. The prototype for Byzantine church architecture is not the Holy Sepulchre, but rather the architecture of the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the Temple, as well as the Heavenly Jerusalem, whereas the ultimate archetype is divine beauty and perfection toward which humans reach out by using various material and immaterial aspects of their creations.<sup>63</sup> As these meanings were recharged within the dynamics of various rites performed within religious structures, performative and rhetorical capacities of specific settings become dominant for the meaning of Byzantine and Byzantine-inspired religious architecture.

### **Neoplatonic reasoning and Byzantine architecture understood as a “spatial icon” and “icon of space”**

When examined through the lenses of Byzantine religious architecture, Neoplatonic concepts become prominent. Moreover, while architectural iconography usually rejects Neoplatonic reasoning as being mysterious and mystical, and therefore not lending itself to empirical positivist studies, it remains applicable within *hierotopy*. Deriving particularly from the theme of the hierarchy of (Pseudo-)Dionysius, several crucial topics can be related to icons and more specifically architectural “spatial icons”—the method for interpretation of visual symbols and their roles; their hierarchical organization; and the threefold process of the making of spatial icons.<sup>64</sup>

The major “iconic” theme is related to symbols and their applicability to Byzantine architecture. Credited for the introduction of symbols into philosophical discussions, (Pseudo-)Dionysius’ explanation of symbols is highly relevant to the iconicity of architecture. According to (Pseudo-)Dionysius, symbols are epistemological means that facilitate reaching out toward the inexpressible knowledge of God beyond being. He places them within symbolic theology at the intersection of what he terms kataphatic and apophatic reasoning about what God is and what God is not. By definition, symbols link various concepts and experiences, take various forms (icons), and imply multiple levels of meanings. Therefore, in such contexts, architectural iconography implies multiple meanings rather than a single, definite reading of a given form. Additionally, iconic features of architecture may stand for not only what they represent but also something else, including the unrepresentable.<sup>65</sup> Symbols provide a high evocative potential of iconic elements of Byzantine architecture including its material elements, such as domes or columns, as usually studied within architectural iconography, and also the immaterial aspects of space that the material envelope frames and denotes, such as light or sound. Furthermore, (Pseudo-)Dionysius arranges the nine kinds of angels into three threefold groups circling around God and organized from up to downward. As mediators, angels, symbols themselves, are never incarnate and are truly immaterial, even if represented in humanoid and material forms. (Pseudo-)Dionysius explains their role as being replete with an architectural process for their “geometric and architectural equipment has to do with their activity in founding, building, and bringing to completion, in fact, they have to do with everything connected with the providence which uplifts and returns their subordinates.”<sup>66</sup> The rotational motility

of angels that are simultaneously icons and symbols themselves is akin to Christological concept of perichoresis (περιχώρησις), rhythmic, circumambient, permeating, and reciprocal movement unique to the Christian Godhead.<sup>67</sup> Dennis recognizes the image of the whirling cross-in-circle as an icon of the Holy Trinity in perichoretic movement critical for the baptismal liturgy and “metaphor for the construction of baptismal space, where human bodies in rotational, processional movement around the font and within an imagined temporal and spatial divide imitated the swirling, interpenetrative movement of the Godhead.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, by revisiting the Neoplatonic concepts, Pentcheva suggests that the pattern of the cross-in-circle inspired visual designs of church domes and vaults and the radiant spherical void of the Hagia Sophia reenacted within the liturgical performances within.<sup>69</sup> This critical role of symbols to dynamically denote the divine presence with the humanmade creations through both material and immaterial aspects of architecture overlaps with the inclusive and multi-directional hierotopical investigations of spatial icons.

The theme of hierarchy and geometric approach is observable in the hierarchical structural design of the church buildings and the geometric design system of Byzantine churches. The Neoplatonic concept of triplets, which derives from a threefold system of nine angelic orders offered by (Pseudo-)Dionysius, I argue, is related to the nine-square modular grid articulated by a centrally placed canopied unit, including typical cross-in-square Byzantine church and its variants.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Byzantine churches with centralized, compact shapes and domical forms of their constituent elements also respond to (Pseudo-)Dionysian concept of “all-inclusive” hierarchy as “a radiant display that reaches out from God throughout the whole of the created order and draws it back into union with him.”<sup>71</sup> Two critical and most consistent elements of Byzantine churches, the church core and the altar space are usually harmonized by being architecturally framed by canopy-like structures of different scales and nested inside each other. The Byzantines even used the same architectural prototypes to define the church building and the altar canopy.<sup>72</sup> By using the latest digital technology that currently allows the highest precision for the analysis of architecture as it was built and designed, a team of architects and experts in computation demonstrated that medieval architects used Platonic forms of circle and triangle for proportionally derived design of Byzantine-rite churches Studenica, Žiža and Gradac, whereby the decisive and fixed spots were related to the placement of the altar table in the sanctuary and the center of the dome.<sup>73</sup> The sophisticated geometric proportional schemas were observed both in the floor plan and elevation and point to the architectural, three-dimensional understanding of space. The three-partite division of the Byzantine church interior as already observed in terms of the hierarchical placement of images on the church walls, or icons in space, responds to the three-partite structural and volumetric architectural design.<sup>74</sup> The sacred space of a church was arranged following hierarchical-cosmic ordering of the Christian universe; a topographical system in which the church became an image of the earthly life of Christ (God-incarnate); and a liturgical-chronological scheme in which some religious images were arranged on the wall surfaces in the sequence of church festivals.<sup>75</sup> Such integration of the structural form and its surface points to highly sophisticated tectonics of Byzantine church design.

Focusing on medieval architecture, I further propose that a Neoplatonic threefold process was used in the creation of sacred space in the Byzantine cultural context.<sup>76</sup> First, an idea forms in the mind of an architect. Second, the idea acquires its form and materialization in the material world through total design. Third, the idea is ultimately dematerialized as the beholder moves toward the spiritual realm through the experience

of space. It is in this second phase of the architectural process that architectural form and iconicity play a critical role. Thus, the architectural form and its iconicity emerge as important, potent, and multivalent, but intermediary aspects of architectural design. In other words, contrary to empiricist approaches, the visible itself does not represent the epistemological basis for understanding architecture, its spatiality, and meaning, yet it is a strong departure point for understanding the world beyond the visible realm.<sup>77</sup> Vital dimensions of the sacred place and memory of sacred events articulated by the architectural frame condition iconic perceptions of the sacred through divine and human agency, comprehended by intellect and experienced by senses. As already investigated elsewhere, visuality was among the most critical aspects of iconic perception that indeed “depended on a chain of interrelated and coordinated stimuli expressed through form, medium, and complex spatial arrangements, inclusive of light, color, sound, tactile, and haptic qualities, or bodily movements.”<sup>78</sup> Analyzed in that framework, iconicity remains a critical aspect that enables us to imagine beyond the visible but cannot provide an inclusive nor conclusive understanding of the architectural form and spatiality in architecture. Likewise, architectural practitioners and theoreticians confirm the untranslatability of iconicity,<sup>79</sup> as (Pseudo-)Dionysius initially suggested within the discussion of symbols. Moreover, we are reminded that in iconographic studies, architecture inevitably remains suspended between the image and context. Furthermore, while neither can fully articulate and explain architectural accomplishments, they remain critical in the making and reception of architecture. The fine balance between the image and text, visual and verbal, allows for the articulation of these processes but does not explain the core meaning of architecture as a “spatial icon” and “icon of space.”

### **Antimimetic aspects of the Byzantine architectural form**

Carver McCurrach highlights how architectural iconography allowed Krautheimer “to articulate a methodology that added a dimension to architectural analysis, freeing it from constraints of textual evidence and mimesis, and allowing for a multivalent reading of plan, forms, and space.”<sup>80</sup> Scholars who cannot support themes of design with contemporaneous medieval texts, as Renaissance architects and theoreticians articulated them, often dismiss the existence of architectural design in a medieval context, yet perhaps too early.<sup>81</sup> As Carver McCurrach additionally elaborates,

the ability of a structure to evoke another space or site conceptually through a mode of open signification freed the study of medieval architecture from ... Renaissance notions of specific architectural mimesis. Moreover, the focus on structure itself as the bearer of meaning, and the demonstration of how iconographic work can be conducted in the virtual absence of texts, enabled architectural historians to move beyond the conservative confines of formal description classification as an end goal. ... the evocation of another structure can only be accomplished through the specificity of concrete forms and their particular contextualizing arrangement.<sup>82</sup>

In my research, I too highlight the shortcomings of the iconographic approach that insists on a singular reading or rather the singular meaning of architecture and the role of iconography in ordering the architectural knowledge.<sup>83</sup> The methodological potentials of *hierotopy* that allow for the multiplicity of meanings and investigations of architecture as an image dependent on visual physical properties are vital. The assumption that

buildings are means of conveying meaning is not new. By focusing on the architectural form, we may successfully use iconographical approaches to give meaning to specific accomplishments. The iconic Byzantine church and the cathedral of Constantinople, the domed basilica of Hagia Sophia, may be the case in point. The church of Hagia Sophia conveys the meaning of “Heaven on Earth” as the dome represents the heavenly realm and the box-like basilica, the earthly realm. Yet, Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580–622) and Germanos Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 733) likened the church to the image of the universe composed of both invisible and visible entities, of both an incorporeal intelligent realm and a corporeal world of senses.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, due to the complexity of architecture as both an immaterial process and material object, architectural meanings cannot be simply likened to the process of decoding by “reading” specific forms—a dome or an oblong-planned box-like basilica, as in the case of Hagia Sophia. Architectural meanings change from the conception of the structure through its construction, and then various interpretations, as both the intention of the creator(s)—architects and donors—and the meaning comprehended by the interpreters—churchgoers, pilgrims, visitors, and other beholders—may change in the process. Addressing questions of architectural formalism, William Whyte proposed that instead of “reading” architecture it is more appropriate to speak of various “translations” or series of transpositions of meanings related to each of the media (images, sound, light, and construction), which are used to organize an architectural structure.<sup>85</sup> By engaging with Neoplatonic aspects of architecture, Alberto Pérez-Gómez argues that the work of architecture is not a passive bearer of meaning but that architecture allows meaning to present itself, and therefore, the representative power of architecture cannot be reduced to a copy, as suggested in iconographical studies and semiotics.<sup>86</sup>

*Hierotopy* most closely merges the tools of iconography and other methods for searching for the meaning of sacred space through a series of meaningful relations between created sacred spaces, whether specific buildings or their larger settings, on one hand, and creators and users of such sacred spaces, understood as their potential interpreters, on the other hand. In *hierotopy*, meanings are derived from the relations between the physical objects, which gain their significance also through nonphysical aspects of built structures as well as from the relations between the physical objects and human participants that involve the changing dynamics of the rituals, or rather the performative and rhetorical dimensions of specific settings when they are in use. Hence, Hagia Sophia becomes a “spatial icon” of the holy land when pilgrims venerated the miraculous icon of the Mother of God or the relics of the True Cross displayed in the church.<sup>87</sup> It also becomes the icon of Jerusalem and Rome, when, for example, the chains of St. Peter were displayed for veneration. Then again, it emerges as the space of primordial creation and the parting of heavens, earth, and waters as described in Genesis when the priest delivered the words of God from the ambo.<sup>88</sup> The ambo of Hagia Sophia was originally set within the church nave as a mountain-tower. Its raised platform, from which the priest would perform the segments of the Cathedral service, enhanced the acoustics and visibility. As it was set in the midair—below the glittering golden dome, representing the heavens, and the floor covered in Prokonessian marble with veins, which the Byzantines likened to the sea—the service from the ambo evoked various sacred meanings. Numerous meanings arise from the specific place-making based on the establishment of other evocative relations between the sacred space of the church and its users in specific historical or ritual contexts, hence, challenging the static, conventional assumptions about the uniform symbolic meaning of Byzantine domed churches. Moreover, as the somewhat relaxed use of select elements of any given architectural form does not necessarily

demand a single interpretation, *hierotopical* studies escape the positivist attempts to structure and order knowledge into neatly defined categories.

Iconicity allows for nonverbal expressiveness and description of the otherwise inaccessible absolute qualities of the sacred but remains strongly bound to its imagistic iconic nature. Simultaneously, the plurality of evocative meanings and relations in various contexts of the same building, as here highlighted in the space of Hagia Sophia, emphasizes the critical feature of iconicity in that while it presupposes materiality and is critical in place-making, it does not necessarily imply emulation of the physical world.<sup>89</sup> Within the religious context and spatial thinking, iconicity, strongly related to both form and meaning,<sup>90</sup> cannot be separated from its ontological nature and the notion of creation, in contrast to life-less, mechanical reproduction or disengaged perception.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the basic but essentially low level of realistic likeness characterizes the iconicity of Byzantine architecture.

The Byzantines and those who followed their concepts of sacred space employed various microarchitectural forms to frame singular experiences of the sacred and to communicate a multiplicity of sacred meanings to the beholders within extensive performative networks of various devotional practices and liturgical and paraliturgical services in Byzantine-rite churches.<sup>92</sup> Broadly based on a canopy as an architectural *parti*, domed church buildings took the developed forms and meanings of the major features and furnishings of the church interiors. In this ingenious solution of the nesting of canopies within the church sacred space, canopy as an architectural structure became a powerful signifier for the communication and interconnection between the interior and outer worlds, on both metaphysical and more literal, physical levels. A canopy frame for both the church and its furnishings facilitated a link between the two worlds, in one case seen from the inside, in the other from the outside (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The Byzantine church centered on the microarchitecture of canopies, as structures assembled by a minimal number of basic architectural elements to convey the sense of framed and specified space, allowed for the expansion of their scale beyond a microscale based on human size to include a macroscale relative to the space in which they are found and which they denote.<sup>93</sup>



Figure 5.3 Canopies as modular and spatial units within a Byzantine church interior, showing a relationship between the altar canopy and canopied church furnishings and the domed canopy of the church structure. Drawing: Zhengyang Hua.

An iconicity is a critical tool in the transposition of various meanings of individual architectural accomplishments in denoting accomplishments of the same or different types and scales in a particular spatial network. An individual church or its memorable architectural elements, such as an ambo, visually and spatially could denote the same or different type of a setting—another ambo but also a tomb or a tower depending on the given expanded context of the service and the setting. Furthermore, a church with its memorable architectural elements within a given service could denote entire architectural frameworks on different scales, for example, cities or essentially unbuilt or unbuilt environments such as Jerusalem, the Holy Land or Heavenly Jerusalem. The spatial relations between the beholders and “spatial icons” of monumental scale are particularly complex, having in mind the changing beholders’ perceptions once in front of them, such as when in front of a church or an ambo, or within them, such as when inside the church. Memorable, even if generic the generative form of a canopy as a kind of diagrammatic spatial icon that simultaneously allows freedom to convey the multiplicity of meanings, again, transpires as a critical architectural feature in Byzantine cultural context.<sup>94</sup>

### **Interconnectivity of representational and conceptual themes of Byzantine architecture: iconicity, *hypodochē*, and *chōra***

Particularly important are pictorial, imagistic phases that precede figuration and the mechanisms that the architects and artists cultivate as formless ideas descend into the world of form and matter. Alexei Lidov, Georges Didi-Huberman, Paul Vanderbroeck, Barbara Baert, Bissera V. Pentcheva, Iakovos Potamianos, Andrzej Piotrowski, and myself, each in our own way reflect upon these aspects of iconicity.<sup>95</sup> Trained as practicing architects and architectural historians and therefore interested predominantly in architectural themes, in our work, Potamianos, Piotrowski, and I especially examine aspects of figurative and nonfigurative modes of representation.<sup>96</sup> Piotrowski nicely summarizes figurative representation as a form related to an entity known from the physical world or associated with culturally recognized interpretation, whereas nonfigurative representation establishes relationships between material forms and visual phenomena without resorting to specific figures.<sup>97</sup> Potamianos highlights the technical and aesthetic design principles that allowed the Byzantines to articulate space, originally invisible, formless, and devoid of character so as to become intelligible and perceptible in their churches.<sup>98</sup> Working independently, all three of us highlight the relevance of Neoplatonic concepts replete with the concepts of framing the formless matter such as water or formless energy such as light or sound. In our research, we are going well beyond generic statements that Byzantines tried to create the sense of supranatural and divine by manipulating light by using domes in their religious architecture. For example, in my work on *phiale*, architectural installations for holy water fonts, I demonstrate how the formless matter of the living holy water receives its shape and meaning of creation and life through the orchestrated use of the architectural installation and sacred rites.<sup>99</sup> The *phiale*, usually located outside of the church building and taking its reduced form, becomes a spatial icon of the church itself, understood both as a structure and community (Figure 5.4).

As I further show in my work, iconicity remains predominantly related to the iconic visual aspects of architecture, yet the expressiveness of three-dimensional structure of architecture should be related additionally to plasticity, both literally understood as well as understood among architects as the quality of the architecture of being adaptable to changes in the environment or different contexts and locations.<sup>100</sup> This



Figure 5.4 Phiale (a canopied installation for the blessed water) and the katholikon (principal church) of the Great Lavra Monastery, Mt. Athos. The Great Lavra Monastery was founded in 963. The current installation of the phiale post-Byzantine, assembled of spolia, some of which can be dated to the eleventh century. Photo: Nebojša Stanković.

holistic phenomenon again can be related to the Neoplatonic concept of plasticity as one of the aspects of *hypodochē* (υποδοχή, literally receptacle, site, but also reception), a kind of space-time continuum, as well as to *hieroplastic* space, in which spiritual phenomena are visually and sensory presented as fragmented traces of theophany.<sup>101</sup> Especially important is the philosophically and architecturally suggestive concept of the presignified elusive state of *hypodochē* that lacks any form, which is known as *chōra* (χώρα), introduced by Plato in his *Timaeus* for the first time and occasionally used interchangeably with *hypodochē*.<sup>102</sup>

In *Timaeus*, Plato presents a philosophical, teleological construct about the formation of the universe as being created by the Demiurge.<sup>103</sup> *Timaeus* opens the discourse on the primordial event of making by distinguishing between *what always is and never becomes*



and *what becomes and never is*, essentially by identifying and juxtaposing two distinct concepts of “being” and “becoming” (27d). The Platonic “being” is noetic. Belonging to the realm of ideas, from which the creator draws ideal patterns, the “being” is the absolute “model,” eternal, unchangeable, nonmaterial, nonspatial, invisible, beyond space and time. In contrast, “becoming” is open to opinion; it is perceptible. Belonging to the realm of the physical world, “becoming” is ephemeral, changeable, and open to interpretations. As the creator’s challenge lies in the making of an image of the model as an absolute that Timaeus names the “living thing (itself),” the image of the model, as a kind of a “copy” and the process of “becoming” is perceptible, visible, and material, and therefore, presuppose a spatial field.<sup>104</sup> Hence, Timaeus introduces the “third kind” (48e); he initially names the “receptacle (*hypodochē*, ὑποδοχή) of all becoming” (49a). The term *hypodochē* (ὑποδοχή) is often translated both as a “receptacle, container” but includes the notion of “reception” or situation of “receptivity,” suggesting a kind of spatiotemporal construal.<sup>105</sup> As Landrum highlights, “*hypodochē* is critical for every creative act, for it is ‘that in which all the elements are always coming to be, making their appearance, and again vanishing’” (49e).<sup>106</sup> Timaeus likens *hypodochē* to various artifacts, agencies, and mediums: to a lump of gold (50a4–b5); to a mirror (that receives the likeness of objects and gives back images to them 71b, 46a); a mixing bowl (krater that receives the elements that the Demiurge mixes 41d); a mother (who receives and nurtures the father’s seed of their child 50d); a winnowing fan (that receives, shakes, separates, and disperses the grain 52e–53a); an odorless liquid (that receives any scent for the making of perfume 50e); and a neutral plastic substance (such as wax that receives impressions 50d).

After summarizing the three kinds: “being,” “becoming,” and “the receptacle (*hypodochē*) of becoming,” Timaeus supplants the term receptacle (*hypodochē*, ὑποδοχή) with that of *chōra* (χώρα), which “provides room for all things that have birth,” itself being apprehensible only in traces by a kind of derivative, dream-like reasoning that what exists must be somewhere and take up some space [χώραν τινά] (52a–d).<sup>107</sup> Yet, *chōra*, as Timaeus reasons, remains highly ambiguous, difficult, obscure, partaking in both intelligible and sensory, material and immaterial, spatial and temporal. *Chōra* is the spatiotemporal receptacle of all becoming the recipient of all impressions and that which is “eternal and indestructible, providing a seat for all created things (σώματα, sōmata, bodies)” (49a–52b, citation 50b). Paradoxically, the lack of formal qualities of *chōra* is a condition for revealing them; therefore, the meaning of *chōra* is derived from the forms of which it is entirely lacking.<sup>108</sup> Understood as an ultimate totality, both space and activity, it is ultimately untranslatable and assumes the attributes of *hypodochē*, some of which are critical for contemplating creative processes and architectural space as further theorized by Neoplatonists, including (Pseudo-)Dionysius. For example, space is not void; light and wisdom precondition its geometric structuring.<sup>109</sup> Like Plato’s Timaeus, (Pseudo-)Dionysius speaks of mirrors “reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself,” and angels, symbols themselves, who “as mediators between God and humans, are mirrored in which the image of God is reflected.”<sup>110</sup> The plastic substance and the feature of plasticity, as arguably the necessary formal characteristic of *chōra* for its role for enabling and situating *becoming*,<sup>111</sup> is also developed in the (Pseudo-)Dionysius’ concept of *hieroplastia*.<sup>112</sup>

The concept of *chōra* has captured the attention of architectural practitioners and theoreticians interested in the concepts of space and making, the communicative role of architecture, and how it can reconcile various levels of reality.<sup>113</sup> Architect and theoretician Dalibor Vesely initiated investigations about various modes of representation in architecture and how these expose the divided ontological and epistemological

conditions for contextualizing space in architecture.<sup>114</sup> The relationship of what he termed the “latent world” of architecture to its visible articulation is based on their ontological difference, recurrently described through concepts of *being* and *becoming*. According to Vesely, the visible conveys a kind of knowledge of the prereflective levels of articulation that simultaneously obscures the epistemological value of the visible. Combining the ontological aspects of architectural space with phenomenological approaches, Vesely’s student Alberto Pérez-Gómez turns to Neoplatonic investigations of the absolute that cannot be contemplated directly but rather has to be experienced as a kind of reflection in the mirror. Realizing that dualism and dichotomy cannot explain architectural phenomena and that they were never there in Plato’s creation story,<sup>115</sup> Pérez-Gómez posits that through his concept of *chôra* Plato is describing the space of human creation and participation, where *chôra* is a distinct reality, both cosmic and abstract space, to be apprehended in the crossing of *being* and *becoming*.<sup>116</sup> In architecture, the concept of *chôra* undermines the distinction between the contained space and material container and points to the realm that exists beyond the linguistic identity of being and becoming, beyond language and culture, while at the same time making them possible.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, Pérez-Gómez suggests that *chôra* can be related to paradigmatic architecture whereby the architecture as an “embodying wisdom” represents a space-matter entity that allows such an experience and is simultaneously a means of the presentification of the *chôra*, not the datum of the original experience or epiphany, but rather full realization of the creation and development through the bodily and mindful immersion.<sup>118</sup> Pérez-Gómez’s student Indra Kagis McEwen reaches back to space-making and Daedalus’ Labyrinth and its *chôros*, a dancing floor and cognate of *chôra*, whose realm, image, and the measure was defined by Ariadne’s dance and an act of weaving.<sup>119</sup> In their work, Vesely, Pérez-Gómez, and Kagis McEwen do not theorize *chôra* in the Byzantine context, however, even if we know that the concept of *chôra* continually occupied Neoplatonists and Byzantine intellectuals, such as (Pseudo-)Dionysius, Gregory of Nazianzus, John of Damascus, and Theodore Metochites.<sup>120</sup>

Tanoulas and Potamianos accurately read *Timeaus*, its terminology, and concepts as relevant to architecture and, in particular, to Byzantine architecture. Through its concept of the Demiurge, the Creator, Timaeus inspired early Christian thought and was the main source for understanding space at least until the mid-twelfth century.<sup>121</sup> Donald Zeyl summarizes the metaphysical scheme of the *Timaeus* (50c7–d4 and 52a1–b5) as follows: (i) the eternal and unchanging forms, the “model,” or “father”; (ii) the copies of the model or “offspring” of the father and the mother; and (iii) the receptacle, or “mother.”<sup>122</sup> The three-partite metaphysical construct was appealing to Christian Neoplatonists by combining references from the Psalms that likened Jesus Christ to ἡ χώρα τῶν ζώντων (*the chôra of the living*) and the Mother of God to ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου (*the chôra of a-chôra*).<sup>123</sup> As one of the epithets of the Mother of God in the Akathistos hymn, *the chôra of the a-chôra* was formulated by the sixth century, and at least by the fourth century also referenced the Incarnation and Logos Incarnate.<sup>124</sup> Isar also analyzes the concept of *chôra* within the incarnational discourse and its relevance to the church practices.<sup>125</sup> I agree with her argument that the modern distinction between the container and contained as used since the nineteenth century in the discourse about *chôra* should be removed because of untranslatability and impossibility to include all the spatial depths that the *chôra* and its related terminology carries.<sup>126</sup> Isar posits that *chôra* is the womb and receptacle in which the creation takes place, yet as *chôra* precedes creation is formless and invisible; *chôra* is also the space in the making, and in between, it partakes both the intelligible and phenomenal bodies but retains neither

of them. Hence, *chôra* in a Christian context is not a mere physical extension of space, but a living body of liturgical performative experience. Tanoulas convincingly shows that phrase ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου, as a reference to Sion and indirectly to the Mother of God, emerges in the commentaries on the Psalms by Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339) who uses two terms *χώρα* and *δοχείον* (*docheion*, container); the latter is a synonym for *υποδοχή* (*hypodochē*) as used in *Timaeus*, as a supplementary to *chôra*.<sup>127</sup> In other words, *chôra* is a spatiotemporal realm from which *docheion*, the material body (of Christ) is born; it is *chora* in function, filled with bodies (σώματα, *sômata*), which cannot exist outside space as elucidated in *Timaeus*. I agree with Tanoulas that even if used interchangeably, *chôra* and *hypodochē* are not the same.<sup>128</sup> *Chôra* is the totality that cannot be grasped by visual terms, whereas the receptacle (*υποδοχή*, *hypodochē*) is *chôra* filled with matter of sensible beings, the matter that changes perpetually, and therefore can be grasped in terms of imagery and narrative.<sup>129</sup>

Tanoulas demonstrates that the members of the Byzantine intellectual elite, including Theodore Metochites, a fourteenth-century highly eloquent statesman, philosopher, poet, and patron of the arts, applied the term *chôra* as it originated in Plato's *Timaeus*.<sup>130</sup> Theodore Metochites extensively used the term *chôra* in his writings, but also in the mosaics that decorated the interior space of his major foundation, the Church of Christ Savior in *Chôra* in Constantinople (ca. 1316–1320/21).<sup>131</sup> By making close parallels between Neoplatonic and Judeo-Christian texts that discuss *chora*, Tanoulas additionally demonstrates that in the Church of *Chôra* in Constantinople, Metochites effectively communicated the imagery of *chôra* or rather its cognate *hypodochē* as it was enriched in its Christological and incarnational argument. Namely, four mosaics in the church bear inscriptions that reference *chora*: two in relation to Jesus Christ, Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς | ἡ χώρα τῶν ζώντων / “Jesus Christ, the *chôra* of the living” and two in relation to Mother of God, Μ(ήτηρ) Θ(εο)ῦ ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου / “Mother of God, the dwelling-place (*chôra*) of the a-*chôra*” (Figures 5.5–5.7).<sup>132</sup>



Figure 5.5 Christ Pantokrator with the inscription: Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς | ἡ χώρα τῶν ζώντων / “Jesus Christ, *chora* of the living,” golden mosaic, lunette above the central doors of the outer narthex, Church of the Holy Savior, *Chôra* Monastery, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: author.



Figure 5.6 Christ Pantokrator and then within the donor composition, golden mosaic, the central doors of the inner narthex, Church of the Holy Savior, Chôra Monastery, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: author.

Images of “Jesus Christ, the *chôra* of the living,” first within the massive representation of Christ Pantokrator and then within the donor composition, are located in the outer and inner narthexes, above the central doors (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). Each time facing beholders as they approach the central core, the nave of the church, these images of “Jesus Christ, the *chôra* of the living” mark the major thresholds within the sacred space of the church. Tanoulas suggests that this is Christianized *chôra* of the living, essentially rooted in the Platonic concept of utopia in the afterlife.<sup>133</sup>

Images and concept of the Mother of God as the *chôra* are seemingly more complex conceptually, as elaborated by Isar, who recognizes *chôra* not only as of the Christianized version of the Mother, one of the three kinds in Plato’s *Timaeus* but also a space of participation and a living body of liturgical experience.<sup>134</sup> Two mosaic icons of the Mother of God inscribed as the *chôra* are preserved in the Constantinopolitan monastery of Christ the Chôra. One is of the Blachernitissa type, showing the Mother of God in *orans*, in praying position with Christ Emmanuel upon her bosoms (Figure 5.7). The Mother of God and Christ Child are facing east and the image of Christ Chôra in the outer narthex. They



Figure 5.7 Virgin Blachernitissa and Angels with the inscription: Μ(ή)τηρ Θ(εο)ῦ ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου / “Mother of God, the *chora* of the *a-chôra*,” golden mosaic, lunette of the northern canopied bay of the outer narthex, Church of the Holy Savior, Chôra Monastery, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: author.

are also seen on the way out of the church proper, hence marking its threshold to the outer world. The other icon is of the Hodegetria type is part of the templon screen and is marking the threshold to the sanctuary, the holiest place within the church proper (Figure 5.8).

Ousterhout relates the image of the Virgin (Mother of God) to the Chôra as represented in Metochites’ foundation by following Krautheimer’s methodology of architectural iconography.<sup>135</sup> He first examines the dedication of the monastery and the church to Christ and the Virgin of Chôra. Then, he focuses on the Blachernitissa type and relates the images of the Virgin as Chôra to the symbolism of containment and enriched by the narrative from religious literature. In particular, he relates the iconic image of the Mother of God Blachernitissa to the narrative scenes of the narthexes, the themes extracted from Byzantine hymnography by John of Damascus, Cosmas of Jerusalem, Joseph the Hymnographer, and Theophanes Graptos. The four hymnographers are depicted in the Constantinopolitan Church of Chôra. Like other Byzantine hymnographers such as Cyril of Alexandria or Andrew of Crete, they use *chôra* and its derivative terms as an epithet of the Mother of God, most often in its meaning as the container, vessel, dwelling, and space of the divine Logos. Finally, following Demus’ approach as to how icons structure space, Ousterhout highlights the third relationship between the image of the Virgin to its setting in the building: the image above the actual doors in the church and its mosaic facing west as if to suggest the view from within the church outward. The placement of icons in the church reinforces the spatial concept of the Virgin of the Chôra as the sacred space of the living church. Tanoulas additionally suggests its Christianized meaning of the utopia on earth and paradise regained thought of the incarnational argument.<sup>136</sup>

I agree with Tanoulas, who recognizes that *chôra* of the Mother of God, *the chôra of a-chôra* here in the context of the Chôra Church is essentially the receptacle, the *hypodochē*.<sup>137</sup> The Mother of God, *the chôra of a-chôra* of the Blachernitissa type is



Figure 5.8 Proskynetarion icon of the Mother of God with Christ Child framed by a marble canopy frame. Church of the Holy Savior, Chôra Monastery, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: Nebojša Stanković.

especially telling in terms of its relations to *chôra* and *hypodochē*. The Blachernitissa image carries toponymic reference to the now lost miraculous icon of the Mother of God, which was originally kept in the Church of the Mother of God in the Blachernae district in Constantinople. The miraculous icon was the sacred palladium of Constantinople and protected the city in times of siege and need.<sup>138</sup> Ceremonially carried along the city walls, the icon defined the sacred, “indestructible” space of the city and the Christian empire. Of relevance is that the original miraculous icon of the Mother of God Blachernitissa was presumably made of wax (see wax as an aspect of *chôra*, *hypodochē*)<sup>139</sup> mixed with ashes of Christian martyrs.

This particular icon of the Mother of God is also known as *Platyτέρα* (from Πλατυτέρα των Ουρανών, “Wider than Universe”) because it shows the Creator of the Universe in her womb. Evoking its name and image, the icon alludes to the original creation and the

paradoxical spatial depth of the *chôra*, which is beyond space. The Mother of God is shown in prayer position with Christ Emmanuel (“God is with us,” cf. Isaiah 7:14)<sup>140</sup> in a roundel upon her bosoms. The image points to the very moment of Christ’s conception. Christ Child is shown in an aureole, a golden circle of light and brightness (see also gold as an aspect of *chôra*, *hypodochē*).<sup>141</sup> Investigating the icon as *chôra*, Lidov clarified the golden backgrounds of Byzantine icons because they negate the image-viewer opposition, therefore suggesting that the image produced in space precedes the pictorial plane.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, the Mother of God and Christ Child are here shown between two flying angels. Surrounded by angels, symbols themselves that facilitate two-directional communication between the divinely and earthly realms,<sup>143</sup> the Mother of God assumes the role of Plato’s “third kind,” while with the Christ Child together the meaning of the *Being becoming*. The image of Mother of God with Christ Child ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου provides a Platonic parallel to understanding Incarnation as the *Being* (ultimate model, archetype, which is eternal, unchanging, formless, beyond time and space, the “living thing itself,” the “Father”) *becoming* the sensible (visible) and material, physical “copy” of the model, of “Mother” and “Father” by means of *becoming*.

The second mosaic icon of the *Mother of God*, the *chôra of the a-chôra* is in the nave, the central part of the church. The icon is of the Hodegetria type (from Ὁδηγήτρια, “She who points the Way”), one of the most popular images of the Mother of God and Christ Child in the Byzantine cultural context. At least from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, the miraculous Hodegetria icon was ceremonially carried through the streets and markets of Constantinople to perform miracles every Tuesday.<sup>144</sup> The focal point of the Hodegetria’s miraculous performance was when the icon and its bearer were moved in a circle up in the air. Lidov studied the Hodegetria as the bearer of sacred space and highlighted the miraculous “flying” performance as the spatial icon par excellence.<sup>145</sup> Additionally, I have interpreted this particular Hodegetria image in the Church of Chôra with the partially preserved inscription of the “Mother of God, the dwelling-place (*chôra*) of the *a-chôra*” in spatial terms.<sup>146</sup> The image is part of the *proskynetarion* icon framed by a marble canopy frame, originally part of the now lost sanctuary screen (Figure 5.9). The Byzantines called this screen the *templon* as a reference to the Mosaic tradition of the veils of the temple that framed the most sacred space, the sanctuary. Here, the image of the Mother of God, as the *chôra* in its cognate as *hypodochē* the dwelling-place reinforced the concept of sanctuary screen as the *templon* screen, a kind of pliable, liminal space, which is also the event-place. The salvific message is unveiled by the passing of the officiating High Priest through the doors of the *templon* screen, the biblical “veil” into the most sacred space. In the sanctuary, the Priest was spiritually reunited with Christ through the performance of the Eucharistic mystery of Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of the humankind.<sup>147</sup> My assessment on the *templon* screen in the Chôra Church made of stone but signifying its previous form made of textile overlaps with Kagis McEwen’s research on the creation of architectural space and the proposition that *chôra* (see also *hypodochē*)—understood as the receptacle made of textile rather than having a fixed form as typical vessels (see krater as a form of *chôra*, *hypodochē*)—has its own form, which is plastic and changeable (see plasticity as a feature of *chôra*, *hypodochē*).<sup>148</sup> Seen through the incarnational Christian discourse (“*the Being Becoming*”), the womb of the Mother of God herself as the *chôra* and *hypodochē*, expanded through the signification and presentification of *chôra* to the church sanctuary itself, reinforces this concept of plasticity and experiential qualities of the sacred architecture. The vaults and domes of the Chôra Church, designed and made with elegantly curved



Figure 5.9 Proskynetria icons, originally part of the developed templon screen, Church of Christ the Savior, Chôra Monastery, Constantinople, now Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: author.

ribs covered in golden mosaics and evoking a textile, fiber covering of their skin, are the receptacles, *hypodochês* themselves (Figure 5.10). The architectural restoration of the Chôra Church undertaken by Metochites, whereby Metochites built around the central domed core of an older imperial church by adding domed and vaulted spaces, here is articulated through the use of canopied *parti* (Figure 5.11). In design and concept, I argue, Metochites design principle demonstrates a subtle understanding of *chôra* in motility and its limited reproducibility that negates the idea of a copy in architecture based on exact likeness but rather on diagrammatic principles.





*Figure 5.10* Mother of God with Christ Child in the medallion of the golden mosaic of the scalloped dome of the northern canopied bay, inner narthex, Church of the Holy Savior, Chôra Monastery, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, fourteenth century. Photo: author.

### **Representational and design themes as “theoretical principle”**

The interconnectivity of *chôra* and *hypodochē* highlights their potentials and limits when related to conceptual and representational themes of Byzantine architecture. This relationship posits the iconicity of *chôra* only within its cognate as the

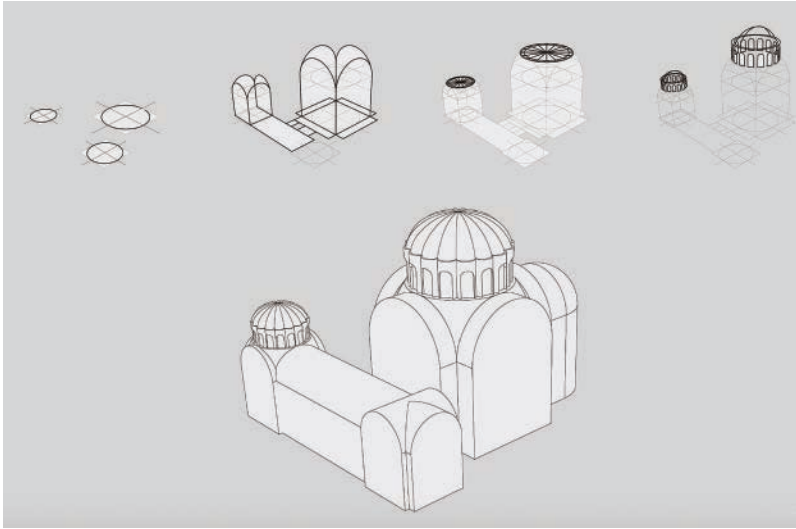


Figure 5.11 Diagrammatic representation of the Chôra Church, built over time around its central domed canopy, demonstrating the motility and limited reproducibility as key features of *chôra*, understood as the design principle. Drawing: Tianling (Rusty) Xu.

*hypodochē*. The concept of *chôra* situated at the intersection of *being* and *becoming* provides this possibility for addressing the traces of the merging of prereflective experiences with the material world. The receptacle, *hypodochē*, as one aspect of *chôra* allows for ontological continuity with the visible and sensible world. The explicit level of visibility, iconicity is critical for architectural representation and what is preserved from the prereflective world.<sup>149</sup> Iconicity, therefore, remains critical in the construal of the form-meaning relationships and the ability to conceive of, interpret, or understand architecture as an object from a variety of perspectives.<sup>150</sup> Yet, in the Byzantine architectural context, iconicity is not static and deterministic, therefore allowing for transferability and multiplicity of forms and meanings as advanced in *hierotopical* studies.

The conceptual theme of *chôra* as a theoretical principle in architecture can be then related to its communicative role and relevance for architectural representation. Zeyl clarified when focusing on Plato's *Timeaus* that

[t]he necessity of a three-dimensional field in which the visible universe, as copy of its eternal model, takes shape and subsists determines the sense in which we should understand the universe to be an 'imitation' of its model. The imitative activity of the Craftsman is unlike that of a builder who replicates a larger- or smaller-scale three-dimensional structure as model, but like that of a builder who follows a set of instructions or schematics. That set is the intelligible, non-material and non-spatial model that prescribes the features of the structure to be built; it is not a structure itself.<sup>151</sup>

Indeed, the ultimate model, the archetype remains absolute in architectural pursuits as well, but as (Pseudo-)Dionysius elaborated by

using matter, one may be lifted up to the immaterial archetypes. Of course one must be careful to use the similarities as dissimilarities ... to avoid one-to-one correspondences, to make the appropriate adjustments as one remembers the great divide between the intelligible and the perceptible.<sup>152</sup>

Therefore, in the material world, immaterial archetype and its various prototypes as paradigmatic models acquire material forms. Hence, even if Byzantine architecture was initiated by philosophical concepts and designed from the inside out, by focusing on the articulation of an interior space rather than exterior form, the qualities of space expressed through the architectural form remain of great importance.<sup>153</sup> In the context of *chôra*, the essence of architecture remains beyond all forms and creation. Then again, in highly sophisticated Byzantine architecture, the concept of *chôra* and its aspect *hypodochē* allowed for the contemplation of space and its representation through diagrammatic modes rather than copies based on likeness and as such were instrumental for balancing the iconicity and its larger symbolic field. In such frameworks, various forms can be given to the same entities and the same forms to dissimilar entities.<sup>154</sup> This fact empirically confirms that the form was the result of the search for the appropriate framing device for the content. In that regard, indeed, as we opened this essay with the discourse on architectural iconography, which Krautheimer initiated and Lidov further elaborated in his investigations of the limits and potentials of iconography and *hierotopy*, the content of architecture was of primary importance to Byzantine architects.

A particular phenomenon in the Byzantine context was also the search for a form that can be adapted for diverse contexts. The generic, microarchitectural form of a canopy proved to be sufficient and flexible enough.<sup>155</sup> It simultaneously included the major interior and exterior aspects for the framing of architectural space. The lack of architectural drawings such as explicit floor plans in Byzantine architecture has been already noticed while a few surviving contemporaneous three-dimensional models simultaneously pose additional questions about the modes of architectural representation in the Byzantine context.<sup>156</sup> Selected textual references confirm the use of models in Byzantine architecture.<sup>157</sup> Especially telling is the account by Gregory of Nissa, who writes: *Look at the engineers of all these grand and sublime buildings, and how they pre-create the likeness of form and type on a little bit of wax... Even a small figure has the same power as many and big constructions.*<sup>158</sup> The twelfth-century stone model from the Church in Cherven (Figure 5.12) is highly perplexing at first sight, potentially perceived as being crude and uninformative.<sup>159</sup> Yet, when examined as a liminal model, showing the space in transition, it suggests a peculiar combination of both the solids and voids. The form of Byzantine churches included the complex materiality of their solids, the immateriality of the light- and sound-filled voids of domed canopies that constituted the basic spatial unit in church design (Figure 5.13).<sup>160</sup> Essentially, the model from Cherven shows the modeling of the interior as solid, while imprinting (as on wax, see also reference to imprint and plasticity of *chôra*)<sup>161</sup> memorable and critical select features for articulating thresholds and accommodating light apertures in particular, such as doors, windows, or columns. Based on the parametric modeling available today, it is possible to reconstruct the interiors of Byzantine churches as solids, confirming a high possibility that the Byzantines used such peculiar composite types of modeling architectural space (Figure 5.14).<sup>162</sup>



Figure 5.12 Stone model of a church, highlighting its western and eastern sides, Cherven, Bulgaria, twelfth century. Photo: Ljubomir Milanović.

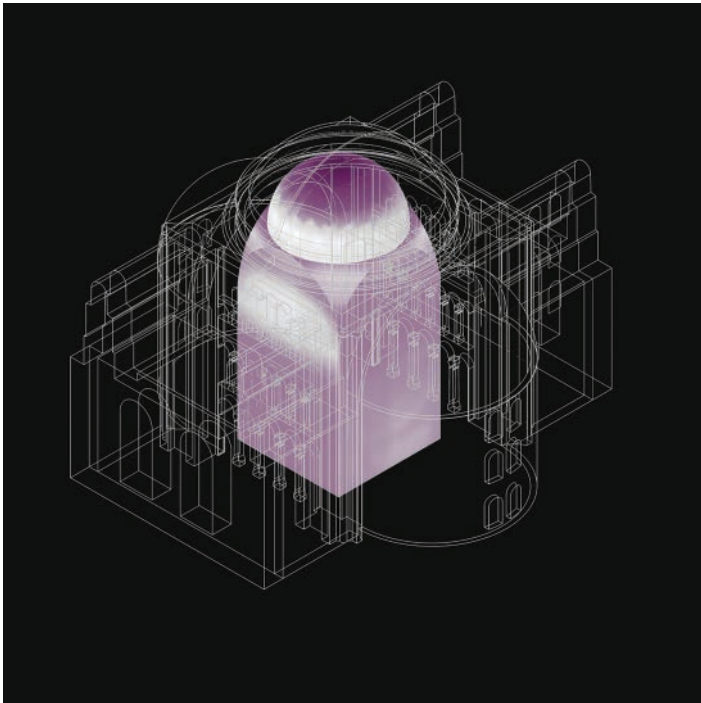


Figure 5.13 Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, Turkey. Analysis showing light penetration in the central canopied core of the church. Drawing: Alexander (Alex) Blum.

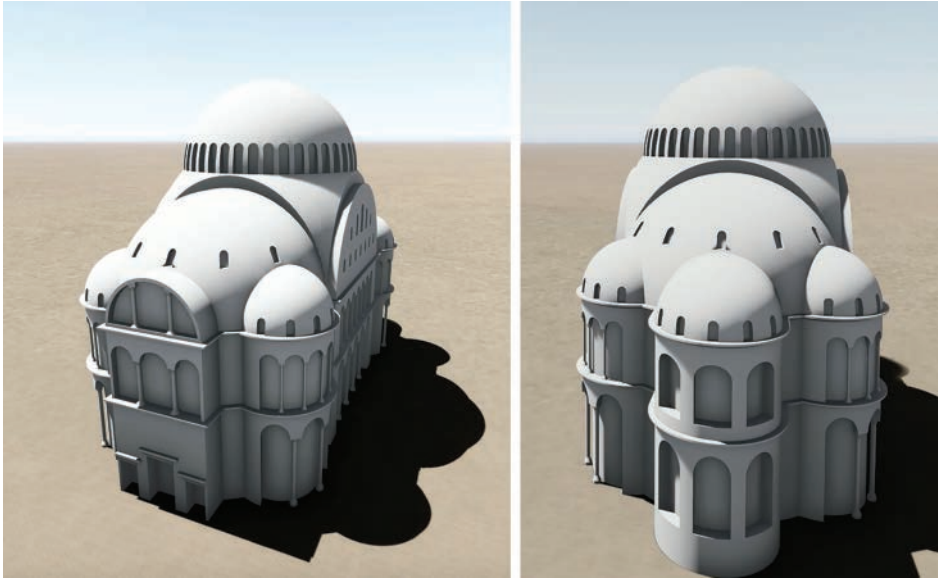


Figure 5.14 Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, modern Istanbul, Turkey. A three-dimensional model of H. Sophia where the interior is represented as a solid with imprinted major architectural features for openings. Modeling: Tianling (Rusty) Xu.

The reasons for the limited iconicity of the representational models again should be searched in the Byzantine understanding of space. It has been already suggested that by the eighteenth century “preconceptual spatiality” of *chôra* was obscured by a rationalized and homogenized “geometric space.”<sup>163</sup> Purely geometric and perspectival drawings often misplace the essence of architecture and the spatial depths of its *chôra*.<sup>164</sup> Pérez-Gómez argues that the distance between spectators and actors in the ancient Greek theater articulated the formative space of *chôra* between the *being* and *becoming* and enabled holistic, microcosmic participation.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, the negation of the distancing gaze in the Byzantine church is suggested in few surviving architectural models, represented in decorative church programs,<sup>166</sup> and recurrently spatially articulated through the use of a canopy as an architectural *parti* that allows for minimal distance between the interior and exterior.<sup>167</sup> This strategy was enriched within the concept of *hieroplastia* as a fragmented trace of theophany and representation of the sacred.<sup>168</sup> The recollection of embodiment in the space of *chôra*, which is at once earthly, heavenly, and beyond, containing the divine presence and the believers within the liturgical performance proved to be a powerful strategy not to reduce the essence of architecture to its bare geometry and form.<sup>169</sup>

## Conclusion

By examining the Byzantine architectural form between its iconicity and *chôra*, this chapter posits that Byzantine architecture was highly conceptual. The iconicity of Byzantine religious architecture even if limited to select generic and culturally recognizable architectural forms, such as domed canopy, carried broad-ranging sacred

meanings. These antimimetic aspects of Byzantine architectural form are largely failing comparative approaches in the investigations of the mechanisms for the transmission of architectural forms as proposed in architectural iconography. Examined within the Neoplatonic context of *chôra*, the concept of copies based on the exact likeness is not attainable and is further supported by the attempt of Byzantine architects to design religious structures aimed to offer a unique and genuine experience of the sacred. Iconicity, in its nature, is deeply imagistic, figurative, and diagrammatic, and remains an essential tool for addressing the representational and design themes. Yet, without its consideration within the philosophically and architecturally suggestive Platonic concept of *chôra*, iconicity cannot sufficiently explain the form and conceptual aspects of Byzantine religious architecture. The Byzantines articulated the meaning of their religious architecture before the form, not the other way around. The explicit visibility of the architectural form and its iconicity remain important but the transitional aspects of Byzantine architecture. Based on Byzantine reasoning, it seems that iconic features of Byzantine architecture should be understood as being more spatial and even supraspatial, whereas diagrammatic features facilitated their culturally conditioned perception. Images of architecture and in architecture, when juxtaposed with critical philosophical thoughts of Plato, (Pseudo-)Dionysius, Gregory of Nazianzus, John of Damascus, and Theodore Metochites, provide an understanding that the primary goal of Byzantine architecture is not in the decreasing the level of distancing gaze between the observer and the observed as suggested by representations in drawings or models. Rather, being deeply iconic, characterized by the low level of the realistic likeness and limited reproducibility, the essence of architecture shifts from the images (on walls) to architectural space and its supraspatial realms facilitated by *hieroplastia*, the fragmented traces of the sacred. The Platonic concept of *chôra* and its cognate *hypodochē* as the spatiotemporal receptacle and activity, enriched by the ontological capacity based on the incarnational argument and the embodiment of divine presence, additionally reveals the critical role of experiential qualities and plasticity of Byzantine architecture. These performative and nonimitative qualities of Byzantine architectural accomplishments as spatial icons, as proposed in *hierotopical* investigations, elucidate the vitality of Byzantine architectural form not only as an image of space but rather a “participatory icon of space.”

## Notes

The material for this chapter was originally presented at the conference panel organized by Alexei Lidov at the International Congress of Byzantine Studies: *Byzantium—A World of Changes* in Belgrade in 2016. It is a special privilege to present revised material in honor of Alexei. I am thankful to Marina Mihaljević and Todor Mitrović for scholarly communication while working on this chapter. My former students and now colleagues Zhengyang Hua, Alexandar (Alex) Blum, and Tianling (Rusty) Xu helped with architectural drawings while Nebojša Stanković and Ljubomir Milanović generously shared their photographs with me. As always, my family members supported my work.

- 1 Among good summaries about iconography and iconology, which also explain their interconnectedness, is the entry by Maria Cristina Carile and Eelco Nagelsmit, “Iconography, Iconology,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, eds. Constance Furey, Steven Linn McKenzie, Thomas Chr. Römer, Jens Schröter, Barry Dov Walfish and Eric Ziolkowski (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), vol. 12, 778–783. See also, Christinie Hasenmueller, “Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36/3 (1978), 289–301.

- 2 On the complexity of the icons in Christianity and visual arts, see excellent summaries by Sven Rune Havsteen and Katherine Marsengill, "Icons," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, eds. Constance Furey, Steven Linn McKenzie, Thomas Chr. Römer, Jens Schröter, Barry Dov Walfish and Eric Ziolkowski (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), vol. 12, 786–795.
- 3 Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic themes in the art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939) and subsequent editions of this highly influential book. See also, Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts. Papers in and on art history*, ed. Erwin Panofsky (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 38–41.
- 4 Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), 1–33; reprinted in: *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art* (1969), 115–150; Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," *Art Bulletin* 24/1 (1942), 1–38.

In addition to Krautheimer, who remained most prominently present in scholarship, several other scholars even before Krautheimer investigated how the form of Byzantine structures relates to their meaning, and in particular, function. Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," *The Art Bulletin* 27 (1945), 1–27; André Grabar, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* (Paris: Collège Royal de France, 1946); Oskar Wulff, *Die Koimesiskirche in Nicäa und ihre Mosaiken nebst den verwandten kirchlichen Baudenkmälern* (Strasbourg: Heitz und Mündel, 1903); *idem.*, *Die altchristliche und byzantinische Kunst* (Berlin: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1914); Joseph Sauer, *Syrrabolik des Kirchengebäudes und seiner Ausstattung in der Auffassung des Mittelalters: Mit Berücksichtigung von Honorius Augustodunensis Sicardus und Durandus* (Freiburg im Breslau, 1902; reprinted Münster: Mehren and Hobbeling, 1964); Émile Mâle, *The Late Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Iconography and Its Sources*, prepared by H. Bober (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986, ©1902). In the 1940s, scholars also prompted investigations of spatial and temporal qualities of architecture, a topic that did not get immediate attention among medievalists but is revived within investigations of Byzantine architecture. See, for example, seminal book that ever since reached numerous reprints and translations, Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941).

Excellent analysis of the place of Krautheimer's work among other scholarly debates about architectural iconography is provided by Stepan Vaneyan, *Архитектура и иконография. «Тело символа» в зеркале классической методологии*. [*Architecture and Iconography. "The Body of Symbol" in the Mirror of Classical Methodology*] (Moscow: Progress: Traditsiya, 2010), 1–41; 62–67.

- 5 Krautheimer, "Introduction," 1–33.
- 6 Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival," 1–38. Catherine Carver McCurrach, "'Renovatio' Reconsidered: Richard Krautheimer and the Iconography of Architecture," *Gesta* 50/1 (2011), 41–69, esp. 50 summarizes the relevance of Krautheimer's early texts for architectural historians.
- 7 Krautheimer, "Introduction," 1–33, esp. 7, 16.
- 8 *Ibid.*, citation on 20.
- 9 *Ibid.*, citation on 1.
- 10 On Krautheimer's biography and intellectual circles, see, for example, Walter Eugene Kleinbauer, *Research Guide to the History of Western Art. Sources of Information in the Humanities*, no. 2 (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1982), 69–70; Willibald Sauerländer, "Richard Krautheimer," *Burlington Magazine* 137 (February 1995), 119–120; Dale Kinney, "Richard Krautheimer at the Institute of Fine Arts," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 27 (2002), 177–195; and Carver McCurrach, "'Renovatio' Reconsidered," 41–69.
- 11 On the relevance of Wölfflin's work for studies of architecture, see, Mark Jarzombek, "De-Scribing the Language of Looking: Wölfflin and the History of Aesthetic Experientialism," *Assemblage* 23 (1994), 28–69; Alina Payne, "Wölfflin, Architecture and the Problem of Stilwandlung," *Journal of Art Historiography* 7 (2012), 1–20.
- 12 Carver McCurrach, "'Renovatio' Reconsidered," 41–69, esp. 49 summarizes Krautheimer's involvement with Wölfflin's scholarship.

- 13 Richard Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae: The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV-IX Centuries)* (Vatican City: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1937–1977).
- 14 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (New York: Random House, 1962), 1–32. See also, Alina Payne, “Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53 (1994), 322–342. On Wittkower’s limited interest in principles of Byzantine architecture as potentially relevant for Renaissance architecture in Italy, see Jelena Bogdanović, “The Domed Canopy in Byzantine Church Design,” *Sacred Architecture Journal* 37 (2020), 11–15.
- 15 See, already mentioned, Krautheimer, “Introduction,” 1–33, esp. 33.
- 16 Vaneyan, *Architecture and Iconography*, 11–41; 62–67; 227–245 theorizes about architecture and iconography and discusses concepts of original and copies.
- 17 Krautheimer, “Introduction,” 1–33, citation on 17.
- 18 Carver McCurrach, “‘Renovatio’ Reconsidered,” 41–69; Kathryn Blair Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land. Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3–6. See also, Jelena Bogdanović, “Book Review. K. B. Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land. Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017,” *Zograf* 41 (2017), 233–234.
- 19 James Ackerman, “Richard Krautheimer’s Method,” in *In Memoriam Richard Krautheimer. Relazioni della giornata di studi, Roma, 20 febbraio 1995, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Sala dell’Ercole*, ed. Julian-Matthias Kliemann (Rome: Biblioteca Hertziana, 1997), 67–71.
- 20 Kinney, “Richard Krautheimer,” 177–195, esp. 192.
- 21 Paradoxically, the concept of architectural space was introduced as the scholarly topic for the first time within German reasoning on aesthetics in the nineteenth century. Cornelis van de Ven, *Space in Architecture. The Evolution of a new Idea in the Theory and History of Modern Architecture* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1978), XIII, 84–93. Reference according to Tasos Tanoulas, “In Search of the Perception of Architectural Space in Byzantine Literature,” in *HPΩΣ ΚΤΙΣΤΗΣ μνήμη Χαράλαμπος Μπούρα* (HEROS KTISTES in memory of Charalambos Bouras) (Athens: Melissa, 2018), 551–562, esp. 551.
- 22 Carver McCurrach, “‘Renovatio’ Reconsidered,” 41–69, critically assessed the singular scholarly reading of medieval architecture in Rome, despite the conceptually open framework of architectural iconography as originally proposed by Krautheimer. Similarly, Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land*, 3–6, starts from Krautheimer’s globally conceived context of medieval Christianity and expands into sophisticatedly contextualized individual case studies, elaborating upon the potentials and limits of architectural iconography. By re-assessing Krautheimer’s critical text on the iconography of architecture that focused on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and its architectural copies in medieval Europe, Moore highlights that while architecture and its materiality were vital in the experience and reception of the architecture of the Holy Land, the ultimate essence was not in the materiality of medieval architecture, but rather in the recreating the experience of the missing body of Christ, which this architecture aimed to enclose.

Robert Ousterhout, Alexei Lidov, and Andrei Batalov are a few scholars who expanded upon the analysis of the mechanisms for the transmission of the architectural form and meaning of the Holy Sepulchre in Byzantium. I discussed the concept of models and copies in architecture beyond the Holy Sepulchre. Robert Ousterhout, “The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior,” *Gesta* 29/1 (1990), 44–53; *idem.*, “‘Sweetly Refreshed in Imagination:’ Remembering Jerusalem in Words and Images,” *Gesta* 48/2 (2009), 153–168; *idem.*, “New Temples and New Solomons: The Rhetoric of Byzantine Architecture,” in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, eds. Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010), 223–253. Alexei Lidov, “Heavenly Jerusalem: The Byzantine Approach,” *Jewish Art* 25 (1999), 340–353; *idem.*, “Tserkva Bogomateri Faroskoi. Imperatorskii hram-relikviarii kak Konstantinopolskii Grob Gospodnii,” [The Church of the Mother of God Pharos. The Imperial Reliquary as Constantinopolitan Tomb of Christ] *Vizantiskii Mir* (2005), 1–26; *idem.*, “The Canopy over the Holy Sepulchre. On the Origin of Onion-Shaped Domes,” in *Jerusalem*



- in *Russian Culture*, eds. Andrei Batalov and Alexei Lidov (New York and Athens: Caratzas and Melissa International, 2005), 171–180; *idem.*, “Иерусалимский кувуклий. О происхождении луковичных глав” [“Jerusalem Kuvouklia. On the Origin of the Lukovitsa Domes”] in *Иконография архитектуры [Iconography of Architecture]*, ed. Andrei L. Batalov (Moscow: VNIИ теории архитектуры и градостроительства, 1990), 57–69; *idem.*, “The Holy Fire and the Translations of New Jerusalem: Hierotopical and Art-Historical Aspects,” in *New Jerusalem*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 58–70; *idem.*, “A Byzantine Jerusalem. The Imperial Pharos Chapel as the Holy Sepulcher,” in *Jerusalem as Narrative Space*, eds. Annette Hoffmann and Gerhard Wolf (Leiden and Boston, MA: Koninklijke Brill, 2012), 63–104. Andrei L. Batalov, ed., *Иконография архитектуры [Iconography of Architecture]*. Moscow: VNIИ теории архитектуры и градостроительства, 1990. Jelena Bogdanović, “Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy in Medieval Architecture: East and West,” in *Dionysius the Areopagite between Orthodoxy and Heresy*, ed. Filip Ivanović (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 109–134, esp. 127–129; *idem.*, “The Rhetoric of Architecture in the Byzantine Context: The Case Study of the Holy Sepulchre,” *Zograf* 38 (2014), 1–21.
- 23 Svetlana Popović, *Krst u krugu: arhitektura manastira u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* [The Cross in the Circle: Architecture of Monasteries in Medieval Serbia] (Beograd: Prosveta; Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 1994); *eadem.*, *The Architectural Iconography of the Late Byzantine Monastery* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies, 1997).
- 24 See, for example, Richard Etlin, “Stereotomy: The Paradox of an Acrobatic Architecture,” in *La Festa delle Arti: Scritti in onore di Marcello Fagiolo per cinquant’anni di studi*, eds. Vincenzo Cazzatto, Sebastiano Roberto and Mario Bevilacqua, 2 vols. (Rome: Gangemi, 2014), 1, 68–73; *idem.*, “Stereotomy: The Paradox of an Acrobatic Architecture,” in *Stereotomy: Stone Architecture and New Research*, ed. Giuseppe Fallacara (Paris: Presses des Ponts, 2012), 14–35; *idem.*, “Toward an Iconography of Stereotomy,” in *Nuts & Bolts of Construction History: Culture, Technology and Society*. Acts of the Fourth International Congress on Construction History, Paris, July 3–7, 2012, eds. Robert Carvais et al., 3 vols. (Paris: Picard, 2012), 1, 145–154.
- 25 Kinney, “Richard Krautheimer,” 177–195, esp. 182.
- 26 *Ibid.*, esp. 182 with reference to Panayotis A. Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach to Byzantine Art* (London: Batsford, 1955). The *Annales d’Esthétique*, a journal by Michelis’ foundation, continues to examine other aspects of Byzantine and medieval architecture, including its Neo-Platonic aspects. See, for example, Jelena Bogdanović, “The Apophatic Appearance of Royal Mausolea of the Nemanjić Dynasty,” *Annales d’Esthétique* 41A (2001/2), 127–139, and advanced research on the topic in Bogdanović, “Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy,” 109–134.
- 27 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962); *idem.*, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) [*Le visible et l’invisible: suivi de Notes de travail* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999, ©1964)]; Jean-Luc Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004) [*La Croisée du visible* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996)] and *idem.*, *The Visible and the Revealed* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) [*Le visible et le révélé* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2005)]. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2000, ©1997), esp. 6–30, 337–395 promote interrelations between Plato’s *chôra*, as the space of architectural representation in the context of Renaissance humanism and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body.
- 28 *Hierotopy* is a neologism combining the Greek words *hieros* (sacred) and *topos* (place, space, notion). Alexei Lidov, “Creating the Sacred Space. Hierotopy as a new field of cultural history,” in *Spazi e percorsi sacri*, eds. Chiara Cremonesi and Laura Carnevale (Padua: Libreriauniversitaria.it edizioni, 2015), 61–90; *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture* [*Иеротопия. пространственные иконы и образы-парадигмы в византийской культуре*] (Moscow: Theoria, 2009); *Hierotopy. Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009); *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006). See also biography by Alexei Lidov presented in this volume.

- 29 For a brief summary of *hierotopy* and how it relates to and differs from iconography and phenomenology, see, Jelena Bogdanović, “Book Review: A. Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture*. Moscow, 2009,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 103/2 (2010), 822–827. Highly relevant book by Vaneyan, *Architecture and Iconography*, passim, expands the analysis of architecture and iconography through philosophical concepts, brings forward additionally work by Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Iconography and Ritual: A Study of Analytical Perspectives* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget As, 1984), and in general, explains in great detail the benefits and limitations of iconographical approach in architectural studies.
- 30 Krautheimer, “Introduction,” 1–33, esp. 1–2.
- 31 Kinney, “Richard Krautheimer,” 177–195, citation on 189.
- 32 For example, Krautheimer, “The Carolingian Revival,” 1–38, negatively assesses the Dionysian legacy on architectural design in the West.
- 33 For example, Robert Ousterhout, a prolific scholar of Byzantine architecture, advocates for the lack of architects in Byzantine context. Robert G. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture. The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), and especially Chapter 16, “Master Builders and Their Craft,” 381–403, essentially reiterating his opinion from Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2008, ©1999), 58–127.
- 34 Marina Mihaljević, “Change in Byzantine Architecture: Architects and Builders,” in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and Its Decoration*, eds. Mark Johnson, Robert Ousterhout and Amy Papalexandrou (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 99–119; Σταύρος Μαμαλούκος [Stavros Mamaloukos], “Από τον σχεδιασμό στην κατασκευή: Ζητήματα εφαρμογής στη βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική” [“From design to construction: Aspects of implementation in Byzantine architecture.”], *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* 4/39 (2018), 83–97; Jelena Bogdanović, “Regional Developments in Late Byzantine Architecture and the Question of ‘Building Schools’: An Overlooked Case of the Fourteenth-Century Churches from the Region of Skopje,” *Byzantinoslavica* 69/1–2 (2011), 219–266; *eadem.*, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 251–263, 299; *eadem.*, “Triconch Churches Sponsored by Serbian and Wallachian Nobility,” in *Byzantium in Eastern Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, eds. Maria Alessia Rossi and Alice Isabella Sullivan (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 167–199.
- 35 Architect and philosopher Branko Mitrović, “Visuality, Intentionality, and Architecture,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 14 (2016), 1–17, citation on 15, additionally points to the role of architects as articulated by August Schmarsow, and further back by Leon Battista Alberti and Andrea Palladio. On the paradoxical modernity of Byzantine architectural practices that considered temporal and spatial qualities of architecture as well as on its material and immaterial aspects, see, Tasos Tanoulas, “Η αντίληψη του αρχιτεκτονικού χώρου στη Βυζαντινή γραμματεία” [“Aspects of Architectural Space in Byzantine Literature.”], in *The Notion of Space in Byzantine Architecture, Proceedings of the 4th Seminar, 2nd Seminar Series II: Theoretical Issues in Medieval Architecture. Aimos, Society for Studies of Medieval Architecture in the Balkans and its Preservation, Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum, June 13, 2008, Thessaloniki*, ed. Evangelia Hadjityrionos (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2011), 75–87; revised and published in English in Tanoulas, “In Search,” 551–562.
- 36 See, Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore, MA: Penguin Books, 1965), and revised version done with his student Slobodan Ćurčić for the Pelican History of Art published by Yale University Press in 1986. At the end of his resourceful and successful career Ćurčić published a monumental project: Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Suleyman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). A decade later, following Ćurčić’s passing, his student Robert Ousterhout published his own opus magnum Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*. All three books belong to the same idiom, with huge improvement seen in the two books published in the twenty-first century that covered either expanded chronology or geography. These also included significantly extended number of churches and non-religious buildings studied in the last 50 years.
- On Krautheimer’s scholarly agenda see, Kinney, “Richard Krautheimer,” 177–195; *eadem.*, “Civis Romanus. Richard Krautheimer,” in *100 Jahre Bibliotheca Hertziana*,

- Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte. Die Geschichte des Instituts 1913–2013*, ed. S. Ebert-Schifferer with M. von Bernstorff (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2013), 192–199.
- 37 Among many publications, see, for example, Lidov, “Heavenly Jerusalem: The Byzantine Approach,” 340–353; *idem.*, *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces*; *idem.*, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms*; *idem.*, *Hierotopy. Comparative Studies*.
- 38 Nicoletta Isar, “The Dance of Adam: Reconstructing the Byzantine χορός,” *Byzantinoslavica* 61 (2003), 179–204; *eadem.*, “‘Χορός of Light’: Vision of the Sacred in Paulus the Silentiary’s Poem Descriptio S. Sophiae,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004), 215–242; *eadem.*, “Chorography” (Chôra, Chôros, Chorós) – A Performative Paradigm of creation of sacred space in Byzantium,” in *Hierotopy: Studies in the Making of Sacred Space*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2005), 59–90; *eadem.*, “ΧΟΡΟΣ: Dancing into the Sacred Space of Chora: An Inquiry into the Choir of Dance from the Chora,” *Byzantion* 75 (2005), 199–224; *eadem.*, “Chôra: Tracing the Presence,” *Review of European Studies* 1/1 (2009), 39–55; *eadem.*, “Imperial ΧΟΡΟΣ: A Spatial Icon of Time as Eternity,” in *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Индрик, 2011), 143–166; and chapter in this volume.
- 39 Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Performative Icon,” *Art Bulletin* 88/4 (2006), 631–655; *eadem.*, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); *eadem.*, “Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics,” *Gesta* 50/2 (2011), 93–111; *eadem.*, “Performing the Sacred in Byzantium: Image, Breath and Sound,” *Performance Research* 19/3 (2014), 120–128; *eadem.*, *Hagia Sophia: Sound, Space, and Spirit in Byzantium* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017); Nathan Dennis, “Bodies in Motion: Visualizing Trinitarian Space in the Albenga Baptistery,” in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. Jelena Bogdanović (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 124–148; *idem.*, “Living Water, Living Presence: Animating Sacred Space in the Early Christian Baptistery,” in *Holy Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2017), 89–119; Alexei Lidov, “Icon as Chora: Spatial Aspects of Iconicity in Byzantium and Russia,” in *L’icône dans la pensée et dans l’art*, eds. Kristina Mitalaitė and Anca Vasiliu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 423–447 and *idem.*, “Iconicity as Spatial Notion,” *IKON* 9 (2016), 1–12. John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus* ([S.I.]: Indiana University Press, 1999); Jacques Derrida, “Khôra,” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John P. Leavey and Ian McLeod (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Jacques Derrida, *Khôra* (Paris: Galilée, 2006); John Manousakis, “The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 58/1 (2001), 93–100; Gregory Shaw, “The Chôra of the Timaeus and Iamblichean Theurgy,” *Horizons* 3/2 (2012), 103–129. Dalibor Vesely, “Architecture and the Poetics of Representation,” *Daidalos* 25 (1987), 22–36 and *idem.*, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2004) argues against understanding of architecture as commodity and highlights the role of *chôra* and chorus in becoming, creating and rebirth as enacted and situated in architecture. See also, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, “Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation,” *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* 1 (1994), 1–34; Pérez-Gómez and Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective*; Indra Kagis McEwen, *Socrate’s Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997); Lisa Landrum, “Chôra before Plato: Architecture, Drama and Receptivity,” *Chora. Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* 7 (2016), 323–358. Anthony Vidler, “Nothing to Do with Architecture,” *Grey Room* 21 (2005), 112–127 criticizes Derrida’s reading of *chôra* in architecture. Tasos Tanoulas, “Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept,” *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας* 34 (2013), 405–416 examines *chôra* in Byzantine architecture, in particular.
- 40 Nadine Schibille, “The Profession of the Architect in Late Antique Byzantium,” *Byzantion* 79 (2009), 360–379; *eadem.*, *Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine Aesthetic Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).
- 41 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*; *eadem.*, “Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics,” 93–111; *eadem.*, “Performing the Sacred,” 120–128.
- 42 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*. Other relevant texts that address questions on architectural theory include: Bogdanović, “Rhetoric of Architecture,” 1–21; *eadem.*, “Framing Glorious Spaces in the Monastery of Hosios Loukas” in *Perceptions of the Body and*

- Sacred Space*, 166–189; *eadem.*, “Controversies Intertwined: Architecture as Icon Examined through the Lenses of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Debates,” in *Transforming Sacred Spaces. New Approaches to the Byzantine Ecclesiastical Architecture from the Transitional Period. Proceedings of the International Colloquium held at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, May 2014*, ed. Sabine Feist in series *Spätantike – Frühes Christentum – Byzanz. Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven* (Weisbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2020), 199–216; *eadem.*, “The Domed Canopy,” 11–15.
- 43 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 253–263; *eadem.*, “The Domed Canopy,” 11–15.
- 44 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 264–299; *eadem.*, “Controversies Intertwined,” 199–216; *eadem.*, “The Domed Canopy,” 11–15.
- 45 On the difference between reading a text and responding to a figurative image, as well as about the different intellectual debates on this topic among Anglophone and Viennese scholarly agendas, see, Richard Woodfield, “Ernst Gombrich: Iconology and the ‘Linguistics of the Image,’” *Journal of Art Historiography* 5 (2011), 1–25.
- 46 Eli Rozik, *The Fictional Arts: An Inter-Art Journey from Theatre Theory to the Arts* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), 136 highlights the imagistic nature of iconicity. See also, Valeria Giardino and Gabriel Greenberg, “Introduction: Varieties of Iconicity,” *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 6 (2015), 1–25; Corrine Occhino-Kehoe, Benjamin Anible, Erin Wilkinson and Jill P. Morford, “Iconicity is in the Eye of the Beholder,” *Gesture* 16/1 (2017), 100–126; Christina Ljungberg, “Iconicity in Cognition and Communication,” *Historical Social Research Supplement* 31 (2018), 66–77.
- 47 Katherine Marsengill, “The Influence of Icons on the Perception of Living Holy Persons,” in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space*, 87–103, argues that Byzantine icons were true portraits that conformed to religious prototypes rather than actually resembling the person portrayed. Adi Efal, “Iconology and Iconicity. Towards an Iconic History of Figures, Between Erwin Panofsky and Jean-Luc Marion,” *Naharaim* 1 (2008), 81–105, critically examines Panofsky’s iconological method and contrasts it with Marion’s iconic theurgy. Efal re-affirms the importance of Byzantine theory on the icon, as posited by John of Damascus and (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite. Other relevant works on this controversial topic on the nature and meaning of Byzantine icons include Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons: Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Michele Bacci, *The Many Faces of Christ: Portraying the Holy in the East and West, 300-1300* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014); Jaś Elsner, “Iconoclasm as discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium,” *Art Bulletin* 94/3 (2012), 368–394; Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*; Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness. On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft* (München: Fink, 2001); *idem.*, *An Anthropology of Images. Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014, first edition 2011); *idem.*, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1996); *idem.*, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). See also, Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms* and chapter by Andrew Simsky in this volume.
- 48 See, for example, Belting, *Likeness and Presence* (1996); *idem.*, *An Anthropology of Images* (2011); Alexei Lidov, “Creating the Sacred Space,” 61–90, esp. 76; Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*; Simsky, chapter in this volume.
- 49 On icons in space and icons structuring space, see, for example, Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas, 1976, ©1948); Cécile Voyer and Eric Sparhubert, eds., *L’image médiévale: fonctions dans l’espace sacré et structuration de l’espace culturel* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).
- 50 On spatial icons, see, for example, Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms*, 7 and *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, Alexei Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Indrik, 2011). See also, *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space in Late Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. Jelena Bogdanović (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018). On the limits of concept of the icons in space as promoted by Demus, see also, Andrzej Piotrowski, “Architecture and Medieval Modalities of Thought,” in *Architecture of Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 1–32.

- 51 Dennis, "Bodies in Motion," 124–148, citation on 142, note 47 with additional references to spatial icons.
- 52 Michele Bacci and Vladimir Ivanovici, "From Living to Visual Images. Paradigms of Corporeal Iconicity in Late Antiquity - Introduction," *RIHA Journal* 0222, 30 September 2019, URL: <https://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2019/0222-0229-special-issueparadigms-of-corporeal-iconicity/0222-bacci-and-ivanovici>.
- 53 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 84–98.
- 54 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*; *eadem.*, "Framing Glorious Spaces," 166–189; *eadem.*, "The Phiale as a Spatial Icon in the Byzantine Cultural Sphere," in *The Holy Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2017), 372–396; *eadem.*, "The Performativity of Shrines in a Byzantine Church: The Shrines of St. Demetrios," in *Spatial Icons. Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 275–316; *eadem.*, "Controversies Intertwined," 199–216; *eadem.*, "The Domed Canopy," 11–15.
- 55 I examine this phenomenon in several texts: Bogdanović, "The Phiale," 372–396, esp. 376, *eadem.*, "Controversies Intertwined," 199–216; *eadem.*, "Framing Glorious Spaces," 166–189; *eadem.*, *Framing Sacred Space*, 177–263. Isar, "Chôra: Tracing," 39–55 examines the ontological phenomenon of the replication of the Platonic concept of *chôra* in the human body as instrumental mechanism in revealing the sacred presence of the Incarnation in the Christian context.
- 56 Jelena Bogdanović, "The Moveable Canopy. The Performative Space of the Major *Sakkos* of Metropolitan Photios," *Byzantinoslavica* 72/1–2 (2014), 247–292; *eadem.*, "The Performativity of Shrines," 275–316; *eadem.*, "Controversies Intertwined," 199–216.
- 57 Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134. See also, Piotrowski, "Architecture and Medieval Modalities," 1–32.
- 58 EH II.3.2, 397C. More in Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134, esp. 133.
- 59 St. John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith*, Book 1, Chapter 13 in *St. John of Damascus, The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Frederic H. Chase Jr (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 197–198.
- 60 Krautheimer, "Introduction," 1–33, citation on 17.
- 61 *Ibid.*, citation on 9.
- 62 Bogdanović, "Rhetoric of Architecture," 1–21.
- 63 Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134; *eadem.*, *Framing Sacred Space*, 266, 299; *eadem.*, "Framing Glorious Spaces," 166–189; Filip Ivanović, "Images of Invisible Beauty in the Aesthetic Cosmology of Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space*, 11–21; *idem.*, *Desiring the Beautiful: The Erotic-Aesthetic Dimension of Deification in Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019).
- 64 Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134, esp. 124–130.
- 65 Piotrowski, "Architecture and Medieval Modalities," 1–32, esp. 4–5 reached the same conclusion.
- 66 CH XV.5, 333B; Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134, esp. 124–130, citation on 130.
- 67 Dennis, "Bodies in Motion," 124–148, esp. 126 and 139, and n. 10, 11, 33, and 34 with abundant references to primary and secondary sources on the topic of *perichoresis* and its use in Christian context by Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria, and John of Damascus.
- 68 Dennis, "Bodies in Motion," 124–148, citation on 141.
- 69 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*, 39–44.
- 70 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 251–263; *eadem.*, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134; *eadem.*, "The Domed Canopy," 11–15.
- 71 CH III.1-2, 164D-165A. I write about this in greater detail in Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134.
- 72 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 265–266, with reference to *St. Germanus of Constantinople on the Divine Liturgy*, ed. Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 57–59.
- 73 Magdalena S. Dragović, Aleksandar A. Čučaković, Jelena Bogdanović, Marko Pejić, and Milesa Srećković, "Geometric Proportional Schemas of Serbian Medieval Raška

- Churches based on Štambuk's Proportional Canon," *Nexus Network Journal. Architecture and Mathematics* 21/1 (2019), 33–58,
- 74 Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, 16–30; Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 251–263, esp. 260–263.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Bogdanović, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy," 109–134, esp. 119–124, 130–132.
- 77 My conclusions coincide with those by Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation, passim*, esp. 82–87, who explains how the visible conveys a kind of knowledge of the pre-reflective levels of articulation that simultaneously obscures the epistemological value of the visible.
- 78 Jelena Bogdanović with Katherine Marsengill, "Conclusions," in *Perceptions of the Body and Sacred Space*, 190–201, esp. 193.
- 79 Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, 82–87; Wei-Cheng Lin, "Untranslatable Iconicity in Liang Sicheng's Theory of Architectural Translatability," *Art in Translation* 5/2 (2013), 219–250.
- 80 Carver McCurrach, "'Renovatio' Reconsidered," 41–69, esp. 43, citation on 55.
- 81 Krautheimer, "Introduction," 1–33, esp. 1. Jaś Elsner and Katharina Lorenz, "The Genesis of Iconology," *Critical Inquiry* 38/3 (2012), 483–512 analyze Panofsky's work and explain how art historians trapped themselves into reading and re-reading texts while underestimating artworks themselves as equally important evidence. On the opinion that images should be understood as equally important source material as texts but also a separate category on its own, see also *History and Images. Towards a New Iconology*, eds. Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley (Turnhout; Brepols, 2003). On the lucid critical assessment of Panofsky's scholastic approach that in its own nature contradicts the Byzantine way of thinking, see also, Piotrowski, "Architecture and Medieval Modalities," 1–32, esp. 1–7.
- 82 Carver McCurrach, "'Renovatio' Reconsidered," 41–69, citation on 48–49.
- 83 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 1–9.
- 84 Ibid., 264–294, esp. 265.
- 85 William Whyte, "How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture," *History and Theory* 45/2 (May, 2006), 153–177. See also, Bogdanović, "Rhetoric of Architecture," 1–21.
- 86 Pérez-Gómez, "Chora," 1–34, esp. 28.
- 87 I summarize this topic of multiple meanings of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 165–175.
- 88 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 143; Fabio Barry, "Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *Art Bulletin* 89/4 (2007), 627–656; Schibille, *Hagia Sophia*, 101; Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, 137; Alexei Lidov, "The Image-Paradigm of Holy Mount. The Ambo in the Hierotopy of the Byzantine Church," in *The Hierotopy of Holy Mountains in Christian Culture*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2019), 126–157.
- 89 Rozik, *The Fictional Arts*, 134–136; Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia, Passim*; Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 165–175.
- 90 See also, Lars Elleström, "Iconicity as Meaning Miming Meaning and Meaning Miming Form," *Signergy. Iconicity in Language and Literature* 9 (2010), 73–100.
- 91 See seminal 1935 essay by Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," reprinted in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 1, 431–469; reprinted and translated many times, including English version Walter Benjamin and Michael W. Jennings, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version]," *Grey Room* 39, special issue *Walter Benjamin's Media Tactics: Optics, Perception, and the Work of Art* (Spring 2010), 11–38. Benjamin theorizes how in the absence of traditional and ritual values, the production of art becomes inherently based upon the politics. He further clarifies how the mass production and the loss of authenticity of art works are features of modern societies and changing cultural contexts, whereby the "aura" of the unique aesthetic authority of the original artwork is absent from the mechanically produced copy. On authenticity and copies in Byzantine context see, Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms*; Bogdanović with Marsengill, "Conclusions," 190–201; and chapter by Andrew Simsky in this volume.

- 92 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space, Passim*, esp. 295–299; *eadem.*, “Framing Glorious Spaces,” 166–189; *eadem.*, “The Phiale,” 372–396.
- 93 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 8.
- 94 Bogdanović, “Controversies Intertwined,” 199–216; *eadem.*, “The Phiale,” 372–396; *eadem.*, “Framing Glorious Spaces,” 166–189; *eadem.*, *Framing Sacred Space*, 176–263.
- 95 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance et figuration* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990); Paul Vandebroek, “The ‘Nameless Motif.’ On the Cross-Cultural Iconography of an Energetic Form,” *Antwerp Royal Museum Annual* (Antwerp: Antwerp Royal Museum, 2010), 113–180; Barbara Baert, “New Iconological Perspectives on Marble as *Divinus Spiritus* Hermeneutical Change and *Iconogenesis*,” *Louvain Studies* 40 (2017), 14–36; Pentcheva, “Performing the Sacred in Byzantium: Image, Breath and Sound,” 120–128; Lidov, “Icon as Chora,” 423–447; *idem.*, “Iconicity as Spatial Notion,” 1–12; Piotrowski, “Architecture and Medieval Modalities,” 1–32; Iakovos Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light and Shadow,” in *The Hierotopy of the Holy Mountains in Christian Culture*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2019), 100–121; Wassim Jabi and Iakovos Potamianos, “Geometry, Light, and Cosmology in the Church of Hagia Sophia,” *International Journal of Architectural Computing* 2/5 (2007), 303–319; Wassim Jabi and Iakovos Potamianos, “A Parametric Exploration of the Lighting Method of the Hagia Sophia Dome,” *The 7th International Symposium on Virtual Reality, Archeology and Cultural Heritage VAST* (2006), 257–265. See also chapter by Potamianos in this volume.
- 96 Bogdanović, “The Phiale,” 372–396; *eadem.*, “The Domed Canopy,” 11–15; Piotrowski, “Architecture and Medieval Modalities,” 1–32; Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light,” 100–121; Jabi and Potamianos, “Geometry, Light, and Cosmology,” 303–319. See also chapter by Potamianos in this volume.
- 97 Piotrowski, “Architecture and Medieval Modalities,” 1–32, esp. 7.
- 98 Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light,” 100–121; Jabi and Potamianos, “Geometry, Light, and Cosmology,” 303–319. See also chapter by Potamianos in this volume.
- 99 Bogdanović, “The Phiale,” 372–396, esp. 372.
- 100 Bogdanović, “The Domed Canopy,” 11–15.
- 101 (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite introduced the concept of *hieroplastia* (ἱεροπλαστία) in his Celestial Hierarchy (CH II.1). Bogdanović, “The Performativity of Shrines,” 275–316, esp. n. 65. The term “heiroplastic” as a reference to space, which is at once earthly, heavenly and beyond, is also suggested by Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms*, 338.
- 102 Plato, *Timaeus*, 49a, 52a–d. See also note 102.
- 103 I have consulted the following editions of Plato’s *Timaeus*, *Plato: Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, ed. and trans. Robert Gregg Bury (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1960); *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1977); revised by T. K. Johansen, 2008; *Timaeus and Critias*, Robin Waterfield trans. with introduction and notes by Andrew Gregory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); *Plato: Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Co., 2000). See also, Donald Zeyl and Barbara Sattler, “Plato’s *Timaeus*,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 edition), Edward N. Zalta ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>. On the reception of the *Timaeus* see Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils, *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).
- 104 *Plato: Timaeus*, Zeyl trans., qlix–lxvi. See also, Donald Zeyl and Barbara Sattler, “Plato’s *Timaeus*,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 edition), Edward N. Zalta ed., URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>.
- 105 Allan Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence: A Study of Plato’s Metaphysics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 260. The concept of the form space-time continuum is in architectural studies promoted in Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture, passim*. See also, Tanoulas, “In Search,” 551–562, esp. 551 and Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light,” 100–121, esp. 102–104.
- 106 Landrum, “Chōra before Plato,” 323–358.
- 107 Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416, esp. 405, with reference to Plato, *Timaeus*, 52 a–d, translation by Bury, 123. See also, Shaw, “The Chōra,” 103–129; Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light,” 100–121, esp. 102–104.

- 108 Shaw, “The Chôra,” 103–129, esp. 111; Isar, “Chôra: Tracing,” 39–55.
- 109 Landrum, “Chôra before Plato,” 323–358; Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light,” 100–121; Bogdanović, “Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy,” 109–134.
- 110 CH III.2, 165A; EH III.10. See, Bogdanović, “Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy,” 109–134, esp. 113; Ivanović, “Images,” 11–21. Pérez-Gómez, “Chora,” 1–34, esp. 6 makes a link between architecture and language as done by Vitruvius and highlights that the absolute cannot be contemplated directly but rather has to be experienced as a kind of reflection in the mirror in the *chôra*.
- 111 On plasticity, which Zeyl calls malleability, as critical characteristic of *chora* see, Donald Zeyl and Barbara Sattler, “Plato’s *Timaeus*,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 edition), Edward N. Zalta ed., URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>.
- 112 See note 101.
- 113 See notes 38, 39 in this chapter.
- 114 Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, *passim*, esp. 82–87.
- 115 See also Shaw, “The Chôra,” 103–129, esp. 107.
- 116 See seminal text Pérez-Gómez, “Chora,” 1–34.
- 117 *Ibid.*, esp. 9.
- 118 *Ibid.*, esp. 6.
- 119 Kagis McEwen, *Socrate’s Ancestor*, 56–64; 80–89.
- 120 See notes 38, 39 in this chapter.
- 121 *Timaeus and Critias*, Desmond Lee trans., ix. Potamianos, “Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light,” 100–121, esp. 104ff.
- 122 Zeyl and Sattler, “Plato’s *Timaeus*,” URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>.
- 123 Χώρα τῶν ζώντων is usually translated as the land, realm or dwelling-place of the living; and ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου as the land, realm, dwelling-place, space beyond space, or container of the uncontainable. See, Paul Underwood, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, 39–43; Robert Ousterhout, “The Virgin of the Chora: An Image and Its Contexts,” in *The Sacred Image East and West*, eds. Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 91–109; Isar, “Chôra: Tracing,” 39–55; Lidov, “Icon as Chora,” 423–447, esp. 428–432; *idem.*, “Iconicity as Spatial Notion,” 1–12; Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416. However, most scholars correctly highlight the untranslatability of these phrases. I opt not to translate *chôra* and *a-chôra* in this work because any translation deprives the term *chôra* of all its layers. Therefore, I use ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου (*the chôra of a-chôra*), which meaning partakes in the understanding of the phrase as the *chôra* of what is before *chôra*, the *chôra* beyond *chôra*, the *chôra* of the *non-chôra*.
- 124 Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416 highlights references to Jesus Christ as Χώρα τῶν ζώντων in commentaries and homilies on the Psalms by fourth-century authors Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339) and Basil of Caesarea (4<sup>th</sup> c) and provides further references to the Akathistos hymn and Psalms as first suggested by Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, 39–43 and developed by Leena Mari Peltomaa, “Epithets of the Theotokos in the Akathistos Hymn,” in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium. Text and Images*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Mary Cunningham (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 109–116, esp. 111–112.
- 125 Isar, “Chôra: Tracing,” 39–55, esp. 44.
- 126 *Ibid.*
- 127 Tanoulas, “In Search,” 551–562; Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416; Tanoulas, “Η αντίληψη” “[Aspects],” 75–87.
- 128 Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416, esp. 409–411.
- 129 *Ibid.*
- 130 *Ibid.*
- 131 *Ibid.* See also, Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, 39–43.
- 132 *Ibid.*
- 133 Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416.
- 134 See, for example, Isar, “Chôra: Tracing,” 39–55; Isar, “The Dance of Adam,” 179–204; Isar, “Chorography,” 59–90; Isar, “Chorós: Dancing into the Sacred Space,” 199–224.
- 135 Ousterhout, “The Virgin of the Chora,” 91–109.
- 136 Tanoulas, “Χώρα,” 405–416.



137 Ibid.

138 See, for example, Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Virgin of Constantinople: Power and Belief," in *Byzantine Women and Their World*, ed. Ioli Kalavezou (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 113–119; Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 55–63, 171–173.139 On wax as aspect of *chōra* see Plato, *Timeaus*, 50d.

140 Isaiah 7:14: Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name "Emmanuel."

141 On gold as aspect of *chōra* see Plato, *Timeaus*, 50a4–b5.142 Lidov, "Icon as Chora," 423–447 and *idem.*, "Iconicity as Spatial Notion," 1–12.

143 See notes 66, 110 in this chapter.

144 See, for example, Christina Angelidi and Titos Papamastorakis, "The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Hodegon Monastery," in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Athens: Benaki Museum, 2000), 373–387.145 Alexei Lidov, "The Flying Hodegetria. The Miraculous Icon as Bearer of Sacred Space," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: Bibliotheca Hertziana, 2004), 291–321.146 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 81–82, 225–229.

147 Ibid.

148 Kagis McEwen, *Socrate's Ancestor*, 81–83. Cf. Plato, *Timeaus*, 41d.149 See also, Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, *passim*, esp. 82–87.150 Alina Payne, "Architecture: Image, Icon or *Kunst der Zerstreung*?" in *Das Auge der Architektur. Zur Frage der Bildlichkeit in der Baukunst*, eds. Andreas Beyer, Matteo Burioni and Johannes Grave (Munich: München Fink, 2011), 55–92; Evangelia Hadjityrphonos, "Presentations and Representations of Architecture in Byzantium: The Thought behind the Image," in *Architecture as Icon*, eds. S. Ćurčić and E. Hadjityrphonos (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 113–154; Jelena Bogdanović, "The Iconicity of Byzantine Architecture: Iconography or Hierotopy?" *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Round Tables: Belgrade, 22-27 August 2016*, eds. Bojana Kršmanović and Ljubomir Milanović with Bojana Pavlović (Belgrade: The Serbian National Committee of AIEB, 2016), 1085–1086. See also, Plato, *Cratylus*, ed. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).151 Zeyl and Sattler, "Plato's *Timeaus*," URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/plato-timaeus/>.

152 CH 144B–C.

153 See, for example, Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach to Byzantine Art*; Potamianos, "Byzantine Church Space: A Holy Mountain of Light," 100–121.154 By looking at hundreds of empirical examples, I have already shown how altar canopies, for example, resulted from, among other factors, the complex circumstances of diverse liturgical needs, devotional practices, and movement-directing channels within a given church and may have originated from various prototypes related to funerary (funerary altars and tomb canopies), civic (*tetrapyla* and imperial canopies), and sacred architecture (shrines and sacrificial altars). Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 56–62. See also, Jelena Bogdanović, "On the Transposition of *Tetrapyla* into the Structural and Symbolic Cores of Byzantine Churches," in *Гласови и слике: облици комуникације на средњовековном Балкану (IV–XVI век)* [*Voices and Images: The Modes of Communication in the Medieval Balkans (4<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries)*], eds. Stanoje Bojanin, Ljubomir Milanović, and Miloš Cvetković (Belgrade-Sofia: Byzantine Institute of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences-Институт за балканистика с Център по тракология БАН, 2020), 285–322.155 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 295–299.156 See, for example, Чедомила Маринковић [Čedomila Marinković], *Слика подигнуте цркве. Представа архитектуре на ктиторским портретима у српској и византијској уметности* [*The Image of the Built Church. Representations of Architecture in Donor's Portraits in Serbian and Byzantine Art*] (Београд: Бонарт [Belgrade: Bonart], 2007); *Models in Medieval Architecture: Byzantium, Southeast Europe, Anatolia, Proceedings of the 3rd Seminar, 1st Seminar Series II: Theoretical Issues in Medieval Architecture. Aimos, Society for Studies of Medieval Architecture in the Balkans and Its Preservation, Thessaloniki,*

- Archaeological Museum, June 1, 2007, Thessaloniki*, ed. Yannis Varalis (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2009); Slobodan Ćurčić, Evangelia Hadjistryphonos, Kathleen E. McVey and Hélène Saradi, *Architecture as Icon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Evangelia Hadjistryphonos, "Presentations and Representations of Architecture in Byzantium: The Thought Behind the Image," in *Architecture as Icon*, 113–54; Maria Cristina Carile, "Buildings in Their Patrons' Hands? The Multifunction of Small Size Models between Byzantium and Transcaucasia," *Kunsttexte.de* 3 (2014), 1–14; Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 58–127; Mihaljević, "Change," 99–119; Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 251–63, 299; Mamaloukos, "From Design to Construction," 83–97; Dominik Stachowiak, "Church Models in the Byzantine Culture Circle and the Problem of Their Function," in *Novae. Studies and Materials VI. Sacrum et Profanum*, ed. Elena Ju. Klenina (Poznan: Instytut Historii UAM, 2018), 243–256.
- 157 Excellent summary in Hadjistryphonos, "Presentations and Representations," 113–154.
- 158 S. Gregorii Nysseni, *PG* 46, 665, according to Hadjistryphonos, "Presentations and Representations," 113–154, esp. 139, n. 141.
- 159 Čedomila Marinković, "A Live Craft: The Architectural Drawings on the Façade of the Church of the Theotokos Evergetis in Studenica (Serbia) and the Architectural Model from Červen (Bulgaria)," in *Models in Medieval Architecture: Byzantium, Southeast Europe, Anatolia, Proceedings of the 3rd Seminar, 1st Seminar Series II: Theoretical Issues in Medieval Architecture. Aimos, Society for Studies of Medieval Architecture in the Balkans and its Preservation, Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum, June 1, 2007, Thessaloniki*, ed. Yannis Varalis (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2009), 55–67; Hadjistryphonos, "Presentations and Representations," 113–154.
- 160 I discuss this complexity of architectural form and its relevance for iconicity in Byzantine architecture also in Bogdanović, "The Domed Canopy," 11–15.
- 161 Plato, *Timeaus*, 50d.
- 162 See, Dragović, Čučaković, Bogdanović, Pejić, and Srećković, "Geometric," 33–58, Fig. 11a, for the interior model of the Studenica church represented as a solid.
- 163 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1983).
- 164 Pérez-Gómez, "Chora," 1–34.
- 165 *Ibid.*
- 166 On assessment of drawings of architecture and space in Byzantine religious context see, Clemena Antonova and Martin Kemp, "'Reverse Perspective: Historical Fallacies and an Alternative View,'" in *The Visual Mind*, ed. Michele Emmer (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), 2, 399–433; Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (London and New York: Routledge 2016, ©2010); Slobodan Ćurčić, "Architecture as Icon," in *Architecture as Icon*, 3–37, esp. 23–26; Lidov, "Icon as Chora," 423–447, esp. 439–443, and *idem.*, "Iconicity as Spatial Notion," 1–12, esp. 4–5.
- 167 Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 295–299.
- 168 See note 101.
- 169 Pérez-Gómez, "Chora," 1–34; Bogdanović, *Framing Sacred Space*, 295–299.

## 6 Hierochronotopy

### Stepping into timeful space through Bonanno's twelfth-century door for the Pisa cathedral

*Maria Evangelatou*

In the present chapter, I hope to pay tribute to Alexei Lidov's generative concept of hierotopy by bringing into greater relief the dimension of sacred *time* in the creation of sacred *space*. I argue that since the human experience at large and Christian religious experience, in particular, are spatiotemporal, with dimensions of place and time thoroughly interwoven, it is useful to expand the notion of *hierotopy* (sacred space) into that of *hierochronotopy* (sacred-time-space).<sup>1</sup> To drive the point home, I focus on the case study of Bonanno Pisano's twelfth-century bronze door for the cathedral of Pisa (Figure 6.1): I explore how specific visual components of this door's imagery make significant references to the spatiotemporal understanding of human salvation, within the Christian context of the medieval city of Pisa. I focus in particular on plant motifs that are subtly employed on Bonanno's door in order to articulate a layered spatiotemporal message. Namely, I argue that trees prominently depicted in select scenes of the door draw links between the specific times and places of past, present, and future turning points in sacred history and connect them with the liturgical time and space of the Pisa cathedral, in order to envelope the Christian citizens of the city in the divine plan for human salvation.<sup>2</sup> My ultimate goal is to argue that the abundantly fruitful and layered concept of hierotopy that Alexei Lidov introduced in the field of cultural studies can become even more fertile and far-reaching for the understanding of complex cultural phenomena, if the layer of time is systematically integrated with that of space, and therefore, chronotopic explorations and spatiotemporal considerations are consistently interwoven through our scholarly approach.<sup>3</sup>

In the following pages, I briefly discuss *spatiotemporal integration* in human and specifically Christian medieval religious experience. Then, I consider chronotopic dimensions embodied by gates and trees in the symbolic universe of medieval Christianity. Finally, I discuss the hierochronotopy of Bonanno's door by analyzing the possible meanings of trees depicted on it and behind it (inside the cathedral). In the limited space of the present chapter, I do not aspire to be comprehensive in the analysis of any of these topics, but simply to offer food for further thought. Through this case study, I hope to contribute to the exploration of hierochronotopy as a fundamental dimension of medieval Christian cultural production: a dimension that allows us to identify multiple layers of meaning, potentially relevant to a number of sociocultural agents (such as makers, commissioners, users, and viewers implicated in cultural production). In this way, I align myself with one of Alexei Lidov's most significant observations about hierotopy, namely, the understanding that it is dynamic, flexible, and conducive to multiple experiences by diverse participants.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, my intention is not to develop a theory of hierochronotopy but rather to contribute to its understanding as



*Figure 6.1* Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. When standing on the top step, the eye level of visitors similar to the height of the tourist on the left (about 5'4") would fall approximately between the first and second narrative register of the central section of the door. Photo: author.

a fundamental component of the medieval Christian worldview and experience and therefore as a significant cognitive and analytical tool in the study of relevant cultural creations. In this regard, I follow Alexei Lidov's suggestion that hierotopy is not a philosophical concept that requires sophisticated theorizing but "a form of vision that helps to recognize the presence of a special stratum of cultural phenomena," which should be carefully studied in their sociocultural context.<sup>5</sup>

### **The time-space continuum in human experience and medieval Christian thought**

For the purpose of this chapter, I define the concept of hierochronotopy as the *essential integration of temporal and spatial dimensions in human approaches to the sacred* (which includes but is not limited to the divine). By “approaches,” I mean both the *creation* of sacred time and space (for example, in the construction of churches and the performance of rituals) and the *experience* of sacredness or divinity within time and space (for example, through participation in church rituals). All of these creations and experiences reflect and promote a wider cultural understanding of hierochronotopy as a specific worldview that explores the relationship of humans with the transcendental. In other words, I intend to emphasize that the creation and experience of sacred space are inextricably bound to the creation and experience of sacred time, because of the essentially chronotopic nature of humans and their cultures. This spatiotemporal integration is a well-known concept in the humanities. For example, the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin has coined the term *chronotope* (time-space) to identify “the *intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships* that are artistically expressed in literature.”<sup>6</sup> As Bakhtin himself mentioned, the concept of the time-space continuum became the subject of scientific inquiry in the twentieth century, and according to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, time is the fourth dimension of space (this being a spatiotemporal concept similar but not identical to Bakhtin’s perception of chronotope).<sup>7</sup> Yet, we do not have to depend on scientific knowledge to become aware of spatiotemporal integration. We simply have to consider the framework of our human existence. To quote Boethius, a Latin philosopher of the sixth century, whose work was particularly influential in the Latin West, “Everything which is born or made exists in space and time,” everything, that is, which falls within human perception.<sup>8</sup> In other words, we as humans understand ourselves and the world around us in temporal and spatial terms (the when and where of human stories and histories). Therefore, we need spatiotemporal cultural processes (such as rituals, defined by specific spaces and times) and spatiotemporal cultural concepts (such as salvation narratives, unraveling in past, present, and future places and times) in order to build community between ourselves and the divine or the sacred, and in order to invest ourselves in hopes that might transcend this world but are still experienced in it. Certainly, perceptions of time and space are culturally mediated and individually experienced and therefore, can vary from culture to culture and be enriched with more subtle interpretations from person to person.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, the only certainty we may have within this chronotopic diversity is the very concept that *time and space are indeed integrated in human experiences*, because of the spatiotemporal dimensions of our body. Indeed, our *corpus* is an embodied chronotopy of *locus* and *tempus* interwoven: a somatic place with a temporal span, from birth to death; a somatic time of a life located in specific geographic and sociocultural contexts.

In the Christian worldview, God is the creator of time and space as perceived by humans (*Genesis* 1), and therefore, he exists outside those spatiotemporal boundaries. In this regard, God is pre-eternal and supra-spatial, yet humans define him as eternal and omnipresent, in other words, timeful and spaceful, in order to understand his omnipotence in their own spatiotemporal terms.<sup>10</sup> Another way to understand this omnipresence of God in terms of both time and space is to consider that as the creator of the world he imbued his creation with sacredness, and therefore all of time and space

should reflect his divinity and bear his imprint.<sup>11</sup> Yet, humans are bound by their own limitations and thus need chronotopically delimited manifestations of the divine and the sacred in order to be able to relate to God: they need specific revelations of divinity circumscribed in time and place (such as theophanies), as well as spatiotemporal identifications and regulations of the sacred (such as feast days celebrated in holy places).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, after he concluded the creation of the world, God himself introduced a holy day of repose and commanded his first chosen people to celebrate it as the day of Sabbath (*Genesis* 2:2–3, *Exodus* 20:8). In Christian tradition, Sabbath was replaced by the holy day of the Sun (Sunday), in celebration of the recreation of the world through Christ's Resurrection and in prefiguration of the future banquet of the just in heaven, both evoked through the Sunday Eucharist.<sup>13</sup>

God also instituted the special place of the Garden of Eden where he communicated with the first humans until the Fall of Adam and Eve (*Genesis* 2–3). After that rupture in the communion of divinity and humanity, God conceded spatiotemporal theophanies to his chosen people, some of which resulted in hierochronotopic creations and experiences meant to reestablish communication between divinity and humanity. Moses' Tabernacle was such a hierochronotopy encompassing the holy place and time of rituals through which communication with the divine was experienced by the Jewish people.<sup>14</sup> The Tabernacle was created during the journey of God's chosen people to the promised land. The latter was a place but also a historical time of earthly salvation, expected to be fully realized with the coming of the Messiah. In Christian understanding, the promised land was identified with the kingdom of God, and the whole trajectory of human history after the Fall was reimagined as a journey back to that divine fatherland, perceived through human spatiotemporal terms: Christians have to transition from the exile of sin to the homecoming of forgiveness and salvation that are offered by Christ and his Church, first on this earth (and especially through spatiotemporal rituals such as baptism and the Eucharist) and finally in the city of God that will receive the just after the Second Coming.<sup>15</sup>

This trajectory of Christian salvation is punctuated by significant spatiotemporal turning points that typologically foreshadow or fulfill each other while marking humanity's progress toward the ultimate destination of God's kingdom.<sup>16</sup> So, the earthly Jerusalem at the time of King Solomon prefigures the earthly Jerusalem at the time of Christ. While Solomon was the creator of the hierochronotopy of the first Temple that replaced the Tabernacle, Christ was Solomon's descendant and the heavenly king and through his passion and resurrection destroyed the old temple and built a new one: that is, the temple of his risen body, which is also identified with his Church made up of his believers.<sup>17</sup> Following this path of hierochronotopic steps toward ultimate human salvation, Christians institute new Jerusalems wherever and whenever they establish their local churches: sacred places for the celebration of sacred time, and especially for the communal meal of the Eucharist, which prefigures the eternal banquet that will be celebrated in the heavenly Jerusalem after the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the just.<sup>18</sup>

In this spatiotemporal trajectory, God's greatest concession to the chronotopic limitations of humankind was his own Incarnation, when he became circumscribed in a body, and therefore in time and space, in order to encounter and save his children in their own dimension.<sup>19</sup> It is not surprising then that this intersection between the spatiotemporal plane of human existence and the supra-temporal and supra-spatial essence of divinity caused a ripple in the space-time continuum, according to the apocryphal

Protevangeliium of James (Chapter 18): shortly before Christ came into the world by miraculously passing through the unopened threshold of Mary's virginal body, time momentarily halted, so that humans and their animals froze as they ate, drank, or walked, and even birds paused their flight in midair.<sup>20</sup> In a sense, the Incarnation was God's own act of hierochronotopy for the salvation of his children. While in the Old Testament he ordered his chosen people to create the sacred space of the Tabernacle and later on of the Temple in order to house the sacred time of communion rituals with the divine, in the New Testament God himself created a sacred temple of ultimate communion: the body of Christ, which enclosed divinity in time and space and made it accessible to human understanding. This supreme divine hierochronotopy is reenacted in the holy time and space of the Eucharist when the divinity of Christ is present in his Eucharistic body, the transubstantiated bread and wine that his followers consume in order to be united with him in their spatiotemporal bodies.

In conclusion, the integration of time and space (chronotopy) in the creation and experience of the sacred (hieron) is prominent and fundamental in the Christian tradition, which is defined by hierochronotopic approaches to the divine. If we take as an example the quintessential ritual of the Eucharist (at least in Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox practice), we can appreciate a number of ways in which time and space are inextricably interwoven: celebrating the holy time/act of the Eucharist is a fundamental reason for which the holy space of the church building is established. In this way, both holy time and holy space complement and define each other. As a ritual, the Eucharist has a specific temporal span (beginning, middle, and end) and recurrence (on particular days and times of the year). As a reenactment of the hierochronotopy of the Incarnation for the purpose of human salvation, the Eucharist connects its present time and space to other significant ones in the past and the future. From the past consumption of the forbidden fruit in Eden and the passion and resurrection of Christ in Jerusalem to the future banquet of the just in heavenly Jerusalem, all these chronotopic units are encompassed in the ritual consumption of the salvific fruit of the Eucharist.<sup>21</sup> As God is united with his people through his Eucharistic body, sacred places and times across human history are condensed in the hierochronotopy of the church, foreshadowing and fulfilling each other, offering temporal salvation, and promising eternal salvation. This timefulness and spacefulness of the Eucharistic ritual is both an expansion and a condensation of chronotopy that in this dynamic form allows humans to connect with God's infinity. As Gregory of Nyssa declared, "for God there is neither past nor future but all things are in the present."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, when God is present in the Eucharist, all things past and future become present through him; among all those things, his human children select to commemorate those turning points that define their journey to salvation. This fullness of the Eucharistic hierochronotopy is also reflected on Bonanno's bronze door for the Pisa cathedral, especially through the employment of the chronotopic image of the tree in combination with the chronotopic plane of the gateway.

### **The spatiotemporal dimensions of gates and trees**

Gates, in other words, doors and framed passageways, are dynamic thresholds: liminal spatiotemporal planes that offer the possibility of transformation through the transition between different realms. By defining space as inside and outside, gates produce

distinctions that activate diverse spatial potentials (for example, safe versus unsafe, and intimate, inclusive, or exclusive versus undifferentiated, generic, or common).<sup>23</sup> Gates also define time as “before or after” by granting or denying access. In other words, they can construct and regulate time itself through their opening and closing, as people aiming to cross their threshold might have more or less time, no time left, or a deficit of time (when they are stranded at the other side of where and when they need to be). In a sense, gates apply a temporal stamp on the spatial dimension of their surroundings, by regulating passage between sides. Therefore, gates define both space and time on either of their sides.

In Christian tradition, thresholds such as gates, doors, and veiled passageways bear great significance as symbols of transition, revelation, and transformation.<sup>24</sup> Important examples include the closed gates of Eden after the Fall<sup>25</sup>; the spread veil that bars access to the Jewish holy of holies (in the Tabernacle and the Temple) as a symbol of heaven<sup>26</sup>; the rending of that same veil at the time of Christ’s death, when heaven is opened to all his followers<sup>27</sup>; the broken gates of Hades, demolished through Christ’s Resurrection<sup>28</sup>; the sacred gates of the church as a path to heaven on earth<sup>29</sup>; and the precious pearl gates of heavenly Jerusalem awaiting the just after the Last Judgment.<sup>30</sup> All these thresholds typologically foreshadow, fulfill, or supersede each other and define the relationship of God with his people. Christ himself is the gate for the salvation of the faithful,<sup>31</sup> and the Virgin Mary is the gate through which God descended on earth so that humanity could ascend to heaven.<sup>32</sup> The parable of the wise and foolish virgins highlights the chronotopic dimensions of gates: only the wise virgins who are adequately prepared and present at the moment of the bridegroom’s arrival are allowed access to the wedding banquet behind the gate, which symbolizes human salvation as the celebration of the union between God and his people.<sup>33</sup>

Like gates, trees are prominent spatiotemporal entities that in Christian tradition provide or deny access to God. By nature, trees are firmly located in space through their roots, and they dynamically act in time through their branches, which grow, bear flowers and fruits, and lose or retain their leaves throughout the seasons. Therefore, trees can become landmarks that define the stable identity of place as well as the fluid passage of time (both of which are referenced in the symbolic use of trees as systems of family genealogies). In Christianity, special trees created by God and engaged by his people define the relationship between divinity and humanity. God planted the Garden of Eden for the first humans and placed the Trees of Knowledge and Life in its center (*Genesis* 2:8–9). When Eve and Adam ate the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were expelled from Eden and a cherubim with a flaming sword was appointed as the guardian at the gate to deny access to the garden and the Tree of Life at its center (*Genesis* 3:22–24). In Christian tradition, the wood of Christ’s cross became the new Tree of Life that grants access back to paradise.<sup>34</sup> The Tree of Life as a symbol of salvation and homecoming for the exiled humankind is also envisioned in the center of heavenly Jerusalem, which will open its gates for the just to enjoy eternal bliss in union with God after the Last Judgment (*Revelation* 2:7, 22:2/14/19). In all these narratives, the Tree of Life is prominently hierochronotopic: sacred in itself, it also defines sacred places *and* times in God’s divine plan for human salvation.

When the spatiotemporal symbolic potential of trees is combined with that of gates, as on Bonanno’s bronze door for the cathedral of Pisa, then we have a unique opportunity to explore the creation and experience of sacredness as a sophisticated hierochronotopic cultural project.



### **Bonanno's bronze door as an example of hierochronotopy at the cathedral of Pisa**

The above brief discussion has already touched upon the concept of church doors as significant thresholds through which the faithful have access to the hierochronotopy of “heaven on earth,” in other words the sacred space and time of the church as a reflection of heavenly Jerusalem. When immersed in that spatiotemporal sacredness that is articulated by the multisensorial framework of the church building and its rituals, Christians have the opportunity to experience salvation or at least the promise of salvation, both as individuals and as communities. Within the church, they practice and celebrate their faith and sociocultural identity, seek and receive guidance and forgiveness, and above all come into communion and union with God, especially through the ritual of the Eucharist. Therefore, doors that provide access to the hierochronotopy of *ecclesia* are potent thresholds of transformation that reverberate with the significance of passages into past and future iterations of heaven (from Eden and earthly Jerusalem to paradise and heavenly Jerusalem). In a sense, church doors symbolically encompass the promise of salvation that the entire hierochronotopy of the church is meant to activate. The decoration of church doors and portals can be designed not simply to visualize but also to participate in the hierochronotopy of salvation that lies behind them. Their visual statements proclaim *and* contribute to the sacredness of the church and call the faithful to experience the rituals with a deeper understanding of their place in the divine plan for human salvation, to which they have the privilege of participation by passing through those doors. In the same way that the introduction to a narrative sets the stage and guides the audience to appreciate the entire story, so do church doors introduce the faithful into the experience of the church and its rituals. And in the same way that narratives are made up of interconnected chronotopic units,<sup>35</sup> so is the hierochronotopy of the church constituted of smaller such units, such as its paintings or its decorated doors that are in themselves hierochronotopic projects. It is time to explore these issues through the concrete example of the door that is the subject of this essay.

Bonanno Pisano, a twelfth-century sculptor from Pisa, is famous among medievalists for the production of three bronze doors<sup>36</sup>: The door that once graced the main entrance to the cathedral of Pisa was destroyed in a great fire in 1595; according to the inscription that once existed on it, it was created in 1180.<sup>37</sup> The door that guards the main entrance to the cathedral of Monreale in Sicily bears the date of 1186 together with Bonanno's name.<sup>38</sup> The door that is the subject of the present study, the so-called door of San Ranieri at the south transept of the Pisa cathedral, was not signed or dated by its creator, but it is considered Bonanno's work based on its similarities with the signed Monreale door. The south-transept door of the Pisan cathedral has been variously dated by scholars either as the first or the last of the three doors Bonanno created: it has been assigned to diverse dates ranging from around 1170–1175 to after 1186.<sup>39</sup> The exact dating of the door does not really affect the interpretation that I propose in this study, which focuses on the door's relation with its broader cultural and architectural context. In fact, even the exact identity of the creator (whom I will continue to call Bonanno) does not affect my analysis, as I do not discuss the door in connection to Bonanno's other work, but in connection to this door's hierochronotopic role in the religious space dominated by the Pisa cathedral. We may assume Bonanno had assistants, yet we do not know if he was advised by members of the clergy or the Opera

del Duomo regarding the subject matter (most probably) and iconography (possibly) of the door. Regardless, I use “Bonanno” as a code name for all the people who might have been involved in planning and executing this cultural creation since my goal is to examine the underlying cultural perception of hierochronotopy that manifested itself in this door, regardless of the number and exact identity of the people who contributed to its creation.

Bonanno’s surviving Pisan door is at the backside of the cathedral of the city, giving access into the south transept (Figure 6.2). This is actually a rather prominent and significant location, in front of the famous campanile (the so-called Leaning Tower of Pisa) and next to the enormous apse of the church. Indeed, the main thoroughfare of the medieval city leading to the cathedral brought people to this very door (rather than to the façade on the other side of the building), and therefore, thousands of Christians would have passed through it every year. Each of the two leafs of this door (Figure 6.1) bears in its central and largest section ten rectangular panels of roughly equal size, arranged in five registers of two scenes each. They depict narrative scenes, starting with the *Annunciation* on the bottom left and ending with the *Dormition of the Virgin* at the top right. Each of the five narrative registers bears in total four scenes in unbroken sequence from the left to the right door leaf, so that the entire narrative is easier to follow when the door is closed. These 20 scenes are framed at the bottom rail with figures of 12 standing prophets among palm trees (six prophets per door leaf, Figures 6.1 and 6.3); and at the top rail with Christ in majesty among angels (on the left leaf) and Mary enthroned in heaven and flanked by two angels and two trees on either side (on the right leaf, Figures 6.1 and 6.4). A palm tree similar to the ones that accompany the prophets at the bottom register appears in the *Flight into Egypt*, and rather unusually also in the *Baptism* and the *Anastasis/Resurrection* (Figures 6.1, 6.3 and 6.5–6.7), while a tree similar to the ones flanking Mary in heaven above appears in the scenes of the *Annunciation*, the *Entry into Jerusalem* and (again unusually) the *Washing of Feet* (Figures 6.1, 6.4 and 6.8–6.10). In the following pages, I will suggest that the trees punctuating the surface of Bonanno’s door create a web of hierochronotopic relations that connect the history of salvation with the cathedral of Pisa and, by extension, its citizens as saved members of the Church of Christ. Through my analysis, I will consider previous observations about the theological significance of this door’s trees, especially in the work of William Melczer,<sup>40</sup> and I will carry them forward through the lens of hierochronotopy.

While considering the following arguments, it is important to keep in mind one major point about the cultural context of Pisa at the time in which Bonanno’s door was created: the Christian citizens of the city had cultivated a very special connection with the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem, already from the eleventh century. The Pisans had participated in the First Crusade with a fleet of 120 ships and considered themselves responsible for the conquest of Jerusalem during that campaign (1099). Daibert, the bishop of Pisa who led the city’s navy in that expedition, was appointed the first Latin patriarch of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. In short, the Pisans fashioned themselves as liberators and protectors of the Holy Land and ventured to create a New Jerusalem in the cathedral complex of their city: in the twelfth century, the baptistery opposite the cathedral was constructed as an unusually accurate copy of the Church of the Anastasis, the holiest site in Jerusalem centered around Christ’s Tomb; in the thirteenth century, the Campo Santo cemetery next to the cathedral was filled with a



*Figure 6.2* View of the southeastern side of the Pisa cathedral and Bonanno's door (opposite the bell tower on the right), seen from the medieval thoroughfare of the city, through which most visitors would have approached the building. Photo: Ikonya/Shutterstock.com.



*Figure 6.3* Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. Bottom right rail with six prophets and palm trees. Photo: author.

shipload of soil from Jerusalem. In this way, the Pisans were reborn (baptized) and buried with the hope of resurrection in the name of Christ inside spaces that through architectural forms or material substance recreated the Jerusalemite chronotopy of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. In other words, the Pisans were fashioning a religious center with a prominent hierochronotopic focus, connecting their city to the past, present, and future, earthly and heavenly Jerusalem and thus creating a local version of that holy city in its various iterations.<sup>41</sup> It is also worthy of notice that the twelfth-century Pisan saint who was to become the patron of the city, San Ranieri, embodied for his fellow citizens a hierochronotopic model of piety, that is, a sacred



Figure 6.4 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. Top right rail with *Mary in Majesty*, surrounded by angels and trees with pointed leaves. Photo: author.



Figure 6.5 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Flight into Egypt*, including the palm tree. Photo: author.



*Figure 6.6* Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Christ's Baptism*, including the palm tree. Photo: author.



*Figure 6.7* Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Anastasis (Resurrection)*, including the palm tree. Photo: Zvonimir Athletic/Shutterstock.com.

life of significant spatiotemporal integration: he started his spiritual journey in Pisa, continued it through a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and then returned to Pisa to live a life of *imitatio Christi* that, according to his biographer, all believers baptized in Christ could and should lead. Through his asceticism, pilgrimage, and charity, San Ranieri brought the holiness of Jerusalem and Christ's mission into the city of Pisa and in the experiences of his fellow citizens.<sup>42</sup> As discussed below, the plant forms on Bonanno's bronze door were meant to reinforce the same hierochronotopic web of connections, especially through the prominence of palm trees, which are emblematic of the landscape of the Holy Land. It is time to look more closely at these plant forms.

Melczer notes that the palm so closely connected with the Old Testament prophets at the bottom rail of Bonanno's door reappears in three important scenes from Christ's life, in order to visually suggest that he is the fulfillment of prophecies that foretold the coming of the Messiah (*Flight into Egypt*, *Baptism*, *Anastasis*, Figures 6.1, 6.3 and 6.5–6.7).<sup>43</sup> I suggest an analogous interpretation, in terms of temporal progression and fulfillment, for the second type of tree that appears in three New Testament panels and the top right rail with Mary in heaven: in the latter composition, the Virgin is paired with Christ the Judge on the left top rail and therefore appears in her role as an intercessor on the day of Last Judgment.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, the same tree motif that appears in the *Annunciation*, the *Entry into Jerusalem* and the *Washing of Feet*, as well as in the paradisiacal setting surrounding Mary as an intercessor, might be meant to indicate that the purpose of the Incarnation will be fulfilled in the salvation of humankind at the end of time when the enthroned Virgin will welcome the souls of the saved into her son's kingdom (Figures 6.1, 6.4 and 6.8–6.10). In this application of inter pictoriality, plants become instrumental in highlighting the wisdom of divine providence from the Old Testament to the New and from there to final judgment and salvation.<sup>45</sup> This use of recurring botanical elements that emphasize cross-references between different biblical scenes and allude to the fulfillment of human salvation according to God's plan is also employed in other medieval narrative cycles, such as the Salerno ivories (possibly of the twelfth century), bishop Bernward's bronze door at Hildesheim (early eleventh century), and of course Bonanno's Monreale door of the late twelfth century.<sup>46</sup> In addition, in all these examples the polyvalent meaning of plants in individual scenes further amplifies the distinct theological and moral significance of the relevant biblical episodes and their dynamic integration into the entire cycle. In other words, plants play an instrumental role in constructing the hierochronotopic web that joins all these episodes in a network of interconnected turning points, progressively meant to guide humankind back to the kingdom of God. This web includes both depicted scenes and episodes alluded to (but not represented) as part of an expanded network of significant chronotopies in salvation history. The following observations will suffice to argue this point, without exhausting the subject.

The tree with large arrow-like leaves that grows behind the upper part of the building in the *Annunciation* (Figure 6.8) has been interpreted by Melczer as an allusion to the Tree of Jesse, in other words, the genealogy of Christ from David's bloodline, as foretold in reference to the Messiah in *Isaiah* 11:1 and repeated in *Luke* 3:23–38 and *Matthew* 1:1.<sup>47</sup> Melczer applies the same meaning to the similar leafy trees that grow out of the walls of David's city in the *Entry to Jerusalem* (Figure 6.9): here, Christ arrives triumphantly in the city of his royal forefather.<sup>48</sup> In the *Washing of Feet* (Figure 6.10), Melczer does not regard the appearance of the same tree as an allusion to Christ's Davidic lineage. However, such a reference could be relevant here as well, if we consider that in the *Washing of Feet* the Tree of Jesse could be a statement about the true nature



Figure 6.8 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Annunciation*, including the tree with pointed leaves. Photo: author.

of the Messiah born out of David's bloodline: Christ is the true anointed one, the compassionate savior, who will guide the new chosen people, the followers of his loving mandates, back to heaven; he is not the worldly ruler whom the Jews await to lead them in the organization of a mighty earthly kingdom. Indeed, as Melczer himself observes, the *Washing of Feet* is emblematic of Christ's Incarnation for the spiritual salvation of the world through the power of compassion and was recognized as such in Christian exegesis: Jesus humbled himself in the role of a servant, taught his disciples



Figure 6.9 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Entry into Jerusalem*, including trees with pointed leaves. Photo: author.



Figure 6.10 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Washing of Feet*, including the tree with pointed leaves. Photo: Zvonimir Atletic/Shutterstock.com.



the importance of love, charity, and humility as basic virtues for the redemption of humankind, and symbolically washed away the sins of the world by cleaning that part of the human body (the heel) that Satan and his serpent wounded in their effort to keep humanity captive when confronted by Christ.<sup>49</sup> This is in fact the subject of the scene represented above the *Washing of Feet*, the *Anastasis* (Figure 6.7), where Christ steps with his bare feet on the head and body of the chain-bound Hades.

Melczer makes a different comment on the leafy tree in the *Washing of Feet* (Figure 6.10), one that opens up the path for an alternative and complementary interpretation of plant forms in this cycle, with emphasis on moral fruitfulness. According to Melczer, the tree that leans toward Christ and stands behind the attentive apostles seems to be receiving the teaching of Jesus in the same eager way his disciples do.<sup>50</sup> It is possible that a similar moral meaning was intended by Bonanno or was perceived by at least some medieval viewers, in connection to the similar tree in the *Annunciation* and the *Entry into Jerusalem* (Figures 6.8 and 6.9). In addition to referencing the Tree of Jesse and Christ's Davidic lineage, the verdant trees in those scenes could also refer to the character of the participating figures. In other words, Mary is the flourishing tree of virtue, worthy of becoming the Mother of God. Fruitful virtuousness is also the attribute of the Jews and the entire city of Jerusalem when they recognize and greet Christ as the savior. Finally, the fruits of love, charity and humility grow in the *Washing of Feet*, when Christ teaches these virtues by way of his example. Given that the same trees grow around Mary and the angels in heaven, the implication might be that the Incarnation (illustrated by the *Annunciation*), the recognition of God (exemplified by the *Entry into Jerusalem*), and the application of Christ's teachings together with his power to cleanse humanity from sin (both visualized in the *Washing of Feet*) prepare the path for the salvation of the just at the end of time when their virtues and the intercession of Mary will open up the gates of paradise for them (compare Figures 6.4 and 6.8–6.10).<sup>51</sup>

Articulating this discourse through the polyvalent symbol of the tree ties the road to salvation with the event that initiated humanity's exile from Eden and prompted its long journey of return back to the kingdom of God: it evokes the consumption of the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, the disastrous effects of which had to be reversed by the true Tree of Life, Christ. His identity as the loving Messiah who teaches humility and compassion is symbolically visualized through the flourishing trees that punctuate the entire narrative of this door and refer both to the Tree of Jesse and fruitful virtue. In fact, the *Fall* in front of the Tree of Knowledge is represented in the bottom right narrative panel of the door, as a significant footnote to the history of humankind retold in this cycle (Figures 6.1, 6.11, and 6.12): the diminutive figures of Adam and Eve appear below the mountain range that holds the three Magi as they ride toward *Christ's Nativity*, depicted on the panel to the left. The first parents look pensively at the Tree of Knowledge with the serpent winding around its trunk, eat its fruit, and get expelled from paradise by an angel.<sup>52</sup> This scene is placed next to *Christi's Nativity*, which was destined to reverse the effects of the Fall. Both scenes appear within cavernous frames as if to indicate that one threw humankind in the dark cave of sin and death whereas the other introduced God on earth in the luminous cave of his birth, which would lead to the rebirth of his people. In addition, the *Fall* also appears on the lower right of the diagonal axis that culminates with the *Anastasis* on the top left of the door, where Adam and Eve are redeemed and a fruitful palm, the symbol of righteousness and virtue (possibly also alluding to the Tree of Life as the antithesis of the Tree of Knowledge), has a prominent place opposite them, next to the just



Figure 6.11 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Christ's Nativity and the Journey of the Magi (including the Fall and Expulsion from Paradise)*. Photo: author.



Figure 6.12 Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Journey of the Magi, detail: Fall and Expulsion from Paradise*. Photo: author.

(Figures 6.1, 6.7 and 6.12).<sup>53</sup> This allows for the history of redemption to be meaningfully outlined in a dense narrative that is animated by the powerful hierochronotopic symbol of the tree. It connects the Garden of Eden, the gates of which closed for the expelled forbearers, to the realm of Hades, whose gates are smashed by Christ through his Resurrection, and to the gates of heaven, which are opened through Christ and Mary for the just to return home. Of course, the visualization of these moments on the gate of the Pisa cathedral (Bonanno's door) evokes the idea that the hierochronotopy of this church is integrated into the history of human salvation, bringing the Christian

citizens of Pisa one step closer to the ultimate destination, heavenly Jerusalem. When Bonanno's door was closed, Christian viewers standing in front of it could appreciate the entire web of spatiotemporal cross-references that punctuate its narrative cycle. When the door was opened, Christian viewers could step into the space of the cathedral with an embodied experience of traversing through sacred history (depicted on the open leaves of the door), to seek salvation inside the church as an earthly reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem (the paradisiacal hierochronotopy that appears at the top rail of the door, welcoming the faithful).<sup>54</sup>

In the redemptive context of Bonanno's biblical narrative, specific details in the representation of the leafy tree under discussion might be particularly significant: although the smooth trunk, curvy branches, and pointy leaves of the tree in question are identical in all the four scenes in which it appears, only some of them bear pine-like fruits, whereas others do not (compare Figures 6.4 and 6.8–6.10). This detail can be of great importance: there are no fruits on the *Annunciation* tree (Figure 6.8), which could perhaps indicate that Mary has just conceived but has not yet born the Fruit of Life, Christ, who through his Incarnation will reverse the effects of the forbidden fruit that led to the moral fruitlessness of humankind through Eve. On the contrary, there are prominent pine-like fruits on the leafy tree that grows out of the walls of the city in the *Entry into Jerusalem* and behind the apostles in the *Washing of Feet* (Figures 6.9 and 6.10), perhaps to indicate not only that Christ is now incarnated and fully active in the world, but also that humans are ripe with virtue in recognizing him and following his teaching. Especially in the *Washing of Feet*, which in Christian exegesis was related to the cleansing of sins and the healing of the heel wounded by Satan, the fruitful tree could also be a powerful allusion to the reversal of the Fall that was caused by the forbidden fruit: the flourishing plant in the *Washing of Feet* is the Tree of Life that undoes the harm of the Tree of Knowledge, depicted as a scrawny bare plant totally overtaken by the serpent in the scene of the *Fall* (diagonally across the *Washing of Feet* and the *Anastasis*, Figures 6.1, 6.7 and 6.10–6.12). Finally, the two trees on Mary's proper right (the viewer's left) in the scene of her enthronement in heaven, at the top right rail of the door, are also laden with fruits, whereas the two trees on her proper left have no fruits at all (Figure 6.4). Given the reference of this scene to ultimate salvation and the day of Last Judgment illustrated by Christ in Majesty on the top left door rail, the distinction between fruitful trees on Mary's right and fruitless on her left (i.e. the positive and negative side according to Christian iconography) could respectively allude to virtue and sin as the presence and absence of "fruitful," that is, virtuous works.<sup>55</sup> Alternatively, given that all four trees appear next to Mary and angels in heaven, the distinction between fruitful and fruitless could perhaps allude to the difference between the Tree of Life that offers sustenance and salvation and the Tree of Knowledge that after having provided its deadly fruit became barren and in need of rehabilitation.<sup>56</sup> In trying to decipher the possible meanings that such botanical details might have held for their original viewers, we should allow for interpretative flexibility, rather than seek exact formal correspondences between the visual signs and the concepts or stories to which they might refer. We should expect symbols to function in ways that amplify rather than restrict the significance of their context, providing vital latitude and various possibilities of interpretation.<sup>57</sup> In this respect, we should not be surprised if references to both virtue and sin appear in a paradisiacal context (which after all relates to Judgment), or if more than one plant in the same garden might allude to the distinct character of the unique Trees of Life and Knowledge respectively.

All the above hierochronotopic references are of course particularly amplified because they appear on a door leading into the Pisan cathedral: another heavenly

Jerusalem on earth, promising salvation through participation in its hierochronotopic rituals, and especially the ritual of the Eucharist that reverses the effects of the Fall through the consumption of the true fruit of the Tree of Life, Christ himself. But to what degree were the Christians entering the cathedral aware of all these possible layers of meaning on Bonanno's door? It should be pointed out here that the seemingly important detail of fruitful versus fruitless trees might not have been easily noticed by members of the congregation: while walking through Bonanno's door, they could perhaps appreciate one or more possible symbolic meanings of the tree motifs, but probably not observe the lack or presence of fruits, especially in the top right rail with Mary enthroned in heaven, which is rather distant from the eye level of visitors. This hindered visibility is still the case even if we imagine Christian viewers attentively studying Bonanno's creation, especially when the door is closed and particularly prominent as a visual statement of the promised salvation available behind it, inside the cathedral perceived as heavenly Jerusalem on earth. Therefore we should consider that, in a hierochronotopic cultural experience, human participants are not the only audience addressed by the people who design and create the hierochronotopic apparatus (including ritual settings and objects) on behalf of the entire community. God himself is a major addressee, to whom everything is visible and all is due. When the message is a reiteration of human hopes for ultimate salvation, as on Bonanno's door, then even details invisible or hardly visible to human eyes can acquire special significance, as they contribute in constructing a hierochronotopic realm of experience in which God himself presides as savior. It should also be noted in this case that an important stage in the hierochronotopic communication with the divine is not only the viewing experience of the community members but also the planning and making experience of the door's patrons and creators. Most likely, the people involved in designing and producing this door were aware that certain meaningful details in individual panels would not be visible once they were set in situ, yet they still included them in their designs and final creation. Thus, they immersed themselves in a deeper contemplation of the history of salvation and worked to transform this door into a more dynamic threshold leading to the experience of salvation inside the cathedral.

It should also be noted here that Mary herself was probably considered another important addressee and participant of the special hierochronotopy of salvation evoked through Bonanno's door. Her central role in salvation history and her special status above all other saints meant that many medieval Christian visitors would recognize her significance in the hierochronotopic narrative of the door and would believe she would listen to their invocations for salvation, which should therefore be as refined as possible, even including meaningful visual components that their own human eyes could miss (such as the strategic placement of fruits on the trees to Mary's right in the top register of the door). It is important to remember here that the Virgin was Pisa's primary holy patron (more important than the local San Ranieri), and the cathedral of the city was dedicated to her Assumption, which emphasized her role as mediatrix of human salvation.<sup>58</sup> Mary was the human who, thanks to her incomparable virtues, had become the mother and living temple of Christ, hierochronotopically housing him in her pregnant body and thus foreshadowing his physical union with his followers—who would house him in their own body through the mystery of the Eucharist. Throughout her close spiritual and human connection with her son, she lived his life and experienced his pain, thus becoming the first follower and imitator of Christ. Therefore, Mary was not only the most powerful intercessor but also the most exalted model of Christian behavior, remaining constantly relevant and present at all Christian times and places in medieval

mainstream Christian practice. The narrative of her life on Bonanno's door would enrich the web of this threshold's spatiotemporal references to human salvation with a strong Pisan undertone. On this door, Mary was not only the antidote to Eve's Fall and the Queen of Heaven—the woman who through her son made salvation possible for all Christians. Rather, as patroness of Pisa and its cathedral, she was also spatiotemporally active among her people, opening the gates of the church in the present as she would open the gates of paradise in the future.

The leafy tree that on Bonanno's door connects her Annunciation with her enthronement in heaven and alludes to paradise lost and regained through the Tree of Life, eloquently emphasizes the hierochronotopic continuum of human salvation with an added Pisan significance. This significance would be further highlighted in later years, when a chapel dedicated to Mary's Assumption and Coronation was located in the apse of the south transept, and would immediately greet the faithful coming into the cathedral through Bonanno's door (Figure 6.13).<sup>59</sup> After seeing the virtuous life of Mary and her enthronement in heaven on the door, visitors would enter the space of the church as a new earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, where they would be enveloped by images depicting Mary's Assumption and Coronation. Thus, in the spatiotemporal nucleus of the south transept, they would experience the promise of future salvation through the presence of the woman who was not only their mediatrix but also their spiritual model. This hierochronotopic experience of salvation would acquire an even more specific Pisan inflection in the second half of the seventeenth century, when the tomb of San Ranieri, the local patron saint and holy pilgrim to Jerusalem, was moved into the chapel of the south



*Figure 6.13* South transept of the Pisa cathedral, with the Tomb of San Ranieri (former Chappell of the Coronation of the Virgin). Photo: Wjarek/Shutterstock.com.

transept, under the images of the assumed and crowned Mary (Figure 6.13).<sup>60</sup> There, Ranieri was a Pisan imitator of Christ and Mary, in his role as both intercessor and supreme model of Christian behavior. Enveloped in the images of Mary's heavenly status, his saintly Pisan body connected the hierochronotopy of the Pisan cathedral with that of the kingdom of God, reminding his fellow citizens that they could also aspire to salvation that he had earned as one of them. The point of this short digression is to remember that the hierochronotopic references of Bonanno's door could be variously energized through interaction with other parts of the cathedral, which was in itself a complex spatiotemporal realm continuously evolving through new additions to its material fabric and via dynamic interactions of its diverse parts in the eyes of its varied visitors.

It is time to pay special attention to the hierochronotopic references of the palm tree, which is as prominent on Bonanno's door as it is emblematic of the landscape of the Holy Land.<sup>61</sup> The choice of a palm tree as a main feature of three critical episodes in Christ's life does more than visually suggest that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament figures surrounded by palms at the bottom rail of the door (Figures 6.1, 6.3 and 6.5–6.7). The strategic placement of the palm tree highlights the theological references of those three episodes, through a hierochronotopic lens. Indeed, the first narrative scene with a palm might offer us a clue for the tree's meaning in the other two scenes. As Melczer notes, in the *Flight into Egypt* (Figure 6.5), the palm that bends gently to touch with its leaves the head of Mary holding her son illustrates the relevant episode described in the apocryphal gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (Chapters 20–21): following Christ's instructions, the tree first leaned forward to provide shade and fruit to the holy family, and then stretched its trunk backward to reveal a source of water at its roots.<sup>62</sup> This can be considered one of the first miracles of God incarnate<sup>63</sup> and clearly manifests his power to offer salvation in this case expressed in the physical dimension through the provision of protective shade and the sustenance of food and water. Melczer claims that besides creating a connection with the prophets surrounded by palms at the bottom rail of the door, there is no clear iconographic reason for the inclusion of the palm in the scenes of Christ's *Baptism* and *Anastasis* (Figures 6.6 and 6.7).<sup>64</sup> However, it is possible that, in analogy to the *Flight into Egypt*, the fruitful palm was used in the other two scenes in order to emphasize Christ's power to offer salvation, now manifested in spiritual rather than physical terms: Christ washes away the sins of the world through water (*Baptism*) and defeats the death of sinfulness that holds humanity captive in both body and soul by offering himself as food and bait for Hades (*Anastasis*).<sup>65</sup> It is, in fact, possible that the infancy miracle of the palm was conceived by the author of the apocryphal gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, or at least was perceived by some of his readers, as a prefiguration of the two most important rituals of the Christian Church: baptism (water) and the Eucharist (food consumption). This interpretation could be evoked on Bonanno's door through the visual link that the palm tree creates between the *Flight into Egypt* (an early moment of the Incarnation in which the palm miracle occurred), the *Baptism* (the initiation of Christ's public ministry and the institution of the initiation ritual of Christian baptism), and the *Anastasis* (the purpose of the Incarnation and the culmination of Christ's salvific mission, also reenacted in the Eucharist). In addition, the edible fruits of the palm that appear prominently in all three scenes (and were actually eaten in the course of the *Flight into Egypt* according to Pseudo-Matthew) also recall the fatal consumption of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the effects of which are now reversed through Christ, the fruit of the Tree of Life. This hierochronotopic reference is amplified by the fact that Bonanno's

door leads the Pisans from the city into the cathedral (and right next to the apse where the Eucharist is celebrated) and guides them on to the other side of the building, which stands opposite their grandiose baptistery. Modeled after the Rotunda of the Anastasis in Jerusalem, which was centered around Christ's Tomb, the Pisan baptistery articulates a particularly evocative hierochronotopic reference in which death and rebirth are linked in the experience of the baptized who die and are reborn in Christ.

It is essential to recall that, in the Bible and by extension in Christian textual and visual production, the palm is a prominent symbol of victory, peace, and prosperity.<sup>66</sup> It is therefore highly significant that on Bonanno's Pisan door this plant appears in the three scenes that relate to the theme of birth and rebirth through Christ, who came to earth to be victorious over sin and to bring peace and spiritual wellbeing to troubled humankind: the *Flight into Egypt*, related to Christ's Nativity and Infancy cycle, introduces the savior triumphant into the pagan world; his *Baptism* refers to the sacrament that offers spiritual rebirth to all his followers and marks an initial victory over the devil; and the *Anastasis* represents the promise of rebirth in both body and soul for all the just and signals the definitive defeat of darkness through Christ's triumph over death. It is also worthy of notice that the *Massacre of the Innocents*, the deadly/sacrificial event that marks the beginning of Christ's life, is framed by the two triumphant moments of the *Flight into Egypt* and the *Baptism*, whose miraculous and salvific nature is particularly emphasized through the prominent presence of the fruitful palm tree (Figure 6.1, second narrative register). Considering that the evergreen, tall, and fruitful palm is also a symbol of righteousness in the Bible,<sup>67</sup> it is even possible that its inclusion in the above three scenes is also a reference to the rewards God offers to his virtuous people: Christ performs miracles for his pure mother and chaste Joseph (*Flight into Egypt*), for the faithful who become part of his flock through the initiation ritual of the Church (*Baptism*), and for the just who are worthy of his mercy (*Anastasis*).

In fact, the palm tree as a symbol of triumph and salvation had a special significance for crusaders and pilgrims to the Holy Land, especially upon their return to their homelands in Europe. Sources attest that Christians baptized in the River Jordan would then acquire palm leaves (fronds), which they would devoutly safeguard until their arrival back home. There, the palm leaves would be considered prized material evidence of their pilgrimage and by extension of their Christian virtue and the blessings they had received. At times, such palm leaves would be dedicated to church altars to commemorate the transmediterranean accomplishments of their owners, publicize their piety, and invoke continuous divine protection.<sup>68</sup> It is most likely that this use of palm leaves was also known at Pisa, within the context of its developed pilgrimage culture. Therefore, the prominent depiction of palm trees on Bonanno's door, including the Baptism at the River Jordan, could have evoked the experience and spiritual significance of pilgrimage for the Pisans, interweaving the biblical stories of the past with the Christian lives of the present and their salvific hopes for the future, when the just would undertake the ultimate pilgrimage to heavenly Jerusalem. In this sense, the palm tree significantly enriches the hierochronotopic references of Bonanno's door.

Another important consideration along these lines is the prominence of palms in the decoration of Solomon's Temple, including its doorways, according to explicit biblical references.<sup>69</sup> The representation of the same plant on the door of Pisa's cathedral could imply that Christian churches (and especially this cathedral, in a city that modeled itself after Jerusalem) have superseded Jewish worship, as a result of the advent of Christ who replaced the age of law with that of grace. According to this mentality, the Christian religion was born to replace Judaism and to lead humankind back to paradise through

Christ's miraculous Incarnation and salvific mission (highlighted through the three scenes that include a prominent palm—*Flight into Egypt*, *Baptism*, and *Anastasis*) exactly as it was foretold by the Old Testament prophets (Figures 6.1, 6.3 and 6.5–6.7). Such a concept evokes the idea of the Church Triumphant, which was often symbolized in Western medieval culture by the palm tree,<sup>70</sup> but it also creates a very meaningful hierochronotopic link between Solomon's temple in Old Testament Jerusalem and the Pisan cathedral as a local version of a new-(Christian) and future (heavenly) Jerusalem.

In the context of the highly meaningful botanical choices employed on Bonanno's door at Pisa, we should also consider the interrelation between scenes with plant forms within the overall design of the door. Although the placement of individual scenes on the door panels was determined by the chronological sequence of the events they depict, the presence of prominent trees in only some of them could function as visual pointers of significant interconnections that highlight the theological and moral meaning of those episodes in relation to each other. The diagonal alignment between the *Fall* (bottom right) and the promise of salvation visualized through the *Washing of Feet* and the *Anastasis* (top left) has been mentioned and would be apparent when the door was closed (Figure 6.1). Another diagonal axis connects the *Annunciation* at the bottom left with Mary enthroned in heaven at the top right rail, thus linking the beginning of the Incarnation with its ultimate goal of human salvation. The presence of the same leafy trees in both scenes further highlights this connection. Most trees are represented in scenes along the outer vertical edges of the two door leaves, aligned in meaningful ways (the only exception being the *Flight into Egypt* in the second narrative register, the second scene from the left). So the *Annunciation* at the bottom left corner is on the same horizontal plane with the *Fall* at the bottom right corner of the first narrative register, as two pivotal points in the history of human salvation: the Incarnation through Mary is the beginning of the path to redemption that was rendered necessary through the original sin caused by Eve. The theme of Mary as New Eve, reversing with her virtue and obedience the sinful disobedience of the first mother, was a significant concept in medieval Christianity and was often highlighted through plant forms.<sup>71</sup> On Bonanno's door, it is vividly visualized through the striking difference between Eve's withered Tree of Knowledge and Mary's verdant *Annunciation* plant, which evokes both her flourishing virtue and the conception of the true Tree of Life, her own son.

Through their meaningful pairing, the two base-line scenes of the *Annunciation* and the *Fall* bind together through significant plant forms the other episodes that are aligned vertically above them. Thus, they create a powerful network that embraces the whole narrative of human salvation with significant botanical references to hierochronotopy, including the palms of the Old Testament prophets below and the leafy trees surrounding Mary in heaven above, which mark respectively the prefiguration and fulfillment of redemption through Christ. So, the *Fall* on the right bottom corner is aligned with the cleansing of sins through *Baptism*, represented immediately above it, where a prominent palm tree announces the triumph over the effects of the scrawny Tree of Knowledge below. Immediately above *Baptism* appears the *Entry to Jerusalem* in which the whole city seems flourishing, with leafy fruitful trees growing out of its walls; even the heads of spectators peeking through the crenellations appear like human fruits sprouting out of the city's body (Figures 6.1, 6.6, 6.9 and 6.12).<sup>72</sup> The advent of the savior is a triumph expressed in botanical terms, and the earthly Jerusalem almost becomes a prefiguration of the heavenly Jerusalem that is actually represented at the top rail above, with Mary and angels in a garden full of the same leafy trees (Figures 6.4 and 6.9). Along this vertical axis, the bottom scene of the *Fall* and the top-most scene of *Mary in Majesty*



repeat the meaningful juxtaposition between Eve and the Virgin as New Eve that is also highlighted horizontally through the alignment of the *Annunciation* and the *Fall* (Figures 6.1, 6.4, 6.8 and 6.12). On the left leaf of the door, the verdant but fruitless tree of the *Annunciation* in the bottom corner is aligned with the fruitful tree of the *Washing of Feet* and the equally fertile palm of the *Anastasis* suggesting that the initial moment of the Incarnation has flourished into the powerful works of salvation through Christ and into the virtues of his followers (Figures 6.7, 6.8 and 6.10). It is significant that right above these two scenes, which are emblematic of the cleansing of sins and redemption, Jesus sits in majesty, venerated by his angelic host as he passes judgment on the world and offers salvation to the just as heralded in the *Anastasis* below.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, the angels flanking the Judge create with their wings a forest of curvy and pointed forms very much like magnified versions of the tree leaves in the two episodes right below and in Mary's enthronement in paradise on the right top rail of the door (Figure 6.4). This vertical alignment of scenes hierochronotopically linked through trees along the outer edges of the two door leaves also allows an appreciation of cross-references between scenes even when the door is open and individual leaves are viewed one at a time.

Finally, the spatiotemporal botanical exegesis that is so prominently visualized through the entire program of this door is further enriched by the decorative framing elements around the scenes, which create a vegetal-like web that unites all the biblical episodes together in a tree-like whole: the twisted vertical and horizontal bands that articulate the registers of the door panels have an organic, trunk-like appearance, whereas the decorated nail heads that surround the individual scenes are clearly intended to look like blooming flowers (Figure 6.1). Together, these elements create the impression that the whole door is a flourishing, flowering surface, suggesting that both the narratives displayed on it and the mysteries experienced behind it, inside the cathedral, pave the path of humanity's return to the garden of paradise.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, this botanical threshold becomes a spatiotemporal matrix in which plant forms highlight the web of interconnections between the different moments of salvation history, visualizing hierochronotopy as a religious experience articulated on, through, and behind the cathedral door.

Indeed, the prominent *palm* trees on the Pisan door might have been very consciously chosen by Bonanno to visually consolidate the link between the door and the interior of the building, in order to emphasize the hierochronotopic experience of salvation in the Pisan cathedral. Namely, I argue that the building's interior is also dominated by palm trees, which echo not only the door and its narratives but also the Holy Land in general and the Temple of Solomon in particular, and possibly also paradise as a garden of eternal trees. Indeed, the cathedral's colonnades in the aisles and transepts appear like a forest of palm trees, thanks to arches spanning above Corinthian columns (Figure 6.14). This impression is reinforced by the alternation of black and white voussoirs at the soffit of several of the arches (especially in the transepts and the easternmost bays of the nave). This bicoloration in some way evokes the serrated leaves of palms (as alternation of dark green edges and light streaming between them).<sup>75</sup> In addition, some columns appear particularly palm-like at the crossing of transepts and aisles (which visitors to the cathedral would have seen shortly after entering the south transept through Bonanno's door): here, three or four bicolored arches span out from a single column, resembling the fanning of palm leaves out of the tree's trunk (Figure 6.15). Scholars have pointed out that the black and white voussoirs and other similarly bicolored stone elements of the Pisan cathedral make a purposeful reference to the *ablaq* decoration of Islamic monuments of the Mediterranean, with which the seafaring and crusading Pisans were familiar.

I suggest that the most important of all such monuments would have been the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, a famous building which Christians of that time conflated with the Temple of Solomon once standing in that area.<sup>76</sup> The inner circular colonnade of the Dome of the Rock also looks like a circle of palm trees, with arches of black and white *ablaq* voussoirs spanning Corinthian columns, above which, mosaics with vegetal themes further enhance the impression of eternal, unwithering, paradisiacal trees (Figure 6.16. Compare the similar visual effect and paradisiacal symbolism of the columns and bi-colored arches of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, Figure 6.17).<sup>77</sup>



*Figure 6.14* View of the north aisles of the Pisa cathedral. The arcades with black and white voussoirs create the visual impression of successive rows of palm trees. Photo: author.



*Figure 6.15* View of the intersection between south aisles and transept, Pisa cathedral. The multiple arches with black and white voussoirs spanning out of single columns and pillars create the visual impression of fanning palm trees. Photo: author.



*Figure 6.16* The central colonnade with ablaq arches in the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, creates the visual impression of a ring of palm trees. Photo: Wong Yu Liang/Shutterstock.com.



*Figure 6.17* The numerous columns and arches with white and red voussoirs in the Great Mosque of Cordoba create the visual impression of a forest of palm trees. Photo: Paolo Gallo/Shutterstock.com.

It is possible that the aisle and transept colonnades of the Pisa cathedral were meant to reference that “forest of palms” in the heart of Jerusalem, at that time under Christian control, and translate it from a circular into a cruciform plan. Within the hierochronotopy of the Pisan building, this new forest of palms would evoke the whole trajectory of human salvation as discussed above: from the Garden of Eden with the Tree of Life at its center to the Temple of Solomon and its palm trees in Jewish Jerusalem,



*Figure 6.18* Bonanno’s bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Annunciation* and *Christ’s Presentation to the Temple*, with domed canopy resting on five columns. The *Temptation of Christ* above his *Presentation to the Temple* employs an identical structure to represent the Temple of Solomon (see Figure 6.2). Photo: author.

to the Cross of Christ as Tree of Life in the same Jerusalem, to the Christian Church as the New Jerusalem, to the cathedral of Pisa as renewed Christian Holy Land and Temple of God, and finally to the future heavenly Jerusalem as paradise and city of God dominated by the Tree of Life. Of course, the hypothesis that the Pisa cathedral colonnades were meant or perceived to evoke this spatiotemporal symbolism through the palm motif cannot be proven, but it remains plausible and particularly fitting in connection to the hierochronotopic references of Bonanno's door, which largely depend on the same palm motif. It is a pity that we do not know what trees, if any, surrounded the cathedral in the twelfth century, as they could have further contributed to the weaving of a rich web of hierochronotopic connections that brought the city and its people into the fold of the divine plan for human salvation.

It is also worthy of notice that Bonanno might have intended some of the *architectural* elements on his door to reinforce the hierochronotopic link between the cathedral of Pisa and the sacred history of human salvation through Christ and his mother: he surmounted a number of scenes with a semidomed structure supported by *five* columns linked by arches (Figures 6.18 and 6.19). Therefore, he did not use the more standard and simpler structure of a ciborium on four columns (typically represented as a dome on two, three, or four columns and employed in Byzantine iconography to indicate a sacred space).<sup>78</sup> Instead, Bonanno went the extra mile to depict an architectural form that would have added complexity to the execution of the scenes. Perhaps, one reason he chose that form was in order to relate the sacred places of the narrative to the architectural fabric of the Pisan cathedral complex. Indeed, the first register of the exterior walls of the cathedral (surrounding Bonanno's door and the entire building), of the baptistery,



*Figure 6.19* Bonanno's bronze door, the south transept of the Pisa cathedral. *Last Supper*, with domed canopy resting on five columns. Photo: Zvonimir Athletic/Shutterstock.com.

and the bell tower are articulated by a blind arcade with semicircular arches, whereas higher up there are rows of semicircular arches on freestanding columns (all around the baptistery and the bell tower, and on the façade and eastern apse of the cathedral, Figure 6.20). In addition, the interior of the cathedral and the baptistery are dominated by arcades with semicircular arches. Both the blind and freestanding arcades are proportionally very similar to the columns and arches of Bonanno's architectural visualizations (with narrow intercolumniations, tall columns, and high semicircular arches). Although the baptistery and especially the bell tower were not yet finished by the time Bonanno created the door, it is certain that at least the blind arches surrounding all the three buildings (or at least the cathedral and the baptistery) were in place at that time and their striking visual effect could have inspired Bonanno in his creation.<sup>79</sup> He represented a semidome resting on an arcade with five columns in the *Annunciation* (above Mary), in the *Presentation to the Temple*, in the *Temptation* (in both cases, using the structure to visualize the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, Figures 6.1 and 6.18), and in the *Last Supper* (crowning the entire scene in the center, Figure 6.19).

If we accept that this architectural statement was intended to create a visual and conceptual link with the cathedral complex of Pisa, then the *Annunciation* and *Presentation to the Temple* that center on Mary as the instrument of the Incarnation and co-redemptrix (Mother of God and the most powerful intercessor of humanity) underline her connection with the cathedral of Pisa dedicated to her. In addition, the *Presentation to the Temple*, *Temptation*, and *Last Supper* have not only the same arched



Figure 6.20 Pisa baptistery, cathedral, and bell tower, with blind arches surrounding the buildings at the bottom register, and arches with freestanding columns on the upper registers. Photo: author.

canopy but also an identical lamp under it, highlighting the Christian understanding that the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (*Presentation to the Temple, Temptation*) was replaced by the temple of Christian congregations celebrating the Eucharist instituted in the Last Supper (compare Figures 6.18 and 6.19). Therefore, the cathedral of Pisa is the local and current version of God's temple.<sup>80</sup> It is also possible to see Mary as the living temple of Christ since she contained his body in hers (*Annunciation*). By extension, she is the embodiment of *Ecclesia* containing the Eucharistic body of Christ, and she is especially the *ecclesia* of the Pisan cathedral in which the Christians of the city can be united with Christ after passing through Bonanno's door.<sup>81</sup>

In this discussion of hierochronotopy, the ritual experience of the Eucharist would have been a vital component, and other religious rituals could have reinforced the web of spatiotemporal connections between the Christians of Pisa and the promised path to human salvation. For example, it would be worth considering if the bishop as representative of Christ was involved in performative rituals that reenacted the Entry to Jerusalem (on Palm Sunday), the Washing of the Feet (on Maundy Thursday), and the breaking of the gates of Hades (on Easter Sunday)—all of which include a tree of hierochronotopic significance on Bonanno's door. In all these cases, as also in the ritual of Baptism (also marked by a tree), the entire clergy and laity would be involved in a reenactment that celebrated God's plan for human salvation on the spatiotemporal fabric of human experience, weaving together past, present, and future through memories, actions, and hopes. The example of architectural analysis proposed above in regards to five-column ciboria may be another case in which the spatiotemporal references of hierochronotopy create a web of reassuring links that envelop Christian believers into the promise of salvation. In this regard, the symbol of the tree is perhaps even more fruitful because it has a wider spatiotemporal span in comparison to architectural structures: it encompasses the whole history of salvation, from the Garden of Eden to the paradise of the afterlife.

## Conclusion

Seen through the case study of Bonanno's bronze door at Pisa, the concept of hierochronotopy has a kaleidoscopic multivalence. In a medieval Christian context, it defines an entire *worldview* that situates humanity within a spatiotemporal divine plan for salvation. Within that overarching hierochronotopic span, from past Eden to future heavenly Jerusalem, specific turning points that manifest the workings of divine providence are smaller hierochronotopic units in a web of typological interrelations. In other words, units such as the Jewish temple, the Christian *Ecclesia*, and the cathedral of Pisa are understood as spatiotemporal rather than simply spatial and are interrelated within the overarching hierochronotopic trajectory of human salvation. In this trajectory, the Incarnation of God is the most important hierochronotopic manifestation of all: through it, divinity is enveloped in the spatiotemporal nucleus of Christ's historical and Eucharistic body, allowing humans to commune with the divine in multisensorial, recurring encounters, through the hierochronotopic rituals and practices of their faith. In this sense, the concept of hierochronotopy also encompasses the human *creation* of spatiotemporal realms and the human *experiences* taking place in and through such realms, such as church buildings and rituals that articulate encounters with the divine and the sacred. Hierochronotopy is the dimension that Christians share with each other and with God, within the realm of religious cultural production and experience. Consequently, hierochronotopy is also a conceptual and

analytical tool for a more comprehensive understanding of cultural manifestations that are created and experienced on the matrix of *spatiotemporal integration*.<sup>82</sup>

This kaleidoscopic operation of hierochronotopy is analogous to the multivalence of chronotope explored in the field of literary studies by Bakhtin and later scholars—so much so that in contemporary literary scholarship, chronotope is discussed in terms of several different types of scope and function, from smaller units within a narrative to overarching structures and concepts within literary genres.<sup>83</sup> Without attempting to draw an exact parallel with such literary units, I would say that in the case study presented here, each individual scene on Bonanno's door is a minor hierochronotopic unit, integrated into the fabric of the door itself as a broader hierochronotopic creation, which in turn is integrated into the fabric of the Pisan cathedral as a hierochronotopic realm within the even broader hierochronotopy of the medieval city of Pisa. The city itself is just another unit in the cosmic fabric of divine hierochronotopy, God's plan for human salvation, which is propelled by those historical turning points that are represented in the smaller hierochronotopic units of the door, its individual scenes. Through this network of hierochronotopic relations, the smaller units and the overarching matrix were inextricably linked in the experience of the medieval Christians of Pisa. When studying cultural manifestations such as Bonanno's door in its broader sociocultural context, attention to spatiotemporal integration through the concept of hierochronotopy may allow us to unlock layers of cultural experience (both in terms of creation and reception) that otherwise might remain hidden to our eyes. I would like to close with three observations about the significance of hierochronotopy for cultural studies—especially in the context of medieval Christianity—which are inspired by recent reflections in the realm of literary chronotopic studies.

Firstly, as a worldview, a creative and experiential practice, and an analytical approach, hierochronotopy is fundamentally intertwined with the mechanisms of human knowledge, memory, and by extension, behavior.<sup>84</sup> The hierochronotopic matrix of Bonanno's door was meant to: activate knowledge and memory in the minds of Christian visitors regarding the tenets of their faith about human salvation; enhance their religious experience of individual and communal salvation in the realm of the cathedral; and finally, inspire their current and future behavior as followers of Christ who would act in ways that would make them worthy of the promised salvation. In this regard, hierochronotopy had a prominent didactic function through the dynamic interweaving of past, present, and future—or memory, action, and hope. In other words, Bonanno's hierochronotopic threshold would invite medieval Christians to become participants of the experiential learning of church rituals by engaging them through a dynamic interaction of “past experience, ongoing involvement, and yet-to-be-accomplished goals.”<sup>85</sup> Considering that the ultimate goal of medieval Christians was nothing short of eternal salvation, then the didactic function of hierochronotopy would have been particularly significant in their cultural experience. This observation also points to personal variations in the experience of hierochronotopy, since all participants in experiential learning engage with any given framework based on their own interests, memories, and overall identities. This is to say that the above hierochronotopic analysis of Bonanno's door points to some possible interpretations of the material but neither exhausts those possibilities nor does it suggest that all viewers would develop such interpretations at all times. In this sense, it is productive to consider the hierochronotopic motif of the tree on Bonanno's door as a multivocal symbol and therefore a generative mnemonic device, within the richly layered and creative function of symbolism and memory in



medieval Christian culture.<sup>86</sup> Viewers of the door could use the tree as a stepping stone toward more or less individualized but still culturally rooted readings of the visual narrative, weaving their way through an understanding of the history of human salvation by tracing various possible and complementary threads. In this creative process of cultural production and experience, the symbolic device of the tree was particularly fertile exactly because it could evoke the hierochronotopic dimension of human salvation as past, present, and future, based on memory, action, and hope.

Secondly, it is worth considering that contemporary literary theoretical models of chronotope might prove to be too rigid for the study of complex hierochronotopic cultures such as medieval Christianity. For example, Bart Keunen has recently proposed that there are two basic models of chronotope in what he calls “Western Narrative Culture”:

*teleological*—or *monological*—*chronotopes* characterize traditional narratives in which the entire plot moves towards the final moment (the “Eschaton”)... In *dialogical chronotopes*, on the other hand, the narrative is not directed towards a final moment, to a “telos”, but rather consists of a network of conflicting situations and junctions that communicate with each other—hence the term “dialogical.”<sup>87</sup>

I would like to argue that in the narrative and experience of human salvation as articulated in medieval Christianity, hierochronotopy is both teleological (or eschatological, moving toward the Last Judgment and eternal salvation) and dialogical (or typological, moving through continuous cross-references between different spatio-temporal units that prefigure, fulfill, or supplant one another throughout salvation history).<sup>88</sup> While the teleological focus of narratives and experiences (for example in ritual) addresses the ultimate goal of eternal salvation, the dialogical focus is equally important in making salvation more easily perceptible and believable in the spatiotemporal matrix of human existence. The dialogical element introduces smaller “units” of salvation narratives and experiences, hierochronotopically limited to specific times and places, but constantly recurring so as to reassure humankind of the wisdom and infallibility of God’s salvation plan and to mark the gradual progress of his children on their long journey back to his kingdom. For example, in the Christian tradition, Noah’s Flood that cleansed the world, the Crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites escaping slavery, and the parting of the River Jordan for the crossing of the Ark of the Covenant are all considered prefigurations of Christ’s Baptism, which in turn instituted the ritual of Christian baptism through which humans are cleansed and introduced into the fold of the Church that offers the promise of future salvation.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, the Jewish Temple is replaced by Christ’s body and the body-congregation of his *Ecclesia* and local churches, all of which are Christian realms of communion with God and promise to reverse the effects of the forbidden fruit through the consumption of the Eucharist.<sup>90</sup> The *dialogical* interrelation between these hierochronotopic units, in other words, their typological cross-references and their synchronic and diachronic connections according to patterns of analogy or antithesis, are a very essential part of salvation narratives and rituals, exactly because they prove salvation’s feasibility and humanity’s progress toward the ultimate goal of return to God’s kingdom. Therefore, dialogical (or typological) hierochronotopy supports teleological (or eschatological) hierochronotopy, which in turn makes dialogical – typological hierochronotopy significant and relevant. In this sense, the Christian perception of history is both cyclical (typological) and linear (eschatological) on the path to

salvation, and therefore, it has been described as “a helix spiraling upward through shadowy types to truth.”<sup>91</sup>

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that there is a protean quality—what I have called kaleidoscopic multivalence—in the way I have discussed hierochronotopy in the present study. This might seem a theoretical and methodological problem, but perhaps only if we are after rigid certainties or linear and exclusive systems of analysis. On the contrary, I propose that this protean quality could be productive in our study of human experiences and cultural creations, which are also fluid, complex, and multilayered. This is especially the case when dealing with transcendental issues of divine providence and eternal salvation in the cultural context of medieval Christianity. After all, the Christian believers of that time were attuned to a particularly creative understanding of the sensorial world around them, embedded as they were in a culture of dynamic, symbolic polysemy that modern “westerners” might find hard to comprehend. In that cultural context, dialogical hierochronotopy reflected and enriched the symbolic polysemy of the world while also articulating its teleological – eschatological hopes. Our study of such a rich cultural tradition could benefit from a more timeful approach to the generative concept of hierotopy that Alexei Lidov has successfully introduced into our current scholarly landscape.

## Notes

- 1 The lexical components of these terms are the Greek words *hieros* (sacred), *chronos* (time) and *topos* (space). For an introduction to the concept of hierotopy see the following two articles by Alexei Lidov, “Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History,” in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 32–58. “Creating the Sacred Space. Hierotopy as a New Field of Cultural History,” in *Spazi e percorsi sacri. I santuari, le vie, I corpi*, eds. Chiara Cremonesi and Laura Carnevale (Padua: Libreriauniversitaria.it, 2014), 61–90. The concept is further explored in numerous other publications by Lidov.
- 2 For the purpose of this article, I use space and place interchangeably, especially since I refer to delimited or enclosed locations (circumscribed spaces as places). I also use sacred and holy interchangeably. When I talk of human or religious experience (singular), I refer to the human state of experiencing; therefore, I do not assume a singular experience but the inexhaustible potential of innumerable and diverse experiences (plural) that occur in the lives of individuals and communities. Occasionally, I might directly refer to experiences (plural), to emphasize this multiplicity that is inherent in the ability to experience.
- 3 Chronotopy and chronotopic can be translated as spatiotemporal, although in chronotopy the order of the words is reverse, as temporal – spatial. Lidov himself (as well as other scholars who have engaged with his concept of hierotopy) has recognized the importance of time in religious experience and has often dealt with it in his various research projects (for example, see his “Spatial Icons. The Miraculous Performance with the Hodegetria of Constantinople,” in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 349–372. Certainly, I do not claim that the interconnectedness of time and space is a novel idea in the study of hierotopy, but that it could be more systematically explored.
- 4 Lidov, “Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces,” esp. 39, 41–42.
- 5 Lidov, “Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces,” 48.
- 6 Bakhtin adds (emphasis mine):

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators *are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole*. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, *becomes artistically visible*; likewise, space becomes charged and *responsive to the movements of time*, plot and history... The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. *The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic*.

See Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. Notes towards a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84–85. Although I was not aware of Bakhtin's chronotope when I first conceived of hierochronotopy as a significant term, I was grateful to discover his work through a reference in Lidov's own writing (Lidov, "Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces," 48). Later in this paper I will return to Bakhtin's contributions to the cultural significance of spatiotemporal integration.

7 Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 84, writes:

This term (space-time) is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes... What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space).

8 Quote from Boethius's commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, "one of the basic logic texts of the medieval school," cited by Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory. An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 7.

9 For a discussion of the cultural specificity of time and various recent explorations of time in a number of disciplines see Christine Ross, *The Past Is the Present; It's the Future Too. The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 18–52. I thank Rachel Nelson, Ph.D. graduate from the program of Visual Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, for recommending this book to me.

10 Timefulness has been introduced to the literature of visual studies by Diana Rose, Ph.D. graduate from the program of Visual Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In her Ph.D. dissertation, *Living Time, Performing Memory: Maya Ceremonies of Foundation and Renewal*, Rose examines "how Maya notions of cyclical time were practiced, looking specifically at how the past, present, and future coexisted in particular moments." (<http://havc-dev.ucsc.edu/people/students/diana-rose>). This coexistence of past, present, and future that transcends a linear perception of time also reflects the timefulness (rather than timelessness) of the Christian God as eternal, and is echoed in the timefulness of Christian rituals in which God is present among his people. Spacefulness may be considered the spatial equivalent of timefulness, referring both to the Christian God as omnipresent, and to the evocation of various sacred places in the context of Christian rituals. The following discussion of hierochronotopy will shed more light on these concepts of ritual timefulness and spacefulness as interrelated.

11 This is a main concept in so-called "natural theology" according to which God's presence, power and wisdom are manifested in the world through the beauty, grand scale and balanced workings of nature. For a number of articles on this topic see *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially the essays by Christopher Rowland, "Natural Theology and the Christian Bible," 23–37; Wayne Hankey, "Natural Theology in the Patristic Period," 38–56; and Alexander W. Hall, "Natural Theology in the Middle Ages," 57–74. I thank Professor Stacy Kamehiro for introducing me to the concept of natural theology and recommending this book.

12 Lidov, "Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces," 33 discusses hierophany (visions or apparitions of the sacred or the divine) as leading to hierotopy (sacred places in which the divine is venerated), using as an example the dream of Jacob's Ladder and the holy stone he anoints on the location of his dream (*Genesis* 28:12–22). I argue that the dimension of time is interwoven with that of space in such cases (for example, Jacob's dream as a specific temporal occurrence at a certain point in his life is as significant as the location of said dream).

13 Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1956), 222–286. *Ibid.*, 266, Danielou describes the theology of Sunday as the first and eighth day of the week (especially in the works of St. Basil) as "the cosmic day of creation, the biblical day of circumcision, the evangelical day of the Resurrection, the Church's day of the Eucharistic celebration, and, finally, the eschatological day of the age to come."

14 Lidov, "Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces," 37, mentions the creation of the Tabernacle and its implements and the institution of its rituals (*Exodus* 25–40) as a hierotopic project. I emphasize the significance of the temporal dimension in this project, calling it hierochronotopic instead.

- 15 Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 139–161, 262–286.
- 16 A few basic publications on the extensively researched theme of Christian typology: Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality; Studies in Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1960); Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen; Anhang: Apokalyptik und Typologie bei Paulus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981); Sabine Schrenk, *Typos und Antitypos in der frühchristlichen Kunst* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1995).
- 17 Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality*, 48–56. The idea that Christ and his Church are the new temple that replaces the old place of Jewish worship (connected with the notion that the Church is the body of Christ) is prominent in the New Testament (e.g. *Matthew* 16:18, 26:61, 27:51; *Mark* 14:58, 15:38; *Luke* 23:45; *John* 2:19–20; *Romans* 12:5; *1 Corinthians* 3:16, 6:19, 10:16–17, 12:12–27; *2 Corinthians* 6:16; *Ephesians* 2:19–22, 3:6, 5:23; *Colossians* 1:18, 1:24; *Hebrews* 9–10 (esp. 9:11 and 10:20); *1 Peter* 2:4–5).
- 18 The bibliography on Christian concepts of Jerusalem, New Jerusalem and Heavenly Jerusalem (including the idea of Christian churches as Heavenly Jerusalem) is rather extensive. Here I mention just a couple of significant publications with references to further literature: *New Jerusalem. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009). *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, eds. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai and Hanna Vorholt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). For the Eucharist as a prefiguration of the heavenly banquet see Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 139–161.
- 19 For a detailed discussion of the Incarnation as a spatiotemporal circumscription of divinity see Maria Evangelatou, “The Holy Sepulchre and Iconophile Arguments on Relics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters,” in *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradicija, 2003), 181–204.
- 20 *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques*, ed. Émile de Strycker (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandinistes, 1961), 148–150. In Chapter 18, Joseph describes his experience of frozen time as he walks outside the cave of the Nativity to find a midwife for Mary. As time recovers its flow, Joseph finds a midwife and when they return to the cave, the birth of Jesus is heralded by a dark cloud replaced by a bright light unbearable to human eyes (Chapter 20, *ibid.*, 152–156).
- 21 Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 139–161. See also Maria Evangelatou, “Botanical Exegesis in God’s Creation: The Polyvalent Meaning of Plants on the Salerno Ivories,” in *The Salerno Ivories. Objects, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Francesca Dell’Acqua, Anthony Cutler, Herbert L. Kessler, Avinoam Shalem and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2016), 147, note 48 for further literature on the connection between the Eucharist as a reversal of the effects of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, through the sacrifice of Christ as the true fruit of the Tree of Life.
- 22 Gregory of Nyssa, Εἰς τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν τῶν ψαλμῶν, δεῦτερον βιβλίον, PG 44, 489CD, 569BC. Translated by Ronald E. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms. Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 126, 184.
- 23 “Inside and outside” are often identified with “sacred and secular” or “private and public” in modern Western thought, but in the medieval Christian world such distinctions were not clear-cut, so I avoid using them. In many cases, gates would define transitions between different degrees of sacred or public identity, rather than create binary distinctions between sacred and profane or public and private. For example, cathedral doors defined the inside as more sacred than the outside, but their exterior (e.g. the public square in front of them) was also sacred, and both the inside and the outside were public spaces for Christian congregations. Bernhard Siegert, “Doors: On the Materiality of the Symbolic,” *Grey Room* 47 (2012), 6–23, esp. 8–11, makes some relevant comments about doors defining the outside and inside, but he focuses on binary distinctions (like public and private) that do not entirely apply to medieval Christian culture. Indeed, on p. 12 he notes that in European tradition “until about 1650, intimate and publicly used spaces were not clearly separated.” I thank Professor Grant Bollmer for recommending this article and providing me with a copy.
- 24 Although Bakhtin, “Chronotope,” 248–249 defines chronotopic thresholds primarily in terms of crisis, I would argue that in Christian tradition they are points of transition that sometimes manifest a crisis (e.g. the Fall from grace) but more often than not lead to divine revelation or positive human transformation (see below). Siegert, “Doors,” 9–11, also considers the crossing of a door or threshold a crisis moment (on the basis of a rather random

- reference to different cultural traditions). On p. 10, he mentions Jacques Lacan's statement on the symbolic nature of doors: "In its nature, the door belongs to the symbolic order... The door is a real symbol, the symbol *par excellence*, the symbol in which man's passing through the cross it sketches, intersecting access and closure, can always be recognized."
- 25 Genesis 3:24 is traditionally depicted in Christian iconography as a closed door with a sword-bearing cherubim in front of it.
- 26 For a brief discussion and references to biblical and scholarly literature on this subject see Maria Evangelatou, "Threads of Power: Clothing Symbolism, Human Salvation, and Female Identity in the Illustrated Homilies by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 68 (2014), 279–281.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 280. *Matthew* 27:51; *Mark* 15:38; *Luke* 23:45.
- 28 Ann Kartsonis, *Anastasis. The Making of an Image* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 13, 26, 65 (note 77), 78, 85–86, 97, 165, esp. 231.
- 29 Margaret English Frazer, "Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise: Byzantine Bronze Doors in Italy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), 145–162, especially 162. Eadem, "Church Doors and the Gates of Paradise Reopened," in *Le Porte di Bronzo Dall'Antichità al Secolo XIII*, ed. Salvatorino Salomi (Rome, 1990), 271–278. Jadwiga Irena Daniec, *The Message of Faith and Symbol in European Medieval Bronze Church Doors* (Danbury, CT: Rutledge Books, 1999). William Melczer, *La porta di Bonanno nel Duomo di Pisa. Teologia ed immagine* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1988), 9–27, esp. 15–17. Prominent plant motifs (with possible paradisiacal allusions) are a common element in numerous Late Antique and Medieval church doors, as is obvious by the photographic material collected in *Le Porte di Bronzo*, 1990.
- 30 *Revelation* 21:21, 21:25 (the gates are never shut because there is no night in Heavenly Jerusalem).
- 31 *John* 10:9, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."
- 32 Mary as the gate through which God comes to earth (*Ezekiel* 44:1–3) and humans return to heaven (*Genesis* 28:17) are both very popular ideas in Eastern Orthodox and Catholic tradition. See the rich material (from both Greek and Latin authors) discussed by Richard Hillier, "Joseph the Hymnographer and Mary the Gate," *The Journal of Theological Studies* (new series) 36/2 (1985), 311–320.
- 33 *Matthew* 25:1–13. For a detailed discussion of the Christian significance of gates, in connection to the rich symbolism of trees (relevant to the following paragraphs), see Mary D. Edwards, "Duccio's 'Entry into Jerusalem': a new interpretation," *Studies in Iconography* 25 (2004), 47–88.
- 34 For relevant literature see Evangelatou, "Botanical Exegesis," 147, note 48.
- 35 Bakhtin, "Chronotope," 250–252.
- 36 For an overview of what we know about Bonanno see William Melczer, *La porta di Bonanno a Monreale. Teologia a poesia* (Palermo: Novecento, 1987), 33–43; and Melczer, *Pisa*, 29–31.
- 37 Melczer, *Pisa*, 29.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 39 For an overview of various dating hypotheses (none of which are conclusive) see *Mirabilia Italiae. Il Duomo di Pisa*, eds. Adriano Peroni and Cinzia Nenci (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1995), vol. 1, 387–395. Vol. 2, 163–193 includes excellent images in color of Bonanno's door.
- 40 Especially Melczer, *Pisa*, 381–387.
- 41 For all the above see Neta Bodner, "The Baptistery of Pisa and the Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre: A Reconsideration," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, eds. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai and Hanna Vorholt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 95–105. Also, Robert Ousterhout, "Flexible Geography and Transportable Topography," *Jewish Art* 23–24 (1997–1998), 393–404, esp. 394, 399–401.
- 42 André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages. Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 62–63. For a much more detailed treatment of San Ranieri and his communal and religious significance in Pisa see Gabriele Zaccagnini, *La "Vita" di san Ranieri (secolo XII). Analisi storica, agiografica e filologica del testo di Benincasa. Edizione critica dal codice C181 dell'Archivio Capitolare di Pisa* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2008), esp. 139–142 for Ranieri as an imitator of Christ; 59–71

for a discussion of chronology (Ranieri died in 1160 and his *vita* was written by his friend and canon of the cathedral of Pisa, Benincasa, a few years later); 91–92 for the burial of the saint, by 1165, next to the cathedral, probably at the exterior corner between the south transept and the nave; 97 for the final burial of the saint inside the south transept of the cathedral in 1688. It is possible that the institution of this final resting place prompted the naming of Bonanno's door at the south transept as "the door of San Ranieri."

- 43 Melzcer, *Pisa*, 381, 386.
- 44 This is particularly appropriate for a cathedral dedicated to Mary's Assumption, the event depicted (in the iconography of the Dormition) below the enthroned Mary. Through her Assumption, Mary was able to preside in heaven next to her son and intercede for humankind.
- 45 On inter pictoriality as the method by which meaning is constructed and developed through a network of visual interrelations between different scenes, either on the same or different monuments, see for example Cynthia Hahn, "Inter pictoriality in the Limoges Chasses of Stephen, Martial, and Valerie," in *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University in association with Princeton University Press, 1999), 109–124.
- 46 See Evangelatou, "Botanical Exegesis."
- 47 Melzcer, *Pisa*, 70–73. On the iconography of the Tree of Jesse with references to earlier literature see two articles in *The Tree. Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, International Medieval Research 20, ed. Pippa Salonijs and Andrea Worm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Marie-Pierre Gelin, "Stirps Jesse in capite ecclesiae: Iconographic and Liturgical Readings of the Tree of Jesse in Stained-Glass Windows," 13–34, and Pippa Salonijs, "Quasi lignum vitae: The Tree of Jesse, the Tree of Life, and the Mendicants in Late Medieval Orvieto," 213–242. For an overview of the symbolism of vegetal and floral motifs in Byzantine and Italian *Annunciation* scenes of the 11th–15th c. see also Hélène Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art Byzantin et Occidental du XI<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'Annonciation* (Venice: Inst. Hellénique d'Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines de Venise, 2007), 248–255 (tree), 255–258 (enclosed garden), 258–260 (vase with flowers).
- 48 Melzcer, *Pisa*, 219–220.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 233–239. Compare *Genesis* 3:15.
- 50 Melzcer, *Pisa*, 242.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 70–73. Melzcer also suggests that the tree in the *Annunciation* relates to the Tree of Life and alludes to the return to paradise through Mary and Christ.
- 52 For a discussion of this scene see *Ibid.*, 115–119, and esp. 119 for the connection between the *Fall* and the *Nativity*.
- 53 On the polyvalent symbolism of the palm in Christian culture see Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance. Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting*, *Arte e archeologia* 10 (Florence: Olschki, 1977), 279–286, and notes 66–70 below.
- 54 It is worthy of notice that all the scenes that represent directional movement (walking or riding) in the door's narrative scenes are aligned with the actual movement of the visitors entering the cathedral through the door: on the right door leaf, the Magi and Christ ride toward the left (on their journey to Bethlehem and in his entry to Jerusalem). On the left door leaf, the holy family and the holy women move rightward (on their journey to Egypt and their visit to Christ's tomb respectively). It is possible that these directional choices (not determined by iconographic standards) were *planned* to parallel the movement of the faithful, who when entering the cathedral would be visiting Christ like the Magi, traveling to safety like the holy family, entering Jerusalem like the followers of Christ in his entry to the city, and visiting Christ's tomb (the Eucharistic altar) like the holy women at his sepulcher. It is also worth noting that the scenes of Last Judgment and Paradise in the top rail of the door are among the few of this narrative cycle in which the main protagonists (Christ and Mary) look out at the viewer, as if addressing and including them in the scene and inviting them to experience salvation in the cathedral space behind the door—while in most other scenes the figures turn to each other, in an "internal" narrative interaction that does not directly address the viewers. The impression that the viewers are directly addressed as if they were participants of the relevant episodes in an expanded hierochronotopic sense could also be the case in the following six scenes (out of a total of 20 narratives in the main section of the door) in which Christ is frontal: Baptism—suggesting that through the ritual

- of baptism Christians are included in the Christian community and can enter through the doors to find salvation? Transfiguration—suggesting that the divinity of Christ is revealed to his followers inside the cathedral, e.g. through the Eucharist? Last Supper above the Transfiguration—here the apostles look out at the viewer, perhaps suggesting a connection between them through the ritual of the Eucharist that re-enacts the Last Supper? Arrest and Crucifixion—emphasizing that Christ suffered for the salvation of the onlookers? Ascension—where both Mary and Christ are frontal, as if inviting the faithful to follow in that ascension that leads them at the top rail of the door, right above, in which both welcome them in Paradise? Of course, in all these scenes the frontality of the figures is part of the established iconography, but it can also be read as a way to integrate the faithful into an extended hierochronotopic network of salvation history.
- 55 On the symbolism of right and left in Christian iconography see, for example, the many insightful references made by Penny Howell Jolly, *Made in God's Image? Eve and Adam in the Genesis Mosaics at San Marco, Venice*, California Studies in the History of Art/Discovery Series 4 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), that include not only the position of specific figures on the right or left of a composition, but also the representation of people using their right or left hand in particular moments of the narrative. Such references are made throughout the book, some examples being at pp. 11, 14, 27, 17, 32, 34, 36, 38, 47–58, 85, 100 (note 10), 104–105 (note 7 with further literature on the subject), 114 (note 1), 118 (note 22).
- 56 For the literary and visual tradition of the withered Tree of Paradise-Tree of Knowledge see Barbara Baert and Liesbet Kusters, “The Tree as Narrative, Formal, and Allegorical Index in Representations of the *Noli Me Tangere*,” in *The Tree. Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, International Medieval Research 20, ed. Pippa Saloniun and Andrea Worm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 174–175.
- 57 Melczer, *Pisa*, 72, points out, when he discusses the possible meanings of the tree in the *Annunciation*, that polyvalent interpretations are common in Christian iconography and theology. In addition, it should be remembered that polyvalence lies at the root of symbolic thought. Douglas Davies, “The Evocative Symbolism of Trees,” in *The Iconography of Landscape : Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 37, refers to Victor Turner’s *The Forest of symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 27 in connection to “the multivocal or polysemic nature of symbols, where one meaning is related to others in an increasingly deep pool of potential meanings available for exploitation by future interpreters.” See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption. Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991/1992), 116: “Medieval symbols were far more complex - polysemic as anthropologists say - than modern people are aware... we might find in medieval art and literature some suggestions of a symbolic richness our own lives and rituals seem to lack.”
- 58 Zaccagnini, *Ranieri*, 108. Antonino Caleca, “Architettura e scultura Romaniche,” in *Il Duomo di Pisa. Il Battistero – Il Campanile*, ed. Enzo Carli (Florence: Nardini Editore, 1989), 15.
- 59 The chapel was officially called *Cappella dell’Incoronata* (Chappell of the Crowned Virgin, i.e. of the Coronation of the Virgin). It included a 14th-c. mosaic of Mary’s Assumption and 16th-c. sculptures of Mary’s Assumption and Coronation. See *Mirabilia Italiae. Il Duomo di Pisa*, vol. 1, 469–472; vol. 2, 434–447.
- 60 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 470–471; vol. 2, 440–441.
- 61 The palm as a reference to the landscape of the Holy Land is emphatically mentioned by John White, “The Bronze Doors of Bonannus and the Development of Dramatic Narrative,” *Art History* 11/2 (1988), 162–163 (including references to the “Middle Eastern” clothing of the prophets in the bottom rail), 187.
- 62 Melczer, *Pisa*, 143–144.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 *Ibid.*, 165–166, 297, 381
- 65 The idea of Christ offering himself as bait to be eaten by the devil, so that through his death Jesus defeats death, is used by prominent theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechetical Oration*, 22–24, edited, commented and translated by James Herbert Srawley, *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 84–96, esp. 89 (comment on line 3), and 93 (comment on line 2), with reference to similar ideas in other Latin and Greek fathers, such as Gregory the Great and John of Damascus; and Augustine, *Sermons*, 261, translated by

- Henry Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 1977), 222.
- 66 See the references by Melczer, *Pisa*, 382, 391 (note 56) with mention to the following Biblical passages: *Exodus* 15:27; *Numbers* 33:9; *Deuteronomy* 2:8, 34:3; *1 Kings* 9:26; *2 Kings* 14:22, 16:6; *2 Chronicles* 8:17, 26:2, 28:15; *Judges* 1:16, 3:13. In Christ's Entry into Jerusalem (*John* 12:13) palm leaves are used as a symbol of triumph. See also Penelope C. Mayo, "The Crusaders under the Palm: Allegorical Plants and Cosmic Kingship in the 'Liber Floridus,'" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), 29–67, esp. 34–38. In his discussion of the palm Melczer mentions its rich symbolism in Christian culture, but doesn't systematically explore its polyvalence on Bonanno's door as I attempt to do here.
- 67 Melczer, *Pisa*, 382, with reference especially to *Psalms* 92 (91 in the Septuagint), lines 12–15.
- 68 For this use of palm leaves see Jay Rubenstein, "Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem: The View from Twelfth-century Flanders," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, 265, notes 1–2 with references to further literature.
- 69 Melczer, *Pisa*, 382. See for example *1 Chronicles* 3:5; *1 Kings* 6:29, 7:36, which mention palms on the temple walls. According *1 Kings* 6:32, palms were sculpted on the door leading to the Holy of Holies. In addition, the temple in the vision of Ezekiel has palms on the pillars of all three gates (east, north, south): *Ezekiel* 41:16/22/26/31/34/37.
- 70 See the examples mentioned by Mayo, "The Crusaders under the Palm," 34–37. For the idea that Christ and his Church are the new temple that replaces the old place of Jewish worship see also note 17 above.
- 71 For relevant literature see Evangelatou, "Botanical Exegesis," 149–150, note 58.
- 72 This detail also recalls references to holy men living on the walls of Jerusalem during the twelfth century (San Ranieri being one of them for some time, according to his twelfth-century biography). They continued this practice up until the city was captured by Saladin in 1188. See Zaccagnini, *Ranieri*, 143–144.
- 73 Bonanno creates a visual link between the *Washing of Feet* and *Christ in Majesty* through the architectural structures above Jesus, which echo each other across the two scenes: a dome-like structure hovering above Christ's head in the former episode, and a ciborium above his throne in the latter.
- 74 See note 28 above for relevant literature on the connection between church doors and paradise.
- 75 Indeed, in the arches of the central colonnades flanking the nave (in its easternmost part), black voussoirs do not span the entire width of the soffit but approximately half of it (occasionally with some irregularities of shorter or longer black blocks). This evokes even more vividly the effect of serrated palm leaves, but with reversed dark and light effects: here the leaves seem made out of the white marble and the spaces between their edges are filled in by black, as if these unwithering stone palm trees are made out of light standing against a night sky.
- 76 Ousterhout, "Flexible Geography," 402.
- 77 Especially on the side of the central colonnade facing outward (on which mosaics cover the wall immediately above the arches, without marble revetment between them, as in the side facing inward). Although some scholars have hypothesized that the *ablaq* inner arches of the Dome of the Rock date to a later period, there is plenty of compelling evidence to suggest that they are actually original to the building. See H. R. Allen, "Observations on the Original Appearance of the Dome of the Rock," *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam* (*Oxford Studies in Islamic Art*, 9), vol. 2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 197–213, esp. 199–206. <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4798305>. To Allen's argument one may add that the red and white *ablaq* voussoirs of the Great Mosque of Cordoba built and repeatedly enlarged in the eighth to tenth centuries (Figure 6.17) might have been intended as a reference to the holy sites of the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus (both of which have black and white *ablaq* voussoirs). This would be especially appropriate not only because of the importance of these two earlier monuments but also because the Muslim rulers of Cordoba who founded and subsequently enlarged the Cordoba mosque were the last remaining descendants of the Umayyad dynasty responsible for building the Great Mosque of Damascus and the Dome of the Rock in the seventh and eighth centuries and may have wanted to evoke past glories of their dynasty in their new great religious center. For a brief but informative discussion of the black and white voussoirs of the Pisan cathedral as a reference to the *ablaq* of the Dome of the Rock see Terry Allen, *Pisa and*



- the Dome of the Rock*, 2nd ed. (Occidental, CA: Solipsist Press), URL: <http://www.sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/pisa.dor.htm#archie>, accessed January 14, 2018.
- 78 For a detailed discussion of this architectural form and its significance see Jelena Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Bonanno is actually using a composite form that comprises of an arched gate-like crenellated structure with two columns (*Annunciation*), or a ciborium with two columns (*Presentation to the Temple, Temptation of Christ*), or a wider arch with crenellations (*Last Supper*), above all of which he depicts a dome resting on five columns.
- 79 For relevant dates and photos see the chapters on the cathedral, baptistery and bell tower in *Il Duomo di Pisa. Il Battistero – Il Campanile*, ed. Enzo Carli (Florence: Nardini Editore, 1989).
- 80 Visually, the elevation of Bonanno's five-column canopy above a ciborium or crenellate arch (see note 78), also recalls the Dome of the Rock raised on the Temple Mount. At that time Christians conflated the Dome of the Rock with the Temple of Solomon (see note 76 above). It is significant that the interior of both the Dome of the Rock and the Rotunda of the Anastasis were dominated by circular arched colonnades (and the Rotunda's colonnade was copied at the exterior of the Pisa Baptistery, note 41, above). If Bonanno had intended such intervisual references to cross the mind of at least some well-informed viewers, then the hierochronotopic significance of his architectural choice would have been enhanced (by connecting the sacred narrative of the door episodes with both Jerusalem and Pisa of the twelfth century).
- 81 The concept of Mary as the Church is widespread in the literary and visual record of medieval Christianity. See, for example, Hélène Papastavrou, "L'idée de l'Église et la scène de l'Annonciation. Quelques aspects," *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 21 (2000), 277–240; eadem, *L'Annonciation*, 177–355. For references to Mary as container/provider of the Eucharist in textual and visual sources of Western Europe see Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 101, 103, 212.
- 82 These observations are in line with similar comments Lidov makes about hierotopy, for example in works mentioned in note 2 above.
- 83 Nele Bemong and Pieter Borghart, "State of the Art," in *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, eds. Nele Bemong, Pieter Borghart, Michel De Dobbeleer, Kristoffel Demoen, Koen De Temmerman and Bart Keunen (Gent: Gent Academia Press, 2010), 6–7.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 8–14 (and p. IV of the book's preface).
- 85 Here I use language employed to discuss chronotope in contemporary classroom pedagogy. See Raymond Brown and Peter Renshaw, "Positioning Students as Actors and Authors: A Chronotopic Analysis of Collaborative Learning Activities," *Mind, Culture and Activity* 13/3 (2006), 247–259. I owe the term "experiential learning" as a reference to religious experience in the context of ritual to Tara Field, Ph.D. student in the Visual Studies Program of the History of Art and Visual Culture Department, University of California, Santa Cruz.
- 86 See note 57 above for the polysemy of medieval symbols. For memory and remembering as creative processes in medieval culture see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1–4. Also, Carruthers and Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory*, 1–4.
- 87 Bemong and Borghart, "State of the Art," 7. They refer to the now published book by Bart Keunen, *Time and Imagination. Chronotopes in Western Narrative Culture* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).
- 88 See note 16 above for basic literature on typology.
- 89 Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church. History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 401–405, 499–501, 641.
- 90 See note 17 above.
- 91 John Spencer Hill, *Infinity, Faith, and Time. Christian Humanism and Renaissance Literature* (London: Queen's University Press, 1997), 128 (see also his analysis in 127–129). For the cyclical elements in the Christian perception of time see also Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 262–286.

## **Part II**

# **Icons and holy objects in sacred space**



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## 7 The marvellous Hierotopy of the golden altar in Milan

### A visual Constantinopolitan fascination?

*Ivan Foletti*

The golden altar in the Basilica of St. Ambrose in Milan is one of the most fascinating objects surviving from the Carolingian domination of Milan (Figure 7.1).<sup>1</sup> Decorated with embossed gold and silver reliefs, it can be considered an expression of the Carolingian domination in Lombardy. There is, first of all, the question of economics: it was most likely the reforms promoted by Adalard that provided the Milanese metropolitan bishop, Angilbert II (824–859) with the material means to carry out such a luxurious object – in addition to the precious metal leaf, the altar is covered with enamels and precious stones.<sup>2</sup> The choice of honouring Ambrose so ostentatiously must be read through the decades following Charlemagne's conquest of Northern Italy (774).<sup>3</sup> According to the evidence, Ambrose was not particularly well-liked by the Lombards and was probably used by the natives, from the seventh century on, to stigmatise them, the new lords of Italy.<sup>4</sup> Hence, giving special prominence to the bishop saint had to have been a political tool, a statement of continuity with the imperial past, as well as an affront to the defeated.

In this context, the object itself stands out in an absolutely exceptional way: the quality of the embossing – which probably takes after the empire's book culture – and the complex theological and political conception of the narrative are just a few of the aspects that allow us to evaluate the work's conceptual importance. Some aspects, however, have remained in the shadows throughout the history of study. One is the altar's liturgical and ritual use. The second aspect I believe requires further clarification is the unusual iconography of the altar as a whole. I would like to dedicate this paper to exploring these two aspects.

#### **A marvellous hierotopy**

As far as I am aware, apart from an unpublished study by Barbara Bruderer and a few lines by the author of this paper, no work has been dedicated to the ritual and liturgical use of the golden altar.<sup>5</sup> Nor has the issue of its liturgical orientation been clarified with certainty. Following the general practice, described by Sible de Blaauw, one might assume that the celebrant would face the apse and therefore the golden antependium.<sup>6</sup> In the Milanese case, based on some gestures in the Tridentine liturgy, the original situation may have been different, with the celebrant facing the people.<sup>7</sup> Bruderer however proved, through a careful analysis of Berthold's work, that at the time it was written, in the twelfth century, the celebrant had to turn towards the apse, thus following the principle outlined by de Blaauw.



*Figure 7.1* Golden Altar, Church of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, Italy, 826–859. Photo: © Domenico Ventura.

If the situation described by Berthold confirms the state of things during the twelfth century, it's fair to imagine that this was also the case in the years of Angilbert II.<sup>8</sup> However, we do not have any documentary evidence to this effect. A series of images depicting Ambrose as celebrant on the back of the golden altar could serve as partial proof – in that case, however, the situation seems quite ambiguous. In the scene showing the bishop sleeping before the funeral of St. Martin of Tours, Ambrose has his back turned to the assembly (Figure 7.2). The same episode, depicted a few decades later in the basilica's apse, seems to confirm this interpretation (Figure 7.3). For the miracle of the cripple, however, the situation seems different, with the bishop placed behind the altar (Figure 7.4). Bruderer emphasises a central point: it is reductive to imagine that the orientation of the liturgical celebration should define the use of the altar, which should instead be taken, according to her, as the true epicentre of the ritual action. In this sense, we can understand the episode of Christ's Presentation at the Temple, where all the figures in the scene surround a small altar, which appears similar to the model of the golden altar that Angilbert II dedicated to Ambrose (Figure 7.5). The altar should therefore be imagined as activated by the celebrants' movement on all sides, with some rituals that could take place around the altar. To this effect, a valuable clue may be found in the covering of the nearly contemporary Drogo Sacramentary (845–855).<sup>9</sup> On this artefact's ivory covering, we find depictions of liturgical rites, which are logical, considering the manuscript's contents. Similar to the golden altar, these reliefs present the *mensa* as an epicentre of dynamic movement – a situation confirmed by the text, which describes movement through the altar space.<sup>10</sup> It is well known that Carolingian liturgy was filled with processions and movements inside the church itself. It is no coincidence that six other altars are still documented in the Basilica of St. Ambrose during the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup> In this regard, the high altar should therefore be perceived as being amplified by the movement of bodies – a

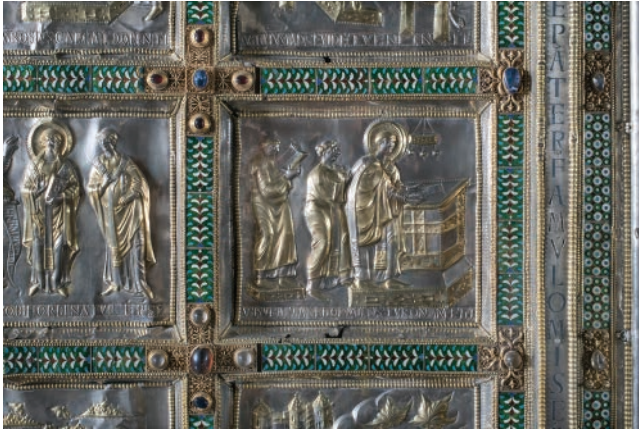


Figure 7.2 Ambrose sleeping during the liturgy, Golden Altar, Church of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, Italy, 826–859. Photo: © Domenico Ventura.



Figure 7.3 Ambrose sleeping during the liturgy, Apse Mosaic, Church of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, Italy, beginning of the thirteenth century. Photo: © Domenico Ventura.

movement complemented by thuribles being swayed by the deacons, candles carried by other members of the clergy, and by liturgical chants and incense smoke. It is in this hierotopy that the golden altar should be understood: as an object activated during the liturgy that becomes a sort of visual fulcrum for the entire basilica.<sup>12</sup> The play of light emphasising the object's importance must have been especially key in this regard. Reliefs, gems and



*Figure 7.4* The miracle of the cripple, Golden Altar, Church of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, Italy, 826–859. Photo: © Domenico Ventura.



*Figure 7.5* Presentation at the Temple, Golden Altar, Church of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, Italy, 826–859. Photo: © Domenico Ventura.

embossing must have created, with the movement of the flames, the illusion of a sort of golden hearth. The entire altar space became a “Spatial Icon,” to use a term coined by the recipient of this *Festschrift*.<sup>13</sup> During the Eucharistic liturgy, this symphony of media must also have been completed by the moving images on the celebrants’ liturgical garments. We know that, in the Carolingian era, copes could be decorated with both crosses and Christological images.<sup>14</sup> The moving celebrant before the altar’s front side thus became an extension of the antependium, plausibly replicating a part of the altar’s central theme – the cross and the image of Christ in Glory. Unfortunately, we have no material data on the matter; however, I think it is plausible to imagine that liturgical garments were envisioned in harmony with the front of the altar. The altar was just one splendid and exceptional element of an installation, completed by a performance, so similar in some respects – as concerns the visual strategies – to certain expressions of the art of the time.

### **Milan, late antiquity and Byzantium: a visual fascination?**

As suggested by the title of this paper, however, the golden altar may also be interpreted as being part of a dialogue, somehow unexpected, with the visual world of Constantinople at that time. At first glance, the abundance of narrative scenes on the golden altar could not be further from the rigorous and elegant aesthetic of the last years of the “struggle about images.”<sup>15</sup> However, when the golden altar is observed “from afar,” that is, from the nave and outside the presbytery, the tiny scenes disappear (Figure 7.6).<sup>16</sup> What emerges in their place, similar to how it is represented on the altar itself, is a splendid chest marked by large crosses on the three sides visible to the common believers. In other words, from afar, the altar becomes a golden background to the crosses, also golden and drawn with thin dark lines. This is a very different aesthetic choice from the previous altar antependia that we know of and does not have, to my knowledge, parallels in the West, in those years or in previous centuries.<sup>17</sup> Considering



*Figure 7.6* Golden Altar, Church of Sant’Ambrogio, Milan, Italy, 826–859. Photo: © Domenico Ventura.



reliquaries, however, the sign of the cross is much more common in the late antique period, from small silver reliquaries to those shaped as sarcophagi in marble.<sup>18</sup> Yet again, however, in contemporary reliquaries, the presence of the cross is much more discreet, as in the case of St. Stephen's Purse.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, though the ideas are similar for earlier reliquaries, the material execution and the visual effect in particular are very different. Not to mention the fact that late antique reliquaries were for the most part unseen, as they were located below the altars of churches. The only monument in gold with an aesthetic that is comparable to the golden altar is the famous Gospels of Teodolinda, thought to be a gift from Gregory the Great to the Lombard queen (Figure 7.7).<sup>20</sup> A similar solution, however, is also featured in the decorations of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and finds clear comparisons in eighth-century decorations, of which the most iconic is certainly the apse of Hagia Irene in Constantinople (Figures 7.8 and 7.9).<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, Alžběta Filipová relativised, in a convincing way, the common assumption that the treasure of Monza was almost exclusively a gift from Gregory the Great to Teodolinda.<sup>22</sup> In her view, at least the ampoules probably arrived in Lombardy directly from the Holy Land to strengthen the image of Teodolinda as the new Helen. In this regard, I believe it cannot be excluded that the famous binding could be considered an Eastern product. Moreover, even if the object was created in Rome – as the very fine cloisonné adorning it might suggest – we know that Rome had very close relations with



Figure 7.7 Drawing of the Gospels of Teodolinda, 600 c. Drawing: © Kristýna Smrčková, Center for Early Medieval Studies, Brno, 2021.



*Figure 7.8* Cross, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, Turkey, 532–537. Photo: Anna Kelblová 2018 © Center for Early Medieval Studies.



*Figure 7.9* Cross in the Apse, Hagia Irene, Constantinople, Turkey, eighth century. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Constantinople in the years of Gregory the Great.<sup>23</sup> From the studies of Natalia Teteratnikov and Alessandro Taddei, we also know that the Hagia Sophia of Justinian must have been aniconic already, decorated only with golden crosses.<sup>24</sup> When we compare the Justinianian crosses still visible today with those in the Gospels of Teodolinda, we find that their shape is similar. Whether produced in Rome or elsewhere, the precious

binding, decorated with elegant aniconism, seems to belong to an elite culture similar to that leading to the design of the decorations of Hagia Sophia.

However, it seems difficult to imagine that, in the design of the altar, the visual reference could be a monument so closely linked to Lombard power. As I have indicated in recent studies, it seems that the decorations of the altar as a whole – especially as concerns the back side – and especially the promotion of the Ambrosian cult, should be considered a clear break with the previous lords of Lombardy, who did not have much affection for Ambrose.<sup>25</sup>

We know that the revival of the Ambrosian cult in Milan was closely linked to the concept of a return to ancient and imperial roots, promoted by the Carolingian court. In this context, the reference to late antique models would take on those models' meanings. As the famous case of the Vienna Coronation Gospels demonstrates, the mediation of early Christian models and aesthetics could pass through a Byzantine filter.<sup>26</sup> An obvious mediation, given the undisputed splendour of Constantinople. What I would like to suggest here is that one of the inputs leading to the designer's choices for this object was a knowledge – active or passive – of the aesthetic canons in vogue in Constantinople at the time.

This choice could not have been iconological in any way: given at that time the association of aniconic compositions with the “struggle about images,” an altar covered with dozens of figures could certainly not be perceived as a veiled iconophobic manifesto. The hypothesis of a Constantinopolitan visual element would mean that the choice was only visual. It remains to be understood if this connection is possible and, if it is, what channels it could have passed through.

At a very general level, it is first of all important to remember Cesare Alzati's study that demonstrated, mostly based on documentary and liturgical evidence, an important and incessant dialogue between Milan and Byzantium throughout the Early Middle Ages and up until the twelfth century.<sup>27</sup> As regards cultural material and artistic exchange, Carlo Bertelli was a great supporter of the direct relationships between Milan and Constantinople. He returned to the issue many times, specifically with a monographic article dedicated to the topic in 1988.<sup>28</sup> In his view, the most explicit proof of this was found in the altar, ciborium and apse of St. Ambrose, alongside Castelseprio.

While the question of the apse now seems difficult to sustain – Irene Quadri and I proposed interpreting the Greek inscriptions rather like an echo of the Petrine apse under Innocent III, which also matches the form of the mosaics – the other monuments mentioned seem to strengthen Bertelli's reasoning.<sup>29</sup> The most extraordinary example remains that of Castelseprio. Now dated, thanks to archaeometric analysis, to a period between the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth century, Castelseprio documents not only the presence of an Eastern workshop in Lombardy, but also the fascination local patrons had for this type of aesthetic.<sup>30</sup> As for the case of the Basilica of St. Ambrose, Bertelli's suggestion has never been doubted. He identified characteristic Constantinopolitan techniques in the architectonic solution of the ciborium's small dome, most likely made in the years when the altar was created. Moreover, in the case of the altar itself, Bertelli, followed by Sandrina Bandera, found iconographic elements – in particular in the scene of the Transfiguration – that in his opinion must have been reacting to new iconographies born post-iconoclasm.<sup>31</sup> An important note: while the composition recalls Byzantine Transfigurations, this certainly cannot be said about the shape, which is nearer to the experience of Carolingian illuminations, in the case of the front side.<sup>32</sup> The monuments mentioned show very

different relations: circulation of people, a technical *savoir faire* and the migration of concepts of Constantinopolitan origin.

This important reception in Milan corresponds to a more moderate situation on the Constantinopolitan side, where the cult of the Milanese saints is attested in the monastery of Theodore at an unspecified date. Even more interesting is the mention of a church dedicated to Saint Nazarius, reconstructed by Basil I (867–886) over the ruins of a building.<sup>33</sup> The information we have is too tenuous to go too far. Based on Filipová's studies, we know that Milan's relic contacts circulated widely in Europe at the end of the fourth century and then again at the end of the fifth century, but later experienced a progressive but systematic oblivion.<sup>34</sup> The early construction of a church dedicated to the Lombard martyrs could therefore date back to that moment. We also know that Angilbert II himself was thoroughly interested in the local saints: besides working on the tomb of Ambrose, Gervasius and Protasius, he was involved in the burial of Victor and Satyrus.<sup>35</sup> From Galvano Fiamma, we also know that, most likely, the bishop fragmented the saints' bodies, at least in part – Galvano informs us of a tooth extracted from Ambrose.<sup>36</sup> We have no evidence of the works on the tomb of Saint Nazarius sponsored by Angilbert; however, the fact that he had himself buried there, following his death on 13 December 859, testifies to the Milanese bishop's immense devotion to this Milanese saint.<sup>37</sup> To suppose, therefore, that Angilbert had at least made a visit to the tomb of this Ambrosian saint seems very plausible. I wonder then if we can connect the works sponsored (or perhaps even completed?) by Basil I with a gift of relics from Milan, which would give a new inclination to the cult of the Milanese saints in Constantinople.

That the Milanese saints enjoyed a certain popularity in the following centuries is also documented in Chapel 31 in Göreme, now inaccessible. There, Jerphanion made out images of Gervasius, Protasius and Celsus and supposed there had been the original presence of Nazarius himself.<sup>38</sup> The frescoes, dated to the eleventh century based on Cathérine Jolivet-Lévy's photographs, thus attest to the continuity of the cult of the Milanese saints in the Eastern Empire, even after the year 1000.<sup>39</sup>

We have, on the one hand, a strong Eastern presence attested in Milan throughout the Early Middle Ages, with some "peaks" in the Carolingian age. On the other hand, we have the revival of the cult of Nazarius, a saint particularly close to Angilbert II, in Constantinople, in the years just after the death of this prelate. That being the case, is it possible to read a Constantinopolitan contribution in the golden crosses that dominate the composition of the golden altar of the basilica of St. Ambrose?

We have no evidence of Angilbert II's presence in Constantinople, while we do know about one of his stays in Rome.<sup>40</sup> The journey of Arnulf II (998–1018) shows that a Milanese bishop went on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople around 1000.<sup>41</sup> We also know that, between 842 and 843, a Carolingian diplomatic mission went to Constantinople. The purpose of this journey was to form a political alliance against the Saracens.<sup>42</sup> Louis II, son of Lothair I, the king of Italy, was meant to lead the Frankish army. To strengthen this alliance, Louis should have married Theodora, daughter of Theophilus (who died before the ambassadors' arrival in Constantinople). The delegation was led by Hilduin of St. Denis, and we have no document that testifies to the presence of a Milanese emissary among the ambassadors.<sup>43</sup> The political relationship between the kingdom of Italy and Constantinople is, however, clearly documented. Through the ambassadors, both objects and ideas could travel. The revival of the cult of Nazarius in Constantinople in the following decades may also suggest that, among the gifts by the king of Italy, maybe in connection with the Milanese archbishop,

devoted to Nazarius, there were the relics of a Milanese saint. The Franks definitely visited Hagia Sophia, which, just a few months after the death of the last iconoclastic emperor, must still have had the essence of its Justinianic and iconoclast decor, certainly covered with golden crosses.

We do not know for sure which route the emissaries took to return to the West, but at the end of 843 they were in Aachen, where they met the emperor.<sup>44</sup> It seems plausible that they followed the route of another diplomatic mission, in 811–813, and that from Constantinople they navigated through Zadar to Venice to then continue on foot, probably crossing through Milan.<sup>45</sup>

With the current research, we cannot go beyond these data that, as a whole, provide important clues to understanding the design of the Milanese golden altar. Whoever made this object, which seems like a golden chest covered with golden crosses from a distance, must have been aware of the tradition of both late antique reliquaries and contemporary ones. However, I don't believe he had seen any of the Eastern aniconic monuments in person. The considerable fame of Hagia Sophia, with its elegant and sober lexis, must have reached Milan, however. Alluding to it, more conceptually than directly, became a subtle way to refer to imperial splendour: to ancient splendour – it was known that Hagia Sophia had been built by Justinian – but also to the current empire that Western emissaries saw regularly in the cathedral of Byzantium, which had not yet been transformed by the triumph of the orthodoxy.

In conclusion, the golden altar of the basilica of Saint Ambrose is a major monument not only for its quality, but also for the refined design that goes with it. What I have tried to explain here is that this object cannot be understood outside of its hierotopy, of its place as a performative installation. The aesthetic choices that accompany this monument, on the other hand, certainly demonstrate an impressive awareness of Carolingian manuscripts. The general design, however, seems to owe to another visual way of thinking, that of late antique and “iconoclast” aniconism. In all probability, this is not a repetition of “models,” but a reference to what remains, in myth and reality, the most imperial church of the Mediterranean: Hagia Sophia.

## Notes

- 1 The last two publications about the altar are: Ivan Foletti, “Le fléau des hérétiques. Ambroise de Milan, l'exclusion 'ethnique' et l'autel d'or de la basilique Ambrosiana,” *Bulletin Monumental* 175/II (2017), 99–112, 201–203; Carlo Bertelli, “L'altare di Volvinio nella basilica milanese di Sant'Ambrogio,” *Rivista dell'Istituto per la Storia dell'Arte Lombarda* 5 (2012), 41–54. Between the recent studies cf. Carlo Bertelli, “L'altare di Sant'Ambrogio a Milano,” *FMR. Edizione italiana* 19 (2007), 56–74; Eric Thunø, “The Golden Altar of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan. Image and Materiality,” in *Decorating the Lord's Table. On the Dynamics between Image and Altar in the Middle Ages*, eds. Soren Kaspersen and Eric Thuno (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 63–78; Cynthia Hahn, “Narrative on the Golden Altar of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan: Presentation and Reception,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), 167–187. The previews bibliography is summarised by Sandrina Bandera, “L'altare di Sant'Ambrogio: indagine storico-artistica,” in *L'altare d'oro di Sant'Ambrogio*, ed. Carlo Capponi (Cisinello Balsamo: Silvana, 1996), 73–111. For the construction of the altar at the Carolingian time cf. Sible de Blaauw, “Il culto di Sant'Ambrogio e l'altare della basilica Ambrosiana a Milano,” in *I luoghi del sacro. Il sacro e la città fra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, ed. Fabrizio Ricciardelli (Firenze: Pagliai, 2008), 43–62. The main ancient publication is certainly: Victor H. Elbern, *Der karolingische Goldaltar von Mailand* (Bonn: Rapid Druck, 1952).
- 2 Bognetti, Gian Piero, “Milano dopo la conquista franca,” in *Storia di Milano. Vol. II, Dall'invasione dei Barbari all'apogeo del governo vescovile (493–1002)* (Milano: Treccani,

- 1954), 303–340; Annamaria Ambrosioni, “Gli arcivescovi nella vita di Milano,” in *Milano e i Milanesi prima del Mille (VIII–X secolo). Atti del X Congresso internazionale di studi sull’alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 1986), 85–118; 100–102.
- 3 cf. Gian Piero Bognetti, “Milano dopo la conquista franca,” in *Storia di Milano. Dall’invasione dei Barbari all’apogeo del governo vescovile (493–1002)*, II (Milano: Treccani, 1954), 303–340; 303–324; Stefano Gasparri, *Italia longobarda. Il regno, i Franchi, il papato* (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012), 100–114.
- 4 Foletti, “Le fléau des hérétiques.”
- 5 Barbara Bruderer, *La posizione del celebrante nella liturgia eucaristica nel rito ambrosiano medievale* (Roma, 2015) [unpublished text].
- 6 Sible de Blaauw, “In vista della luce: Un principio dimenticato nell’orientamento dell’edificio di culto paleocristiano,” in *Arte medievale: Le vie dello spazio liturgico*, ed. Paolo Piva (Milano: Jaca book, 2010), 15–45.
- 7 Pietro Borella, *Il Rito Ambrosiano* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1964), 154.
- 8 Margherita Giuliana Bertolini, “Angilberto,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Roma: Treccani, 1961), vol. 3, 382–384.
- 9 Jean-Pierre Caillet, “Il Sacramentario di Drogone di Metz: modalità e circostanze della realizzazione di un libro liturgico carolingio,” in *Come nasce un manoscritto miniato*, eds. Francesca Flores d’Arcais and Fabrizio Crivello (Modena: Panini, 2010), 81–92; Roger E. Reynolds, “Image and Text: A Carolingian Illustration of Modifications in the Early Roman Eucharistic Ordines,” *Viator* 14 (1983), 59–82.
- 10 See the notice of the BNF, Latin 9428, <http://archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc13014t> (accessed 31 July 2017).
- 11 Gualberto Vigotti, *La diocesi di milano alla fine del XIII secolo. Chiese cittadine e pievi forensi nel “liber sanctorum” di Goffredo da Bussero* (Roma: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1974), 28.
- 12 Alexej Lidov, “Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Space as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History,” in *Ierotopija: issledovanie sakral’nych prostranstv; materialy meždunarodnogo simpoziuma*, ed. Alexej Lidov (Moskva: Radunica, 2004), 32–33.
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- 14 Joseph Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1907); Maureen C. Miller, *Vestire la Chiesa. Gli abiti del clero nella Roma medievale* (Rome: Viella, 2014), 37–50.
- 15 Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine iconoclasm* (London: Bristol Classic Press, 2012).
- 16 Cf. Thunø, “The Golden Altar of Sant’Ambrogio,” 63–78.
- 17 Denis Valenti, *Le immagini multiple dell’altare: dagli antependia ai polittici. Tipologie compositive dall’Alto Medioevo all’età gotica* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2012).
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- 19 Renate Prochno, *Die Stephansbursa: die Sprache der Steine; Edelsteinallegorese im frühen Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012).
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- 21 Natalia Teteriatnikov, *Justinianic Mosaics of Hagia Sophia and Their Aftermath* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017); Katarína Kravčíková, *The Church of Hagia Eirene in Constantinople* [bachelor thesis] (Brno: Masaryk University, 2017).
- 22 Alžběta Filipová, “On the Origins of the Monza Collection of Holy Land ‘Ampullae’: The Legend of Gregory the Great’s Gift of Relics to Theodelinda Reconsidered,” *Arte lombarda* 1/2 (2015), 5–16.
- 23 Cf. Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi, “Il VI secolo: da Simmaco (498–514) a Gregorio Magno (590–604),” *La committenza artistica dei Papi a Roma nel Medioevo*, ed. Mario D’Onofrio (Roma: Viella, 2016), 109–143; Alessandro Taddei, “Il VII secolo: da Sabiniano (604–606) a Sergio I (687–701),” *La committenza artistica dei Papi a Roma nel Medioevo*, ed. Mario D’Onofrio (Roma: Viella, 2016), 145–180.

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- 25 Ivan Foletti, *Oggetti, Reliquie e Migranti. La basilica Ambrosiana e il culto dei suoi santi (386–973)* (Roma: Viella, 2017).
- 26 Cf. for example Otto Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970); *Das Krönungsevangeliar des Heiligen Römischen Reiches. Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum Weltliche Schatzkammer Inv.-Nr. XIII 18. Interimskommentar zur Faksimile-Ausgabe. Faksimile-Verlag*, ed. Fabrizio Crivello (Munich: Faksimile-Verlag, 2012); Matthias Exner, “Anspruch und Autorität eines kaiserlichen Modells: zur Rezeption der Buchmalerei vom Hof Karls des Großen,” Karl der Große, eds. Bernhard Pinsker, Annette Zeeb (Petersberg: Hessischen Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 2014), 33–54.
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- 28 Carlo Bertelli, “Castelseprio e Milano,” in *Bisanzio, Roma e l’Italia nell’Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: CISAM, 1988), vol. 2, 869–914.
- 29 Ivan Foletti, Irene Quadri, “L’immagine e la sua memoria: l’abside di Sant’Ambrogio a Milano e quella di San Pietro a Roma nel Medioevo,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 76/4 (2013), 475–492.
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- 32 Victor H. Elbern, *Vulvinio*, in *Enciclopedia dell’Arte Medievale*, ed. Maria Anagiola Romanini (Roma: Treccani, 2000), 750–752.
- 33 Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire byzantin I: Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique III: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris: Publications de l’Institut français d’Études byzantines, 1969), 359.
- 34 Alžběta Filipová, *Milan sans frontières. Les reliques au service de la diffusion de l’art et de l’architecture milanais pendant l’antiquité tardive* (Rome: Viella, 2018).
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- 36 Galvano Fiamma, *Chronicon maior*, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ms. Ambros., 275 inf. fol. 172, published by Aristide Calderini, *La zona monumentale di San Lorenzo in Milano* (Milano: Ceschina, 1934), 83.
- 37 Bertolini, “Angilberto,” 384.
- 38 Guillaume De Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l’art byzantin. Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925–1942), vol. I.1, 253–258; 257–258.
- 39 Cathérine Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce un siècle après Guillaume de Jerphanion*, avec la collaboration de Nicole Lemaigre Demesnil (Paris: Éditions Geuthner, 2015), 63–64, 56–57.
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- 44 Lapidge, *Hilduin of Saint-Denis*, 51.
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## 8 The patriarchal quarters in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia

Where was the patriarch's throne?

*Natalia Teteriatnikov*

Through its history, Hagia Sophia, the central cathedral of Constantinople, had multiple functions in different compartments within the building. Because there are scarce literary sources and an absence of original furnishing, these many functions have been curtailed. In situ markings on the pavement of the south gallery are a case in point. They are located on the marble floor revetments near the north side of the east wall of the central bay; the original furniture fitting, however, is missing (Figure 8.1). These floor markings were recorded by Robert Van Nice in his survey plans of the south gallery, but they were largely overlooked thus posing a question of their identity (Figures 8.2 and 8.3).<sup>1</sup> This essay examines these markings, their location in the gallery, and their relevance to a neighboring mosaic decoration in the central bay. It concludes that these floor markings are probably remains of the patriarch's throne and therefore were a part of the sacred space of the south gallery of Hagia Sophia.

### **The floor marks and their location**

The central bay of the south gallery is located between the southeast and southwest main piers (Figure 8.2). It is separated from the southwest bay by a marble screen; the latter has a small door indicating that the access to this area of the gallery was restricted. Early scholarship attributed this screen to the time of Justinian.<sup>2</sup> It was later recognized that this screen was added after the construction of the patriarchate, sometime in the early seventh century.<sup>3</sup> Scholars agree that the south gallery's eastern bay served as an imperial *metatorion*,<sup>4</sup> whereas the central bay was reserved for the patriarchate.<sup>5</sup> There are three rooms of the patriarchate, which are adjacent to the south gallery: the room over the south vestibule, the room over the ramp, and the alcove.<sup>6</sup> These rooms provided access to the central bay of the gallery through the room over the ramp via the staircases within the southeast and southwest piers.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the central bay of the south gallery had direct access to the patriarchal palace. However, it is uncertain how the floor markings on the opposite side of the northeast area of the central bay possibly relate to the patriarchate.

### **Markings and their identity**

The marble floor near the north side of the east wall shows a distinct set of markings (Figures 8.3–8.5). The veining of the gray Proconnesian marble slabs on the pavement confirms that they belong to the original Justinianic construction of the pavement. The deeply carved markings form a rectangular base that probably came from a piece



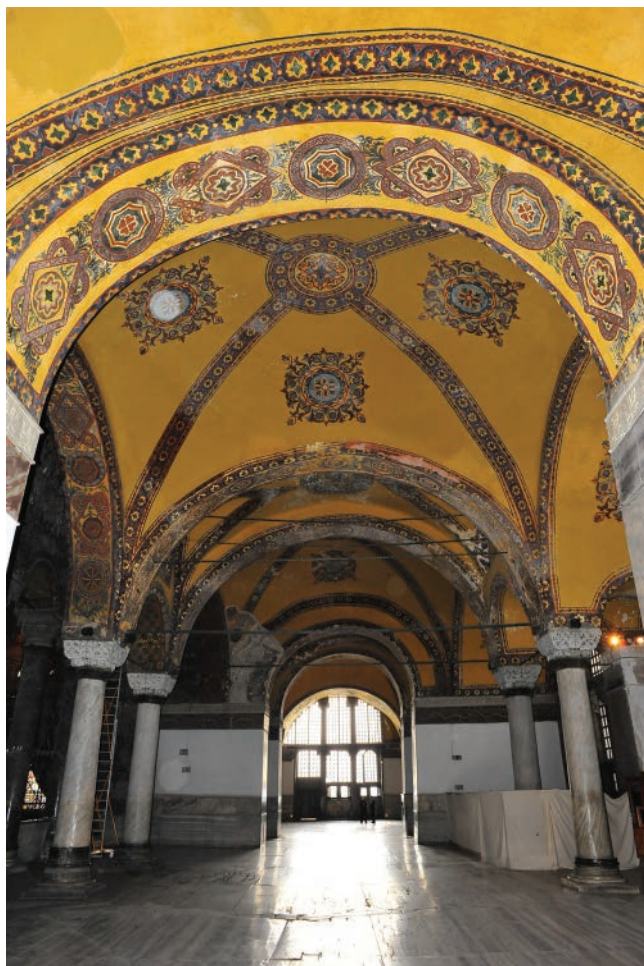


Figure 8.1 Hagia Sophia, view of the south gallery, looking east. Photo: author.

of furniture measuring  $150 \times 187$  cm with an open area in front. These markings appear as deep horizontal and vertical grooves of different sizes possibly for fitting marble slabs. There was a back piece, which was likely adjacent to the wall. It is important to note that marble horizontal revetments on corresponding east wall do not belong to the original construction of the Justinian church. Different colors and veins in the marble point to different marble types. These revetments replaced the originals at a later time. The front opening suggests that the markings could have come from a marble throne if the opening was reserved for stairs.

In early churches, including Hagia Sophia, the patriarch's throne or seat during the liturgy was in the *synthronon* located in the central apse.<sup>8</sup> Because of the reduction of clergy in churches after iconoclasm, *synthronon*—which had been a common feature of the central apse of Early Byzantine churches—went out of fashion and was omitted in most church buildings.<sup>9</sup> In the Middle Byzantine period, the bishop's throne was

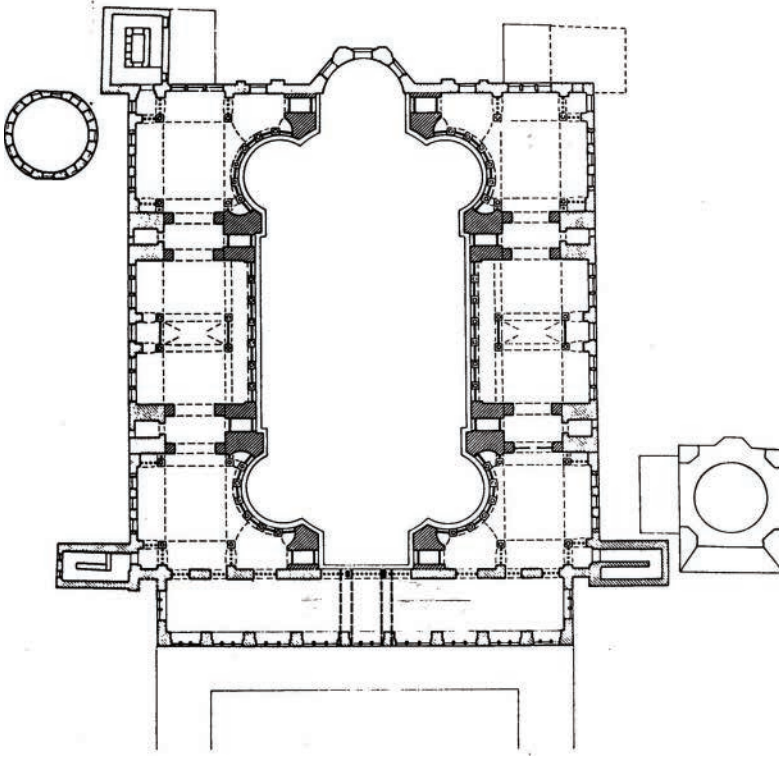
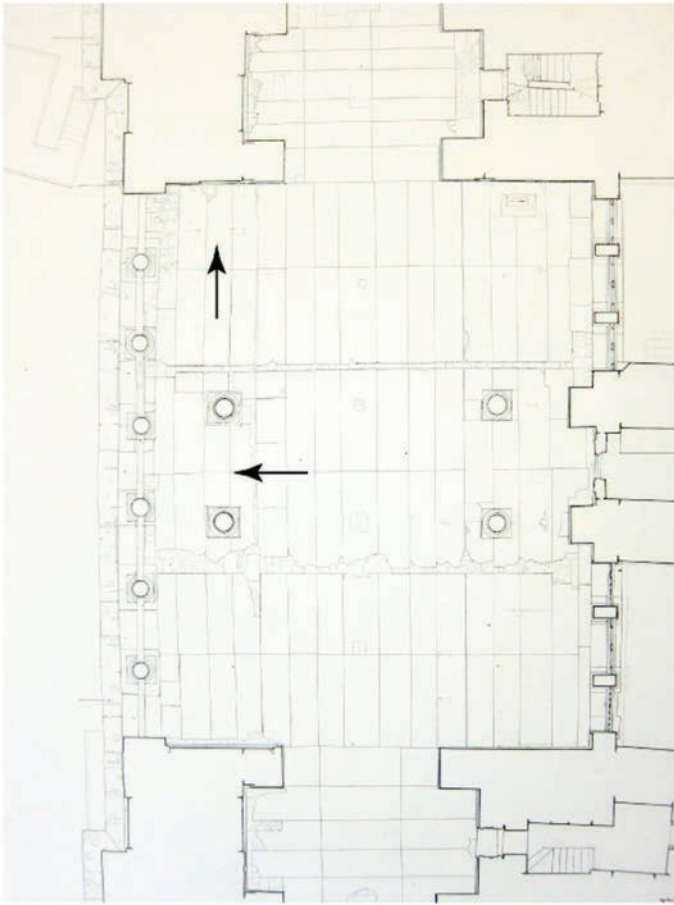


Figure 8.2 Hagia Sophia, Istanbul: Plan at gallery level. Drawing: Wikimedia commons <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hagia-Sophia-Grundriss.jpg>.

located in the nave. As for Hagia Sophia, several sources suggest that the patriarchal throne was in the sanctuary. The *Life of Patriarch Nicephoros*, the patriarch of Constantinople, relates the story that after an inauguration of Nicephoros as Patriarch in Hagia Sophia, he mounted on the “lofty” patriarchal throne.<sup>10</sup> The text implies that it is a special patriarchal throne though its location was not mentioned. *Vita Ignatii, the Life of Patriarch Ignatios*, written by Nicetas David Paphlagonian between 913 and 963, provides further information, indicating that the patriarchal throne was in the sanctuary.<sup>11</sup> Neither of these texts mentioned the synthronon but rather a patriarchal throne, which was probably located at the time in Hagia Sophia’s sanctuary. It has been suggested that the location of the throne in the Late Byzantine period was in the north aisle near the sanctuary,<sup>12</sup> yet several examples of stone bishop’s thrones from Middle and Late Byzantine period show their location in the nave and close to the sanctuary. One can be seen in the twelfth-century cathedral in Gelati, Georgia,<sup>13</sup> located on the north arm of the crossing adjacent to the pillar. Another example is the fifteenth-century throne from the cathedral at Mtzcheta in Georgia.<sup>14</sup> This throne is located in the nave, and it is attached to the west wall of the south arm of the church. It is made of stone and painted in fresco. Its lower part consists of four piers in the corners and side slabs in between. Its front has an opening for an entrance. The bishop’s



*Figure 8.3* Plan at gallery level, central areas. Robert L. Van Nice [1965]. *Saint Sophia in Istanbul: an architectural survey*. Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.

throne in the Assumption Cathedral of Moscow Kremlin is another example; this sixteenth-century example is adjacent to the southeast column facing the sanctuary.<sup>15</sup> All these thrones are attached to the church's wall or a pier. The upper parts of these thrones have baldachin resting on four piers; because they were made to include a seat, they are of a larger size, approximately comparable to the size of the floor markings in the south gallery of Hagia Sophia.

There were also wooden thrones. The church of St. George in Greek Patriarchate, Constantinople, for example, still houses the patriarch's wooden throne. This throne is attached to a southeast pillar of the nave. An inscription on the gable dates it to 1577. The throne faces the nave and is elevated above the floor level with steps in front. Thus, the aforementioned examples show similarity in basic design of such thrones. Their base plan resembles the plan of the Hagia Sophia's floor markings, suggesting that it could be the remains of a base of a bishop's throne. The necessity for a second patriarch's throne in the gallery is unclear and will be explored herein.



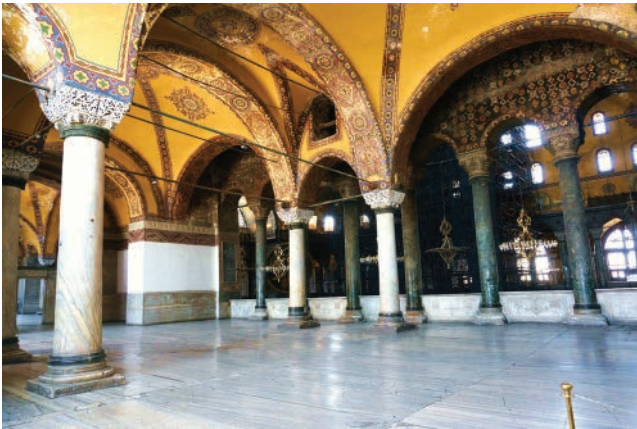
*Figure 8.4* South gallery, central bay, northeast area. Photo: author (taken in 2016).



*Figure 8.5* South gallery, central bay, northeast area, east wall and pavement. Photo: author (taken in 1983).

**Function of the throne**

To address the necessity of a patriarch's throne in the south gallery, we must turn to its location. The floor markings from the throne under discussion are located on the south gallery just above the emperor's throne, which originally stood somewhere on the ground level below.<sup>16</sup> The markings of the proposed patriarch's throne on the south gallery above it are situated approximately near the center of the north side of the east wall and close to the marble balustrade (Figures 8.2, 8.4, and 8.5). This location has an advantage because it is in close proximity to a balustrade, from which the central nave is visible (Figures 8.6 and 8.7). This location also allows the patriarch easy access to the throne from the patriarchal palace via the door in the central bay of the gallery. The patriarch could reach the ground floor through the staircases in the southeast and southwest buttresses or by staircase connecting the Holy Well with the door in the east wall of the south gallery. This door is still visible in the east wall; the staircase is no longer exist (Figure 8.1).



*Figure 8.6* South gallery, central bay, looking northwest. Photo: author.



*Figure 8.7* Hagia Sophia, central nave, looking east. Photo: author.

But when would the patriarch use this proposed throne? The close proximity of the floor markings to the marble barrier is important; the latter separates the gallery from the central nave, allowing the patriarch to attend the liturgy on the gallery where he could hear it well. Literary sources confirm that on several occasions patriarch attended church services and remained on the gallery. The Russian archbishop Anthony of Novgorod, for instance, who visited Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in the year 1200, testified to this event.<sup>17</sup> In a few passages, Anthony noted that the patriarch was present on the gallery on several occasions, including Sundays and the Great Feasts. Anthony described a particular part in the church service to which he was not accustomed, called *asmatike akolousia*.<sup>18</sup> This ceremonial service was unique. It was an entirely chanted service, performed according to a style of the cathedral rite of the Great Church. This service presumably existed in Hagia Sophia from the time of the emperor Justinian up to the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204. It survived in the post-Byzantine period in provinces such as Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki and was described by the archbishop Symeon of Thessalonika.<sup>19</sup> Anthony, however, was one of the last witnesses of this unique service in the Great Church before the Latin occupation. This service was an important section within asthmatic Sunday matins. It includes vigil in the narthex; morning psalmody in the nave; an office of urban praise and thanksgiving to God featuring the most venerable cathedral psalms and canticles; and then the order of the Resurrection Gospel, a majestic sequence of psalmody and cathedral ceremonial with proclamation of Christ's Resurrection. Finally, there was a prayer in the sanctuary and service of supplication and benediction focusing on the needs of the local liturgy assembly. The time of the service, which was mentioned by Anthony, is important because it was the time of morning psalmody when the Psalter was read and the attendants were appointed to seat. The psalmody in the central nave starts after the priest blesses the church's entrance in the narthex and enters the nave through the main doors, followed by the bishop who goes to his *stasidion* (a seating place). The priest goes to the main doors of the sanctuary, and the people then enter the nave through the side doors.<sup>20</sup> The text makes clear that the priest went to the sanctuary but that the bishop went to his *stasidion* at a different location. Symeon of Thessalonika does not specify where the bishop's *stasidion* is located in Hagia Sophia, Thessalonika. Since Anthony mentioned that the patriarch blessed *psaltai* (probably during the beginning of psalmody), he most likely went to the south gallery where the throne was presumably located. Thus, if the throne was located close to the barrier, it could possibly have been a seating place for the patriarch during the psalmody, when seating was required. This is another important piece of evidence that concerns the location of the patriarch during this service. Anthony also described that the psalmody as a part of the *orthros* service "is first sung in the narthex in front of the royal doors, then they enter and sing in the middle of the church."<sup>21</sup> Anthony pointed out that the location of the singers (*psaltai*) was in the middle of the church where the ambo was located. Based on the *ekphraseis* of Paul the Silentiary, Ronald Mainstone suggested that *psaltai* stood near the ambo.<sup>22</sup> The ambo was located at the center of the nave and close to the east as it is seen on his reconstruction plan.<sup>23</sup> The patriarch most likely stood at the center behind the balustrade between the third and fourth columns and in front of the *psaltai* (Figures 8.6 and 8.7). Therefore, the information provided by Anthony about the location of the singers and the position of the patriarch further reinforces the suggestion that in the Middle Byzantine period, the *psaltai* stood near the ambo. The patriarch blesses the *psaltai* probably with a *dikirion* (a double candle).<sup>24</sup> From the gallery side, a small central arch separating the gallery from the barrel vault

marks the place near the balustrade. This arch is flanked by wide lateral arches. Many pilgrims left graffiti on top of the balustrade where the patriarch performed the blessing, indicating the importance of this place. Evidently, the location of the throne at the center of the north part of the east wall of the south gallery made it convenient for the patriarch to attend the service. He could easily descend the throne, reach the balustrade, and bless the psaltai during the service. The throne could also be used on the occasions when the patriarch stayed in the gallery and especially in those days when he was not celebrating the liturgy.

One such occasion was described in the above-mentioned *Vita Ignatii*.<sup>25</sup> The story can be summarized as follows. On November 23, 867, Ignatios was installed for the second time on the patriarchal throne. He went up from the Holy Well of Hagia Sophia via a staircase. This staircase originally connected the Holy Well with the east wall of the south gallery; currently, only a wooden door remains in this wall (Figure 8.1). The Holy Well was connected with the south gallery via wooden staircase to which the door of the south gallery was attached.<sup>26</sup> This door is located in the east wall of the eastern bay of the south gallery. Ignatios should have gone to the south gallery and to the central bay presumably where he was greeted by a delegation of the patricians, who were making obeisance to him and clasping his right hand. Going to the south gallery was thus part of the ceremony of the consecration of the patriarch.

### **The mosaic decoration and its relevance to the place of the patriarchal throne**

The architectural setting of the central bay and the surviving mosaic decorations also point to a place where the patriarch blessed the psaltai. This location marks the center of the tunnel vaults that are adjacent to the gallery arcade. From the gallery side, the center of the tunnel vault is marked by a small arch supported by two columns (Figures 8.2 and 8.6). Large lateral eastern and western arches flank this arch. The central small arch appears as a sort of canopy under which the patriarch most likely stood. Its vault is decorated with ornamental mosaics consisting of alternating circles and diamonds (Figure 8.8). Circles enclose an X motif whereas diamonds enclose quatrefoil motif. Above this arch, there is a little window opening; its soffits are adorned with plant motifs and a Cyprus tree at the center, evoking a paradisiac image.

The decoration of the lateral eastern and western arches is also of interest (Figure 8.6). Both arches are decorated with ornamental patterns enclosing diamonds and circles, with plant motifs in between, depicted on golden grounds. Similar arches in the north gallery also have ornamental decoration, but the background is made of gray marble tesserae.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that the south gallery was important enough that artisans saved the gold tesserae for the background of the arches in the south gallery where the patriarchal quarters were located. Another unusual feature is that only the eastern lateral arch, which is closer to the location of the proposed throne, received an additional decoration of three crosses; the central cross is enclosed in a diamond and two Greek jewel crosses in medallions are depicted on both sides (Figure 8.9). These crosses are not centered at the top of the arch but shifted toward the east in the direction of the proposed throne. So when the patriarch was seated on a throne, he could see three crosses in a closer distance. In addition, the east wall of the tunnel vault has a unique image of the Latin cross with floriated bottom arm (Figure 8.10). It is hardly visible now due to the over-painting of this wall during the Fossati's restoration (1847–1849).<sup>28</sup>



*Figure 8.8* South gallery, tunnel vault, central arch, mosaics. Photo: author.



*Figure 8.9* South gallery, eastern lateral arch, mosaics. Photo: author.





*Figure 8.10* South gallery, tunnel vault, east wall, mosaics. Photo: author.

The cross is large and occupies almost the entire wall. It is the only cross found in the walls of the north and south tunnel vaults, suggesting that it was specially made to mark a place, most likely designated for the patriarch. He would have been able to see it when he turned toward the east in the direction of the apse.

This decoration was most likely made in the first decade of the tenth century together with the portrait of emperor Alexander, located on the west wall of the tunnel vault of the north gallery.<sup>29</sup>

## **Conclusion**

A study of the gallery plan as well as the location of the floor marks, the historical sources, and the liturgy of Hagia Sophia suggests that the floor marks in the north side of the east wall of the south gallery probably belonged to the throne of the patriarch of

Hagia Sophia. The plan of the throne is similar in shape and size to the surviving late Byzantine thrones. The necessity of a throne in this part of the gallery was dictated by the presence of the patriarch in the gallery during some church services such as the cathedral rite of the *astmatiki akolousia*. It emphasizes the ceremonial appearance of the patriarch, who was visible for the congregation and for *psaltai*, a phenomenon that refers to an imperial cathedral rite typical of Hagia Sophia. The throne was also probably used by the patriarch when he was not celebrating the liturgy, as well as on other occasions such as the consecration ceremony. The mosaic decoration further suggests that the large single cross was included in the decoration of the east wall of the tunnel vault and that the three crosses adorned the east lateral arch. These crosses also shifted toward the east side of the arch. All these aspects of the decoration further emphasize the special context of this part of the south gallery. If my suggestion is correct, the location of the floor marks shed light on a complex use of the south gallery by the patriarch, which in turn contributed to multiple activities in the sacred space of this unique church.

## Notes

- This article is a tribute to Alexei Lidov whose contributions inspired many scholars to further explore the function and meaning of the sacred space in Byzantine and Russian churches.
- \* The paper on this subject was presented at the Byzantine Studies Conference in 1996: "The Patriarchal Quarters in the South Gallery of Hagia Sophia: Where was the Patriarch's Throne?" *Byzantine Studies Conference, Abstracts of Papers October 24–27, 1996* (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996), 26.
- 1 Robert L. Van Nice, *Saint Sophia in Istanbul: An Architectural Survey*, 2 pts (Washington, DC, 1965), 18.
  - 2 Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 95. E. H. Swift dated the screen to the ninth century. See Emerson H. Swift, *Hagia Sophia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 78.
  - 3 Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi and Claudia Barsanti, eds., *Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli: L'arredo marmoreo della grande chiesa giustiniana* (Vatican City, 2004).
  - 4 Cyril A. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1959), 73–92, note 11; Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Etude sur le "césaropapisme" byzantin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996); *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), repr. 2007, 96–97, note 25. George P. Majeska, "The Emperor in His Church: Imperial Ritual in the Church of St. Sophia," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997), 1–11.
  - 5 Mango, *The Brazen House*, 52, 64. Robin Cormack and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the South Vestibule and Ramp," *DOP* 31 (1977), 175–251; Ken Dark and Jan Kostenc, "The Patriarchal Palace at Constantinople in the Seventh Century: Locating the Thomaites and the Makron," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 64 (2014), 33–40.
  - 6 Cormack and Hawkins, "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the South Vestibule and Ramp," 175–251; Dark and Kostenc, "The Patriarchal Palace at Constantinople in the Seventh Century," 33–40.
  - 7 Cormack and Hawkins, "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul."
  - 8 Richard Krautheimer (with S. Ćurčić), *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (first published 1965; rev. ed. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 102, 520; Mathews, *Early Churches*, 139, 143, 150–151, 170.
  - 9 Robert G. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 2008), 14.

- 10 “Life of the Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople,” trans. Elizabeth A. Fisher, in *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), 64.
- 11 Nikita Paphlagonian, *Vita Ignatii*, PG 105, 544; *Vita Ignatii Patriarchae*, trans. Andrew Smithies, with notes by John M. Duffy, Dumbarton Oaks texts 13 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), 85, 87.
- On the date, see Romilly James Heald Jenkins, “A Note on Nicetas David of Paphlago and the vita Ignatii,” *DOP* 19 (1965), 241–247, esp. 241.
- 12 See George P. Majeska, *Russian travelers to Constantinople in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies (Washington DC, 1984), 30 and 221.
- 13 For the throne in Gelati, see Jelena Bogdanović, *Framing of the Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 83–85.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Irina Kachalova, *The Moscow Kremlin: Cathedral of the Assumption* (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1995), 37.
- 16 On the basis of floor marks, Mathews suggested that emperor’s throne was located in the southern aisle. See Mathews, *The Early Churches*, 132–134. Other scholars do not accept this hypothesis: Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre*, 96–97 and note 25; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks research library and collection, 1984), 132, 139–154.
- 17 Ch. M. Loparev, ed., *Kniga palomnik: Skasanie mest sviatykh vo Tsargrade*, Antonija Arhiepiskopa Novgorodskago v 1200 godu, in *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskij Sbornik*, 17/3 (1899), 17.
- 18 Alexander Lingas, “Sunday Matins in the Byzantine Cathedral Rite: Music and Liturgy.” PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1996, 12, 139–154.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Vassa Larin, “The Origins and History of the Royal Office at the Beginning of the Matins,” *Bollettino della Badia Graca di Grottaferrata* s. 5 (2008), 199–218, esp. 200.
- 21 Loparev, ed., *Kniga palomnik*, 17. See also *ibid.*, 201.
- 22 Rowland J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian’s Great Church* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 229; Neil Moran, however, placed the *psaltai* on both sides of solea. See Neil K. Moran, *Singers in Byzantine and Slavonic Painting* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 26–32.
- 23 Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia*, 271, A2.
- 24 Vassa Larin, “The Dikerion and Trikerion of the Byzantine Pontifical Rite: Origins and Significance,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 74 (2008), 417–430.
- 25 Nikita Paphlagonian, *Vita Ignatii*, 85.
- On the date, see Jenkins, “A Note on Nicetas David of Paphlago and the vita Ignatii,” 241–247, esp. 241.
- 26 Mango, *The Brazen House*, 152–160.
- 27 Natalia B. Teteriatnikov, *Justinianic Mosaics of Hagia Sophia and Their Aftermath* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017), 155–160.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 152–154.
- 29 Natalia Teteriatnikov dates the mosaics to the reign of Leo VI (866–912). See Natalia B. Teteriatnikov, “Why Is He Hiding? The Mosaic of Emperor Alexander in Hagia Sophia, Constantinople,” *Arte medievale* ser 4/2 (2012), 61–76. Paul Underwood attributed the mosaics to the reign of the emperor Alexander (ca. 913). See Paul Atkins Underwood and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, “The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul: The Portrait of the Emperor Alexander. A Report on Work Done by the Byzantine Institute in 1959 and 1960,” *DOP* 15 (1961), 187–215.

## 9 Seeing toponymic icons hierotopically

*Annemarie Weyl Carr*

In honoring Alexei Lidov, this article offers thoughts on the spaces of kinship carved out by toponyms on icons. The theme is not obviously apt, for Lidov deplores the conception of icons as flat panels painted with set iconographic formulae. This fueled his formulation of hierotopy, the special artistry of working in the medium of sacred space. The icon in his view is inherently spatial, as he illustrates with a favored image in which a worshipper, standing under the image of Christ high in the inverted cup of the dome of a church, bends to see the same image at the base of the communion cup.<sup>1</sup> The icon exists in the space between two images: the image before the eye, and the image behind it that makes the scene recognizable. Since both perception and memory are multi-dimensional, the icon cannot meaningfully be confined to the flat, two-dimensional picture; it occurs as a multi-sensory response within a spatial setting. As Lidov says, “A spatial linking of the two images occurred, wonderfully illustrating the Byzantine concept of icon and iconicity in which the image could never be conceived as a flat picture, but always as a spatial image.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet the painted icon, too, animates the area between image and audience, and it, too, assumes cogency in the interval between the image seen and the image remembered. Thus, it, too, poses issues of space. The toponymic icon does this with paradoxical literalness. The toponym says essentially “the icon of this place.” This is true for the miracle-working panel for which the label was coined, but it is necessarily untrue of that panel’s labeled replicas. Between them, they establish their own kind of “spatial linking of two images,” often across very considerable distances. This paper endeavors to look hierotopically at the toponym’s performance. In doing so, it also honors Gordana Babić, for this volume originated in Belgrade, where her work was done. She devoted a number of articles to epithets on icons, and particularly to toponyms.<sup>3</sup> Toponyms intrigued her as thermometers of religious intensity<sup>4</sup>: the emergence of a toponym tells us that devotional expectation has gathered with particular warmth and density around a given place and artifact; the radiative force of that expectation, in turn, is registered in replicas bearing the name. Since toponyms adhere to specific images as other kinds of epithets do not, they serve readily as identifiers. Especially as toponyms migrate from their originating icons to named replicas, they function ever more widely as iconographic identifiers. This has left its mark on the way they are studied, which is heavily iconographic, emphasizing taxonomy over the dynamics of devotion.

In the language of iconography, toponyms behave like homonyms. They flatten identity, contracting the distances between multiples of the same name. A type of a given name “is” that name: we readily say of an icon of the relevant type that “this is a

Hodegetria,” or “a Vladimirskaia.” But can an icon bearing another’s name ever really be that icon? It is true that to function iconically, the toponymic replica cannot just refer; it must give presence to the model’s capabilities. Yet, as Katherine Marsengill notes, one does not ask one icon to do another icon’s miracles.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, to respect the special power of their toponymic model, the replicas must very clearly *not* be what their names say. The name says “the icon at this place,” where the original is. The replicas are elsewhere. They must be separate entities, functioning at a distance by the power of the icon that *is* where they themselves are not. Operating in terms of equation,  $x = y$ , iconography offers a planar and essentially static view of toponymy. It does not begin to exercise the considerable paradoxes that toponyms pose for canonical icon theory. Not only, as Babić notes, are human artifacts unacceptable in theory to function as iconic archetypes—as occurs when a replica assumes the name not of Mary herself but of a toponymic icon—but there can be no question of equation between the original and a replica bearing its toponym, for an icon is not its original.<sup>6</sup> Toponymic icons challenge iconic orthodoxy in ways that iconography elides. Thus, they need to be seen not just iconographically, as replications of certain two-dimensional configurations, but hierotopically, as negotiations between potentially charged three-dimensional fields of ritual and emotional interchange, drawing into play the space—the necessary distance—between the model, which is in the place it names, and the replica, which is not.

Revered icons with their own toponyms are known throughout the Byzantine Empire from at least the eleventh century onward. But named replicas of such icons are far rarer except in the case of great Constantinopolitan icons, and even among them, the stable linkage of name to type can be problematic. An early intimation that a name forged outside the capital had migrated from its originating image onto replicas may be offered by three late twelfth-century uses of the name Panagia Lampe or Lampene in Crete,<sup>7</sup> but since the name alone survives, it is hard to know if it adhered to a consistent image; the use of the name “Arakiotissa” on two contemporary but iconographically quite different paintings in the church of 1192 at Lagoudera on Cyprus may give a feeling for the fluidity of such naming at this point.<sup>8</sup> Only in the late fourteenth century do the names of regionally venerated miracle-working icons begin to accompany consistent images on panel-painted replicas: among the earliest are the Pelagonitissa, Tricheirousa, and Kozinitza in Serbia.<sup>9</sup> Thus, toponymic replicas seem to have been a late and largely post-Byzantine enthusiasm, which has stimulated rather limited curiosity among Byzantinists. Nonetheless, Byzantium has yielded some useful questions.

Babić herself, in her inquiry into the degrees of signification in icons’ epithets, wondered what the difference was between a replica with the toponym and one without.<sup>10</sup> The diffusion of an iconographic type often far exceeded the radius within which a given toponym was known. But even within the range of a name’s familiarity, using it was a matter of judgment, as indicated by an icon described by the late twelfth-century Holy Land pilgrim, John Phocas, in the monastery of Calamon.

In its apse is represented the Mother of God holding the Saviour Christ in her arms, which in its composition, its colour and its size, resembles the icon of the Most Holy Hodegetria in the capital. It is reported on the basis of ancient traditions that this was painted by the hand of the Apostle and Evangelist Saint Luke. The many miracles and the awesome fragrance which issued from the icon argue for the truth of the report.<sup>11</sup>

Phocas points out the image's kinship to the Hodegetria. But he does not therefore give it the name of Hodegetria, or ascribe its miracle-working capabilities to that likeness. Instead, he ascribes them to its possible Lukan authorship. For all the visual kinship, neither he nor the Calamon fathers felt impelled to say "this is a Hodegetria." Even in the face of acknowledged kinship, then, naming was a matter of choice, with varied degrees of signification. That obligations and even liabilities could affect the use of a toponym emerged in Nicolas Oikonomides' playful but provocative discussion of an icon named Hodegetria that was exploited as a financial asset in the early fourteenth-century Peloponnesos.<sup>12</sup> "This was obviously a copy," he writes, "because the original Hodegetria never left Constantinople; but it was recognized as a valuable copy, which means that there must have been an agreement with the owners of the original."<sup>13</sup> He suggests that it operated "under a 'franchise'."<sup>14</sup> How, and how widely might such arrangements have been formulated? Was Eustathios of Thessaloniki's delicacy in speaking of the icon "who has among us the appellation of Hodegetria" an obligatory gesture of deference to the owners of the original?<sup>15</sup> That a toponym could entail reciprocal obligations has rarely been drawn into the discussion. Nor has the possibility that such a name could be a liability. The name Hodegetria added value to the icon in the Peloponnesos, but the icon at Calamon was more valuable without it, as an autonomous entity and potential Lukan autograph.

Given such possible entailments, were all toponymic replicas supposed to do the same thing? Liliya Evseeva and Marina Shvedova indicated that replicas of the famous icon of the Mother of God Portaitissa on Mt. Athos were of two kinds—one identical in measurements and nearly identical in iconography to the original; the other smaller, of varied scale, and iconographically more similar to the great icon's kissing icon—and they suggested that the two types went out with different tasks, the former to reproduce both the material form and miracle-working power of the famous model; the latter to transmit devotees' prayers to and through it.<sup>16</sup> This evidence is very late, but the diagnostic importance of identical measurements has been encountered already in John Phocas' description, and Oikonomides implies that replicas could be of greater or lesser value. As the tasking of replicas becomes more varied, the spaces of identity that toponyms carved out become more intricately layered.

The frenetic oscillation between identity and difference that Marie Gasper-Hulvat imagines in the face of the toponymic replica is hard to align with the spontaneous simplicity with which a flower or coin is placed before the icon bearing another's name,<sup>17</sup> yet this gesture often designates a space of difference, more ample than in the case of the replica without epithet, but not so intense as before the toponymic original itself. It is a space that invites questions like those above: what conditioned the choice to include the name, what entailments accompanied it, how variable the invitation of the name was, and how layered the response might be?

To ponder the role of toponyms for icons that bear them, I'll turn to a big, bilateral panel from the church of the Panagia Kivotos in Agios Theodoros Agrou, Cyprus.<sup>18</sup> Its obverse bears the Mother of God in the posture known from the miracle-working icon of Mary at the Cypriot monastery of Kykkos (Figure 9.1)<sup>19</sup>; its reverse has a magic cross. Its obverse also bears the epithet, *Kykkotissa*, the customary toponym of the Kykkos icon. The Agios Theodoros panel's late thirteenth-century attribution complicates this label: the epithet is not attested otherwise until around 1500, and even the Kykkos icon's *Diegesis* seems not to have included its name until the Ottoman centuries.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is hard to know when the name "*Kykkotissa*" emerged as a recognized



*Figure 9.1* Panagia Kivotos. Agios Theodoros Agrou, church of the Panagia Kivotos. Late thirteenth century. Photo: Sophocles Sophocleous.

toponym. The Agios Theodoros image has sustained later interventions, as the disparate colors of the Virgin's sleeves show; thus, its epithet may well be a later addition. But even if it is an addition, it still raises the question: what changes with the presence of a toponymic epithet?

Seeing what threshold might have been crossed with the addition of the Kykkotissa's name means watching the various early replicas as they went about their lives in their communities, to see what happened to them, and what it meant for an icon to bear the name of another icon. Icons with the type of Kykkos' icon emerged on Cyprus with abrupt, implausible force at the end of the thirteenth century. A full eleven panels are known from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries<sup>21</sup>; a further eight replicas from the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries yield nineteen in all from

the centuries before the Ottoman conquest in 1570/71.<sup>22</sup> Seven of the nineteen are named, four with the name Kykkotissa: the panel at Agios Theodoros, and three from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>23</sup> The initial eleven replicas command particular attention, for with the possible exception of the three latest, they predate the devastating fire that consumed Kykkos Monastery in June 1365. The fire forms the core of the icon's *Diegesis* and provided the context for its first recorded miracle: it alone survived the conflagration. No information exists of miraculous activity at Kykkos before 1365, but the replicas leave no doubt that its icon had attracted intense attention already before that date. Only the Agios Theodoros icon offers any intimation that it might have had a toponym at this point, but as a thermometer, the replicas register a fever pitch.

Of the eleven panels, all but one are impressively big, measuring between 100 and 119 cm in height. Their magnitude is amplified by their placement on poles. They were important images, designed to play a significant role in the life of their churches. In accord with this eminence, they display an image recognized for its prestige and power, an image that distinguished a locally celebrated icon, and through which that icon had done extraordinary things. Several scholars have suggested that Kykkos harbored a workshop of painters, and deliberately disseminated replicas of its icon.<sup>24</sup> I find the styles too varied to assign to a single shop; in fact, I've found no evidence that Kykkos *ever* disseminated painted replicas. What was available was the type. I believe it was the patrons of the replicas who chose both the type and painter. They were not, however, without obligation to Kykkos. All of the panels repeat a fixed repertoire of iconographic motifs, and a core of seven replicas can adhere with almost eerie fidelity to a prescribed template, with set proportions and distinctive techniques, especially the finely calibrated mordant-gilded chrysography.<sup>25</sup> This emerges clearly in comparing the Agios Theodoros panel (Figure 9.1) with an icon from the Panagia Theotokos church in Kalopanagiotis (Figure 9.2).<sup>26</sup> Three of the remaining four show the image in reverse, with less refined chrysography, as illustrated in the image from the Holy Cross church in Paliomylos (Figure 9.3).<sup>27</sup> Whether these reflect an earlier template or a different kind of relationship to Kykkos is unclear. They are as imposing in scale as the others, making it unlikely that a hierarchy of charismatic expectations like that of the Portaitissa's replicas was at work. And like the others among the eleven, they reflect a serious obligation to iconographic consistency.

Once installed in their churches, the replicas went on to a life within their communities, and in some cases, they took on the name of their church or congregation, as the "Panagia" of that place. This is surely significant. What it tells us is that they went on as effective images, not of the Kykkotissa itself, but of Mary, the Mother of God. The Kykkotissa had proved its type's outstanding capability and assured its recurrent selection. But it was as Mary that the type was embraced. Indicative in this regard is the most majestic of the replicas, a bilateral icon of outstanding quality from Kalopanagiotis, now in the Byzantine Museum in Nicosia (Figure 9.4).<sup>28</sup> Its obverse replicating the Kykkos icon was damaged at some point and repaired in the early sixteenth century. By this time, it had apparently acquired the name "Athanasiotissa," inscribed to Mary's left. It is not clear what that name meant—plausibly "of the church of St. Athanasia." But it is obviously not "Kykkotissa." The panel had assumed its own identity as an autonomous icon of Mary. It had indeed adopted the image of a great icon. But that image had settled into and given energy to its own panel and the place that it occupied, and at some point had acquired its own name. A benign amnesia had settled





*Figure 9.2* Icon from the Panagia Theotokos church in Kalopanagiotis. Icon Museum, Monastery of St. John Lampadistes, Kalopanagiotis. First half of the fourteenth century. Photo: author.

over the image's past as it assumed its new life, a process that helps to explain why it has been so hard to trace favored image types back in time.

The practice of inscribing toponyms on icons increased greatly in the sixteenth century on Cyprus, and a number of icons were inscribed with locally specific names, including icons of the Kykkotissa's type. The imposing Panagia Chrysoemesoegitissa, for instance, a Mother of God of the Kykkotissa's type surrounded by eighteen scenes of the Virgin's life, was created in the later sixteenth century as the title icon of the church of the Virgin in the village of Mesogi.<sup>29</sup> At much the same time, the Kykkotissa's type in reverse was taken up in the tender Panagia Kardiovastousa, painted in 1564 as the title icon of the eponymous church of the Virgin in Kaminaria.<sup>30</sup> There is no hint that any of these, including the Athanasiotissa, had to shed an identity as a Kykkotissa to assume its own name. Each brought to its own community an image that had worked



Figure 9.3 Icon from the church of the Holy Cross, Paliomylos. Monastery of St. Nicholas, Orounta. Late thirteenth century. Photo: author.

with dramatic effectiveness elsewhere, in the expectation that it would invest its own panel with Mary's power, and bring the grace of the Mother of God to its community.

It is in the sixteenth century, too, that the three remaining instances of the name *Kykkotissa* appear: on a big icon of the reverse type in Moutoullas,<sup>31</sup> an icon of 89 cm in height in Pedoulas,<sup>32</sup> and a mural of a full-length figure of the Mother of God in the *Kykkotissa's* type flanked by St. Athanasia Pharmakolytria and St. Melania in SS. Kerykos and Ioulitta, Letymbou.<sup>33</sup> One can readily see in these an effort to reassert a bond to the *Kykkotissa* itself for an image that had become widely and fairly promiscuously popular for Marian images in general. In this scenario, the presence of the toponym functions not so much as a proclamation, but as a reassertion, reclaiming for specific reference an image that had been honored into ubiquity and variously appropriated. The intensified impulse to give names to images may well in itself have provided the context for the decision to begin introducing the name "*Kykkotissa*" on panels. This tempts one to place the label of the *Agios Theodoros* panel in this period, too, and to place the introduction of the *Kykkotissa's* toponym in the sixteenth century.



*Figure 9.4* Panagia Athanasiotissa. Byzantine Museum, Nicosia. Second half of the fourteenth century. Photo: by kind permission of the Byzantine Museum, Nicosia.

At some point over the ensuing centuries, several of the early replicas of the Kykkotissa's type went on under their locally acquired names to develop significant cult identities of their own. Until they were recorded by early twentieth-century ethnographers, we have no documentary evidence of them—if their cults were ever narrated or written down, the accounts do not survive. Thus, we truly do not know how, or how rapidly, this process occurred. Exemplary is the Salamiotissa, an icon of the reverse type that is among the earliest of the replicas (Figure 9.5).<sup>34</sup> It is named for the village of Salamiou on the road through the high Troodos traveled by Saints Paul and Barnabas on their way to Paphos. Beautifully installed and venerated today, it is recorded for the first time only in 1905, when it was rescued from fire in its sixteenth-century church. The church had served a monastery in the 1600s and 1700s and was reputed then to have been the destination of pilgrims for centuries. Thus, the Salamiotissa's veneration could have a long, if silent, history. More tangible is the life of the icon known as the Panagia Theoskepaste—the Virgin Veiled by God (Figure 9.6).<sup>35</sup> It shares its



Figure 9.5 Panagia Salamiotissa. Monastery of the Panagia Salamiotissa, Salamiou. Late thirteenth century. Photo: author.

appellation with a tiny chapel above the village of Kalopanagiotis, so named because it is veiled by an enveloping live oak tree which is deeply embedded in local legend. When the icon came there is unknown. In 2004, the icon was removed for safekeeping and installed for veneration in the nearby monastery of St. John Lampadistes; though a new icon presides now over the chapel, the Theoskepaste remains a potent devotional focus, and *tamata* flood the floor at its feet. That its type is that of the Kykkotissa is acknowledged, but given no more significance than it is in the case of the Athanasiotissa, also from Kalopanagiotis.

Perhaps even more indicative in this regard is the exquisite Galoktiste (Figure 9.7).<sup>36</sup> It comes from deep at foot of the Troodos where the mountains meet the sea, from a valley steeped in legends of the Kykkotissa. It was in the limpid bay here that the imperial ship is supposed to have arrived bearing the Kykkotissa from Constantinople. It



*Figure 9.6* Panagia Theoskepaste, in the Latin Chapel, Monastery of St. John Lampsakos, Kalopanagiotis. Second half of the fourteenth century. Photo: Gerald L. Carr.

was here that the great icon disembarked, and the trees bent their heads in reverence as it came ashore—as in fact the wind-bent trees still do. The sea creatures followed the icon, until Kykkos’ saintly founder had to insist that they stop lest they die, and in fact, the rocks are speckled with fossilized shells. The village church of SS Constantine and Helena to which the Galoktiste has been moved for safekeeping is frescoed with scenes of the Kykkotissa’s arrival, displaying clearly the type of the great icon. One would expect the Galoktiste to have taken on at least something of the Kykkotissa’s aura. But absolutely not: it has its own character and its own competence as the patron icon of the “Milk church,” where women hurled votive offerings of milk onto the walls. The Milk church was cleaned when the icon was moved to the village church; before that, it had reeked with rancid milk and flies.



Figure 9.7 Panagia Galoktiste. Church of SS Constantine and Helena, Pyrgos, Tillyria. Early fourteenth century. Photo: author.

Each of these is a specially venerated icon. Each bears the image of the Kykkotissa and owes the prestige of that image to the icon at Kykkos. But they give no indication that they were therefore seen as re-presenting the Kykkotissa, or that they had to divest themselves of an identity as a Kykkotissa in order to assume another one. In only one case is there evidence that such a transformation occurred. That case is the panel at Agios Theodoros. It was never exposed publicly until the summer of 2017, because it is a specially venerated icon, concealed in an enclosure or ark and venerated as the Mother of God of the Ark, the *Panagia Kivotos*. For all its identifying toponym, whenever it was acquired, the panel clearly at some point occluded its identity as a Kykkotissa beneath a different and autonomous identity. It might seem that the lesson to be learned from this is that all 19 of our icons really were Kykkotissas and that some of them, too, assumed altered identities later on. But I think the message is really



*Figure 9.8* Panagia Dexa, or Dexia. Church of the Panagia Dexa, or Dexia, Thessaloniki. Eighteenth century. Photo: author.

something else: it is that an icon doesn't assume charismatic identity under the name of another icon. Once it assumes special grace, it does so under its own name, as itself.

The icon at Agios Theodoros is not unique in this kind of transformation. Something similar seems to have happened with the title icon of Makhairas Monastery, Cyprus' second biggest monastery.<sup>37</sup> This, too, is an icon of the Mother of God. It was kept veiled till the early 1980s, when it was removed and cleaned. It turned out to be not only of astonishingly early date, in the eleventh or early twelfth century, but to have born the name Hagiosoritissa, probably the oldest surviving panel painting that bears that Constantinopolitan toponym. But at a certain point, the word Hagiosoritissa had been amended to read Hagiomachairiotissa. The icon thus acquired its own name, the toponym of its monastic home. That it had ever been a Hagiosoritissa vanished: it plays no role in its legend. This process is seen more often in post-Byzantine times—the powerful Panagia Dexa or Dexia in Thessaloniki, for instance, has its own miracles, name, and history, despite the clearly legible name of Eleousa tou Kykkou on its frame (Figure 9.8).<sup>38</sup> In fact, what is the formidable Portaitissa itself, but a Hodegetria under a new and different name?

What this discussion suggests is that the toponym, far from eliding the difference between model and replica, in fact embraces a variable terrain with considerable room for movement. Linkage between model and replica can range from association to

reclamation, evocation to invocation. The name can add value—indeed, even very high-intensity reflective glare, as in the Hodegetrias of Thessaloniki and Trebizond. But it can also be a liability. We've seen several cases of toponyms reconfigured or forgotten, and an icon like that at Agios Theodoros shows that autonomy as a miracle worker cannot be achieved under another icon's name.

## Notes

- 1 Alexei Lidov, "Icon as *Chora*: Spatial Aspects of Iconicity in Byzantium and Russia," in *L'icone dans la pensée et dans l'art. Constitutions, contestations, reinventions de la notion d'image divine en context chrétien*, ed. Kristina Mitalaitė et Anca Vasiliu, Byzantios, Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 425.
- 2 Ibid.; Alexei Lidov, "Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 46.
- 3 Gordana Babić, "Il modello e la replica dell'arte bisantina delle icone," *Arte Cristiana* 76/724 (1988), 61–78; Eadem, "Les images byzantines et leurs degrés de signification: l'exemple de l'Hodegetria," in *Byzance et les images*, eds. André Guillou and Jannic Durand (Paris: La documentation Française, 1994), 189–222; Eadem, "Quelques observations concernant l'icône de la Vierge Kosinitza," in *Λαμπήδων. Αφιέρωμα στην μνήμη της Ντούλας Μουρίκη*, 2 vols., ed. Maire Aspra-Vardavake (Athens: University Press, 2003), 1, 95–102.
- 4 Babić, "Quelques Observations," 101.
- 5 Katherine Marsengill, *Portraits and Icons. Between Reality and Spirituality in Byzantine Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 45 n104.
- 6 Babić, "Les images byzantines et leurs degrés de signification," 211.
- 7 Olga Gratziou, "Οι εικόνες στην Κρήτη κατά τη δεύτερη βυζαντινή περίοδο και αργότερα. Ἐκκλησιαστική πολιτική και λαϊκή λατρεία," in *Παιδεία και Πολιτισμός στην Κρήτη, Βυζάντιο – Βενετοκρατία. Μελέτες αφιερωμένες στον εοχάρη Δετοράκη*, eds. Ioannes Vassis, Stefanos Kakkalmanis and Marina Loukaki (Iraklion: University of Crete, 2008), 43–56; Eadem, "Παναγία η Λαμπηνή. Μια χαμένη, ιδιαίτερα τιμώμενη, μεσοβυζαντινή εικόνα της Κρήτης," in *Ψηφίδες. Μελέτες ιστορίας, αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης στη μνήμη της Στέλλα Παπαδάκη-Oekland*, eds. Olga Gratziou and Christos Loukos (Iraklion: University Press of Crete, 2009), 245–255.
- 8 See Sophocles Sophocleous, *Panagia Arakiotissa, Lagoudera, Cyprus*, Museum Publications 3 (Nicosia: Centre of Cultural Heritage, 1998), 49, where both images are assigned to the painter Theodore Apeudes; pl. 24 and pl. on final recto of the book.
- 9 On the Pelagonitissa, see most recently Sanja Pajić and Rosa D'Amico, *La Theotokos Pelagonitissa. Un'iconografia tra l'Oriente, I Balcani e l'Italia nel medioevo* (Kragujevac, 2015); Lenia Kouneni, "A Byzantine Iconographic Type of Virgin and Child in Italy? The Pelagonitissa Virgin Re-examined," *Arte Cristiana* 95/828 (2007), 1–8. On the Kosinitza, see Babić, "Quelques Observations," 95–102. On the Tricheirousa, see Georgios Mantzarides and Euthymios Tsigaridas, *Οι θαυματουργοί Εικόνες στο Περιβόλι της Παναγίας* (Mount Athos: Holy Community of Mount Athos, 2013), 115–116; Leopold Kretzenbacher, "Legende und Athos-Ikone. Zu Gegenwartsüberlieferung, Geschichte, und Kult um die Marienikone der 'Dreihändigen' im Serbenkloster Hilandar," *Südostforschungen* 21 (1962), 22–44.
- 10 Babić, "Quelques Observations," 99–101.
- 11 John Wilkinson with Joyce Hill and William F. Ryan, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1988), 331.
- 12 Nicolas Oikonomides, "The Holy Icon as an Asset," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991), 40–43.
- 13 Ibid., 40.
- 14 Ibid., 43.
- 15 John R. Melville Jones, *Eustathios of Thessaloniki, The Capture of Thessaloniki, A Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Byzantina Australiensia 8 (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1988), 143, 130.
- 16 Lilija Evseeva and Marina Shvedova, "Athonian Copies of the Icon 'Portaitissa' and the Problem of Likeness in Icon-Painting," in *Чудотворная Икона в Византии и Древней Руси*,



- ed. Alexei M. Lidov (Moscow: Martis, 1996), 547. Important to add is the Portaitissa icon in Rozhen, Bulgaria, which also replicates the measurements and iconography (though again with the Virgin's head more tilted), showing that this was done not only for the Tsar, as Evseeva and Shvedova's examples were: see Elka Bakalova, "Zwei Ikonen der Muttergottes Portaitissa (von Ivron) in Bulgarien," *Δελτίον τῆς χριστιανικῆς ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας* 4, 17 (1993–1994), 347–358.
- 17 Marie E. Gasper-Hulvat, "The Icon as Performer and as Performative Utterance: The Sixteenth-century Vladimir Mother of God in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 57/58 (2010), 182–184.
- 18 Sophocles Sophocleous, *Icones de Chypre, Diocèse de Limassol, 12e – 16e siècle* (Nicosia: Centre of Cultural Heritage, 2006), 66–67, 322, no. 13; Idem, "Η Εικόνα της Κυκκώτισσας στον Άγιο Θεόδωρο του Αγρού," *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Μελετών Ιεράς Μονῆς Κύκκου* 2 (1992), 329–348.
- 19 On Kykkos and its icon, see Agamemnon Tselikas, Stylianos Perdikes and Menelaos N. Christodoulou, *Ιερά Μονή Κύκκου' Εικόν ενεσπεροῦ Φωτός* (Athens: Kykkos Monastery Cultural Foundation, 2010); Chrysostomos Abbot of Kykko, *The Holy, Royal Monastery of Kykko Founded with a Cross* (Limassol: Kykko Monastery, 1969); George A. Soteriou, "Η Κυκκώτισσα," in *Νέα Ἐστία* (Christmas issue, 1939), 3–6; John Hackett, *A History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901), 331–345, 682.
- 20 The earliest surviving version, in Patriarchate of Alexandria, cod. 176, of 1614, speaks only of "our icon": see Constantine N. Constantinides, *Ἡ Διήγησις τῆς θαυματουργῆς εἰκόνας τῆς Θεοτόκου Ἐλεούσας τοῦ Κύκκου κατὰ τὸν ἐλληνικὸ κώδικα 2313 τοῦ Βατικανοῦ* (Nicosia: Research Centre of the Holy Monastery of Kykkos, 2002), 179–183.
- 21 These include the Panagia Kivotos in Agios Theodoros Agrou; two icons in the Icon Museum at the Monastery of St. John Lampadistes in Kalopanagiotis; the Panagia Theoskepaste in the same monastery; the Athanasiotissa, also from Kalopanagiotis, and an icon from the church of the Chrysaliniotissa, both now in the Byzantine Museum in Nicosia; the Panagia Galoktiste in the Museum of the Monastery of Kykkos; an icon in the Panagia church in Praitori; an icon from the church of the Timios Stavros, Paliomylos, now in St. Nicholas, Orounta; an icon in the church of St. Theodore, Lemythou; and the Panagia Salamiotissa in the eponymous convent near Salamiou.
- 22 These include an icon labeled Kykkotissa from the church of St. Paraskeve, Moutoullas, now in the Museum of Kykkos Monastery; a second icon labeled Kykkotissa in the Icon Museum, Pedoulas; an icon recorded but no longer preserved at the church of St. Michael, Pedoulas; a mural icon in the apse of the Chryseleousa church in Lysos; a full-length figure in fresco labeled Kykkotissa in SS Kerykos and Ioulitta, Letymbou; the Panagia Kardiovastousa in the eponymous church in Kaminaria; the Chrysesoegitissa in the eponymous church in Mesogi; and a silver cover once attached to the icon in Praitori and now in the Byzantine Museum, Paphos.
- 23 They include the icon from Moutoullas (see note 31 below); the icon in Pedoulas (see note 32 below); and the mural in Letymbou (see note 33 below).
- 24 See most recently Charalampos G. Chotzakoglou, "Αναψηλάφοντας τη Ζωγραφική του 13<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα στην Κύπρο. Reconsidering the thirteenth Century Painting in Cyprus," in *Κυπριακῶ τῶ τρόπῳ. Ἡ ζωγραφικὴ τοῦ 13ου αἰώνα σὴν Κύπρο ἀνάμεση σὲ δύο κόσμους. Κυπριακῶ τῶ τρόπῳ. The Cypriot Painting of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Between Two Worlds*, exhibition catalogue, Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, Nicosia, 19 January–31 June 2017, ed. Ioannis A. Eliades (Nicosia: Archbishop Makarios III Cultural Foundation, 2017), 39–40.
- 25 These include the Panagia Kivotos in Agios Theodoros Agrou (Figure 1); the larger icon in the Icon Museum in Kalopanagiotis (Figure 2); the Panagia Theoskepaste (Figure 6); the Athanasiotissa (Figure 4); the icon from the church of the Chrysaliniotissa, in the Byzantine Museum in Nicosia; the Panagia Galoktiste in the church of SS Constantine and Helena in Pyrgos, Tillyria; and the icon in the Panagia church in Praitori.
- 26 Helen C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, exhibition catalogue, New York, The Metropolitan Museum, 23 March–4 July 2004 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 169–170, no. 91, entry by Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou, with earlier bibliography.

- 27 They are the icon from Paliomylos itself, on which see Stefano G. Casu, Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou, and Yiannis Toumazis, eds., *Θεοτόκος/Madonna*, exhibition catalogue, Nicosia, Exhibition Hall in Hellenic Bank Head Office, 1–31 July 2005 (Nicosia: Pierides Foundation, 2005), 40–41, cat. 2, entry by Christodoulos Hadjichristodoulou; the icon in Lemythou, on which see Paul Hetherington, “From Cyprus to Sinai: A Fine Enamelled Crucifix in St Catherine’s Monastery,” in *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, 2011-12* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 2017), 862–863 and color plate [855–878]; and the Panagia Salamiotissa (note 34 below).
- 28 Athanasios Papageorghiou, *Icons of Cyprus* (Nicosia: Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus, 1992), pl. 49; Lefke Michaelidou, ed., *Ιερά Μητρόπολις Μόρφου, 2000 Χρόνια Τέχνης και Αγιότητας*, exhibition catalogue, Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2000 (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation and Holy Metropolis of Morphou, 2000), 139, fig. 23.
- 29 Athanasios Papageorghiou, “Μία ανέκδοτη Διήγηση για τις Εικόνας που ζωγράφισε, κατά την Παράδοση, ο Απόστολος Λουκάς και την Ίδρυση της Μονής Κύκκου,” *Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Μελετών της Ιεράς Μονής Κύκκου* 6 (2004), 51, figs. 7, 8.
- 30 Lefke Michaelidou and Christodoulos A. Hadjichristodoulou, eds., *Η Μόρφου ως Θεομόρφου, του Χθες, του Σήμερα, και του Αύριο*, exhibition catalogue, Nicosia, Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 22 March to 11 September 2011 (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2011), 58–59, entry by Christodoulos A. Hadjichristodoulou.
- 31 Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzis and Maria Iacovou, eds., *Βυζαντινή Μεσαιωνική Κύπρος. Βασίλισσα στην Ανατολή και Ρήγαινα στη Δύση*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki, 1997 (Nicosia: Cultural Foundation of the Bank of Cyprus, 1997), no. 144.
- 32 Evans, *Byzantium, Faith and Power*, 171–172, cat. 93, entry by Sophocles Sophocleous.
- 33 Athanasios Papageorghiou, *Letymbou and the Church of Saints Kerykos and Ioulitta at Letymbou* (Letymbou: Communal Committee of Letymbou, 2008), fig. 41; Sophocleous, “Η Εικόνα της Κυκκώτισσας,” fig. 9.
- 34 Agathi, Abbess of the Monastery of Panagia Salamiotissa, *Holy Monastery of Panagia Salamiotissa, A Miracle Through the Centuries* (Salamiou: Holy Monastery of Salamiotissa, 2011); Antros Paulidis, ed. *Μεγάλη Κυπριακή Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, 2nd ed., 19 vols. Nicosia: Marfin Laiki Bank, 2011–2014), 17 (2012), 41–42. S.v. Σαλαμιώτισσας Παναγίας μοναστήρι.
- 35 Athanasios Papageorghiou, “θεοσκέπαστης Παναγίας εκκλησία, Καλοπαναγιώτης,” in *Μεγάλη κυπριακή εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, 16 vols. (Nicosia: Philokypros, 1987), 6, 20; Annemarie Weyl Carr, “Taking Place: The Shrine of the Virgin Veiled by God in Kalopanagiotis, Cyprus,” in *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 388–408.
- 36 Stylianos Perdikis, “Εικόνα Βρεφοκρατούσας Παναγίας ‘Κυκκώτισσας’ από τον ναό της Παναγίας Γαλόκτιστης,” in *Melusine of Cyprus*, eds. Justine Andrews and Ioanna Christoforaki (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, forthcoming).
- 37 Papageorghiou, *Icons of Cyprus*, pl. 3.
- 38 Athanasia Tourta, “Η Παναγία του Κύκκου σε μεταβυζαντινές εικόνες της Θεσσαλονίκης. Παραλλαγές ενός εικονογραφικού τύπου,” in *Η Ιερά Μονή Κύκκου στη βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή αρχαιολογία και τέχνη*, eds. Menelaos N. Christodoulou and Stylianos Perdikes (Nicosia: Holy Monastery of Kykkos, 2001), 167.

# 10 Virgin Mary and the Adoration of the Magi

## From iconic space to icon in space

*Maria Lidova*

### Mary and/in the apse

The Mother of God seated frontally on a throne with the Christ Child on her lap is perhaps the most recognizable image of the Virgin in Byzantium. When represented this way, Mary is often depicted flanked by angels and/or other saints, although the general scheme varies from one decoration to another.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have always emphasized the particularly solemn nature of this image, in which the throne, *suppedanium* (footstool) and other details serve as visual indicators of the Virgin's high status and allude to the idea of supernatural power and heavenly kingship, transmitted in almost earthly terms.

At some point, this image became very popular and started to appear regularly, even predominantly, in the decoration of the main apse embracing the space of the sanctuary.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it occupied the most important location in terms of the visual impact within the interior space of the Eastern Christian churches. This shift in emphasis and introduction of the Marian image bearing the Christ Child as the focal element was fully accomplished by the sixth century, with the earliest surviving examples found in the basilica of Euphrasius in Poreč (mid. of the sixth century) (Figure 10.1),<sup>3</sup> and apse decoration of Panagia Kanakaria church at Lythrankomi in Cyprus (first half of the sixth century).<sup>4</sup> However, the origins of this tradition might date back to the fifth century.<sup>5</sup> After iconoclasm, the image of Mary enthroned, placed in the apse of Hagia Sophia church in Constantinople and solemnly celebrated on the Easter Saturday of 867, became a sort of model and point of reference for subsequent decorations, serving as a material testimony to the re-established veneration of images and worship of the Virgin.<sup>6</sup>

In the period preceding the sixth century,<sup>7</sup> the preference in the apse decoration was generally given to either aniconic imagery (limited to ornamental, vegetal and zoomorphic motifs) or to the figure of Christ represented as a beardless youth or grown man appearing as the protagonist of a scene.<sup>8</sup> It is believed that the earliest figurative decoration in the apse of the Old St. Peter's basilica in Rome, probably dating back to the second half of the fourth century, was a *Traditio Legis* scene featuring Christ in the center flanked by the apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>9</sup> Jesus surrounded by disciples – by either Peter and Paul or all twelve apostles – was a common motif decorating the concave-shaped niches in the catacombs or religious buildings of late antiquity,<sup>10</sup> with the most monumental and well-known examples found in Sant'Aquilino chapel in Milan (fourth century) and Santa Pudenziana in Rome (early fifth century).<sup>11</sup>



*Figure 10.1* Mary enthroned with saints. Apse decoration. Euphrasian basilica in Poreč, Croatia, sixth century. Photo: author.

Various images of Christ with the apostles were substituted in the fifth century by images of the Theophany, representing either a Gospel event – Ascension or Transfiguration – or a more complex vision of God rendered in accordance with Biblical narratives of revelations and mystic experiences of divine manifestations to the prophets.<sup>12</sup> In the course of the sixth century, however, these representations gradually ceded the stage to the theme of incarnation, embodied by the figure of Mary with Child, which became a preferable “governing” image in apse decoration for centuries thereafter.<sup>13</sup> The explanation for the popularity and significance of this image is usually reduced in scholarship to late antique debates on the natures of Christ and the functional role of the Marian representation in transmitting the idea of divine incarnation and the humanity of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> This paper aims to expand the argument and unveil the mechanisms and visual transformations that resulted in the figure of Mary acquiring the leading role in the array of images decorating the sanctuary space.

### **The Adoration of the Magi in early Christian art**

It has long been established, based on surviving material, that the Adoration of the Magi was the most important and widespread scene featuring Mary in early Christian art.<sup>15</sup> Considering that the only canonical Gospel that mentions the Adoration of the Magi is that of Matthew (Mt. 2: 1–14), it is not surprising that from the start visual renderings of the Adoration relied heavily on the apocrypha for further details, such as the cave space, the active participation of angels and the presence of midwives.



*Figure 10.2* Adoration of the Magi and Nativity, Adelphia sarcophagus, Archeological Museum, Syracuse, Sicily, second half of the fourth century. Photo: © David Mauro, Wikimedia.

The arrival of the Eastern wise men and their encounter with the newborn King was represented more often than the traditional scene of the Nativity in which the Virgin appeared lying on a mattress besides the manger.<sup>16</sup> On the sarcophagi, the two scenes were often merged together and appeared as elements of the same composition (Figure 10.2). This could indicate that these two moments in the Gospel narratives were actually connected in the mind of the viewer and that, at that time, the Adoration was perhaps seen as a more compelling representation of the Bethlehem events.

In the earliest examples on the sarcophagi, Mary often appeared seated on a chair or a rock when welcoming the Kings, her figure thereby already acquiring foremost importance. Furthermore, in these scenes, the Virgin sometimes featured as a central figure, symmetrically flanked by the Magi as, for example, in a series of murals found in the catacombs and also in a number of relief representations.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, scholars have often implied that the iconography of the Virgin enthroned could have developed from the visual rendering of Mary seated with Child in the compositions of the Adoration.<sup>18</sup> The principal consideration in favor of this hypothesis is usually connected to the iconographic similarity between the seated pose of Mary and Jesus and the general solemnity of their figures, often seen as indebted to imperial imagery and representations of ceremonial receptions.<sup>19</sup>

So far, purely iconographic investigations have not been able to fully substantiate this idea nor demonstrate the gradual evolution of the visual formula.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, no convincing attempt has been made to explain the transition of the Mary with Child image from its original appearance in narrative compositions to its later place as the primary iconic image of Christian worship.<sup>21</sup> As will be demonstrated in this paper, the only way to solve this problem is to apply the method of hierotopy, introduced by Alexei Lidov several years ago. This approach is helpful for the argument of this paper in several respects, but foremost because it privileges the spatial dimensions of Byzantine art and its interactive aspects, besides being concerned with understanding how the experience of the divine was “emulated” and artistically conceived in Byzantium.

### **The cave and the church of Nativity**

When viewers in late antiquity looked at a composition of the Adoration their memory would evoke the story narrated by the sacred texts, while their internal

gaze would be directed to Palestine and Bethlehem as the site of these events.<sup>22</sup> The church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was one of the earliest foundations in the Holy Land, second in importance only to the church of the Anastasis.<sup>23</sup> The Nativity basilica was closely associated with the Virgin's role in salvation and became a model for subsequent ecclesiastical buildings. Built in the fourth century on the initiative of either Constantine or his mother Helen, the church was situated right above the cave believed to have been the location of the Nativity.<sup>24</sup> The church underwent major transformation during the reign of Justinian (527–565) when the original centralized structure acquired a trefoil-shaped form marked by three niches with semicircular conches.<sup>25</sup>

The building initiatives of various Christian emperors transformed the actual natural site of the cave into a specific Christian shrine on two levels, with the man-made structures built on top of the sacred space thought to have been sanctified by God's incarnation. Interestingly, the apocrypha, in particular the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of Christ, when narrating the events in Bethlehem, compare the cave of the Nativity to a temple:

Then came shepherds; and when they had lighted a fire, and were rejoicing greatly, there appeared to them the hosts of heaven praising and celebrating God Most High. And while the shepherds were doing the same, the cave was at that time made like a temple of the upper world, since both heavenly and earthly voices glorified and magnified God on account of the birth of the Lord Christ.<sup>26</sup>

For a new religion in search of an identity and objects of devotion, claiming sites such as the Nativity cave was of crucial importance. As with other early pilgrimage sites, the sacred space of the cave enclosed within the church became the focus of veneration, inviting travelers from abroad to reconnect to the sacred events through the physical experience of a mystery made accessible and contextualized by the church's architectural frame<sup>27</sup> (Figure 10.3).

The space of a cave had particular significance in Christian tradition. A natural grotto carved in the body of a rock was the scene where the history of Salvation and the earthly life of Jesus began as well as where it ended. The cave in Bethlehem became the location of the Nativity, while the one in Jerusalem became the place of Christ's burial and Resurrection. Although the scriptures seem merely to indicate the location and space of these events, the two caves and their symbolism were central to the theological tradition besides becoming the most important sites of religious veneration.<sup>28</sup> In the *Life of Constantine* by Eusebius, the historian clearly emphasizes that it was the imperial agenda to select "three places, each distinguished by a sacred cave" and to adorn them "with rich buildings."<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, other sites such as the Ascension church, the grotto of the Milk and the tomb of Rachel were also characterized by the presence of a cave.

The very shape of a cave, with its restricted entrance, often smaller than the inner mystic environment of a dark space carved within rock, was a context which could easily be compared to and paralleled with a sanctuary, traditionally embraced by a semicircular, concave form of the apse, with only priests and important individuals allowed to stay inside and cross the boundary between the outer and inner spaces.



*Figure 10.3* View of the Nativity cave in the Nativity church in Bethlehem. Photo: Anna Adashinskaya.

### **The Nativity church in Bethlehem as an iconic space and space for images**

Little is known about the decoration of the Nativity church in the late antique period. It can only be suggested that the walls and apses of the church were covered from the beginning with extensive decoration, most probably mosaic. It is also a mystery whether any of the earlier possible visual motifs were preserved or reproduced in the sixth-century church, or whether Justinian's project presupposed a totally new design for decorating the space. Our only written evidence in relation to the early mural decoration of the Bethlehem church is found in the Letter of the Three Patriarchs (ninth c.) which mentions the existence of a mosaic image:

Moreover, Helen of blessed memory, the Godly-minded empress in the process of discovering the life-giving Cross, embellished and decorated with sacred icons the

holy and revered places, among which was the holy and famous Bethlehem. There she built a very great church in honour of the Mother of God and on the outer wall on the west side she depicted in artistic mosaics the holy birth of Christ, the Mother of God holding the life-bringing infant at her breast and the adoration of the gift-bearing Magi.<sup>30</sup>

This passage is followed by a famous remark that during the conquest (612–629) the Persians did not destroy the church since they recognized in the Magi the representation of their countrymen.

Various hypotheses have been put forward as to the dating and location of the mosaic, as well as to the validity of the source and its relevance for the discussion of early material. The creation of images on façades was not unusual in the Early Byzantine period, and evidence survives for similar practices in Rome, Poreč and other cities.<sup>31</sup> Neither the phenomenology of external visual introductions to the sacred spaces of given churches, nor the question of the religious use of the façade compositions have yet received proper scholarly attention. We can assume, nevertheless, that a similar image on the entrance wall of the church would have had a strong effect on viewers, and, in the case of a Bethlehem basilica, on many pilgrims.

Over time, the images decorating the Bethlehem church, either on the west wall, in the apse or even inside the cave,<sup>32</sup> could easily have become associated with the site itself. If that is the case, then the sacred space enclosed within the building would have found expression in an artistic medium of a rather different dimensionality, capable of visually suggesting the sacred content inherent in the church's walls. This quintessential visual formula, as mentioned in the Letter of the Patriarchs, could have shown the Nativity, the Virgin and Child, as well as the Adoration, becoming a sort of embodiment of the site built to commemorate these events in historical and liturgical terms. In this manner, the "body" of a concrete space could be assimilated with the more abstract "body" of an image of God.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the building, however, this visual expression of the site was portable and could be taken to distant locations as a *memento* of the believer's long journey and successful pilgrimage, as well as a reminder of the spiritual prototype.

Two Russian art historians from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Iakov Smirnov and Dmitry Ainalov – the latter more extensively in his book "The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art" – argued that a few representations of the Adoration on the *ampullae*, now in Monza and Bobbio, could derive from the monumental decoration of the Bethlehem church.<sup>34</sup> The small, embossed lead containers were most probably destined to hold oil and various sacred substances collected by pilgrims during their visits to the Holy Land.<sup>35</sup> There are three *ampullae* in Monza and one in Bobbio that bear the same image characterized by minor differences on each flask, indicative of a certain level of variance with which the representation could be rendered at the time.<sup>36</sup> The best-preserved image commonly dated to the seventh century shows Mary seated frontally on a throne with the Christ Child on her lap (Figure 10.4). The throne is richly decorated and characterized by a back with the upper edge curved downward. The three Magi approach Mary from the left, while the shepherds are depicted on the right side of the composition. Two archangels appear behind the throne, flying in opposite directions and pointing to a large star placed right above the Virgin's head.

While the rendering of Mary's figure remains essentially the same on all three better preserved *ampullae* (the consistency of the image of the throne is particularly interesting), there are certain differences in the way that the figures of the Magi and shepherds





*Figure 10.4* Adoration of the Magi, ampulla, Monza, sixth–seventh century. Photo: author.

are depicted. The left and right placement is always respected, but in some cases the Kings and shepherds form compact groups with one figure standing behind the other two, thus creating a pyramid-like structure, while in others they are depicted as a row of figures all appearing beside one another. It is difficult to establish at this stage how obvious and significant these differences were for a viewer in late antiquity, but this variance could allow for a single image of Mary enthroned, as on one of the other *ampullae*, to be seen also as an abridged version of the Adoration.<sup>37</sup>

Several Gospel scenes on pilgrims' oil flasks were enriched with representations of altars, architectural elements and also kneeling figures that are not connected to the plot but appear within the composition. These modifications could be related to the function of the *ampullae*, which were designed to evoke not only historical events but also liturgical contexts and specific sites that formed part of the pilgrims' personal experience during their journeys to the Holy Land.

It cannot be excluded that the decoration of the Nativity church could have become known through pilgrims' tokens and small-scale images that traveled all over the Christian world. Due to the lack of other sources and any material evidence, Ainalov's suggestion has remained merely an attractive hypothesis, often cited in the literature but rarely critically analyzed.<sup>38</sup> Although it is difficult to draw conclusions with the scarce amount of evidence at our disposal, the impact and overall significance of the artistic legacy of the Holy Land and its sites on subsequent artistic traditions should not be omitted solely on the grounds that little, if anything, has survived. Recent studies have demonstrated the crucial role that Jerusalem and the Holy Land played in the formation of the earliest cult practices in the capital cities of both Eastern and Western parts of the Empire.<sup>39</sup> In these studies, the legendary and historical allusions made to

the earliest icons and relics brought to Constantinople from Palestine finally receive further substantiation and are taken as reflections of the real transmission of patterns, liturgical practices, feasts and artworks, and thus no longer as mere mythical references intended to grant authority to the aforementioned artifacts.

What differentiates the composition of the Epiphany found on the Palestinian *ampullae*, in relation to the rendering of the subject on Roman sarcophagi and in catacomb painting, is its iconic centralized composition in which the figure of Mary enthroned becomes an absolute protagonist, and whose importance is emphasized by her central position and slightly larger proportions. The narrative and story component is subdued in order to give preeminence to the vision of the divine figures. It is obvious that the *ampullae* version is much more complex and theologically dense than the one found in other media. The text that runs around the image, especially on the horizontal line beneath, refers to Emmanuel and the theme of the incarnation, and with the help of imagery, it transforms the miniature circular object into a visual expression of Christian exegesis and manifestation of divine presence.

The various steps in the transition from narrative compositions to iconic representations, and consequently to the principal image of the Byzantine church that crowns the altar space inside the apse, can be detected in a number of Early Byzantine artworks.<sup>40</sup> One of these is an eighth-century decoration of Deir al-Surian monastery in Egypt, in which one of the lateral conches of a trefoil structure of the main church is occupied by the Adoration scene (Figure 10.5). This mural is distinguished by the placement of the Mother and Child in the very center, where Mary is depicted flanked by angels and two groups of attending worshippers, with the Magi on the left and shepherds on the right. Here, the viewer is led to focus on the figure of the Virgin and is even able to make eye contact with Mary's frontal gaze.



Figure 10.5 Adoration of the Magi, Deir al-Surian church, Egypt, eighth century. Photo: author.

The iconography of the Wadi Natrun monastery follows, almost precisely, the image on the Palestinian *ampullae* from Monza. Particularly noteworthy are such details as the placement of figures, the inward curve of the back of Mary's throne and the general setting. The decoration illustrates how compositions such as the one on the *ampullae* could be adapted to the semi-spherical shape of the conch. These striking similarities incited the restorer and principal investigator of the Egyptian murals, Karel Innemée, to suggest that the northern apse at Deir Al-Surian reproduces the decoration of the apse in the Nativity church in Bethlehem.<sup>41</sup> If Innemée's interpretation is correct, then the old hypothesis discussed by Ainalov would finally find some substantiation. Independently, whether or not we accept the derivation of this image from a specific representation in the Bethlehem church, the decoration of Deir Al-Surian demonstrates unambiguously the links and potential interdependence between the imagery of minor works, such as *ampullae*, and monumental church decoration.<sup>42</sup>

Another reflection of the complex transition from one image to another can be found in a golden encolpion from the Dumbarton Oaks collection. The circular shape of this precious medallion is divided into two parts<sup>43</sup> (Figure 10.6). In the lower part, the elements of the Nativity scene, with seated Joseph and Jesus in his cradle, merge almost seamlessly with the Adoration composition. Several figures shown within this narrative direct their gazes and gestures upward. Although the attention of these figures is justified contextually by the presence of a star in the sky, the direction of



*Figure 10.6* Nativity, Adoration of the Magi and the Virgin enthroned. Gold medallion. Dumbarton Oaks collection, sixth century. Photo: author.

their gazes also creates an impression that they point to the emphatic representation above, where the Virgin Mary and Christ are seated on the throne, turned frontally toward the viewers and flanked by archangels. Through the sequence of these moments in the story of the incarnation, the subject becomes a more comprehensive image of eternal power and glory, with the illustrations of the Gospel story dedicated to a single event evolving into an icon that could be worshipped in the hands of the object's owner. The token's key image would in turn make its way to the central position in the apse of the great majority of Byzantine churches, where the viewer could become, in a manner of speaking, one of the Magi coming to worship God and bearing gifts of devotion.

One more medium and group of objects that needs to be brought into the discussion is a couple of late antique ivories with almost identical iconographies. Both are kept today in British collections and are attributed to the sixth century. They reproduce the Adoration of the Magi at the top, accompanied by a much smaller Nativity scene placed at the bottom. The first ivory is kept in the British Museum (inv. 1904,0702.1) and must have originally formed part of a diptych, while the other one, now in John Rylands Library in Manchester (inv. 6), was used as a central panel of a five-part Gospel cover<sup>44</sup> (Figures 10.7 and 10.8). In the upper part, the Virgin is portrayed seated frontally on the throne holding the Christ Child on her knees. At the sides of the throne, four figures are shown standing symmetrically: the three Magi and an angel. The solemnity of the scene is underlined by the architectural frame composed of an arch, forming a sort of ciborium, and two spiral columns on top of which two crosses were originally carved. The lower zone is occupied by a narrative composition of the Nativity, rendered on a much smaller scale and depicting, on the left, Mary, on a large mattress, at rest after the birth; on the right, baby Jesus in a masonry crib, in front of which the figure of the midwife Salomé is seen prostrating her withered hand.

The scene of the Adoration dominates the composition of both ivories. The setting and general rendering of the scene, however, indicate that beyond its narrative function the Adoration scene, in this case, was designed to inspire devout contemplation in the Christian viewer. The ivories exemplify in the best possible way the transformation of a narrative scene into a cult image. The differences in style and carving techniques, however, indicate that the contexts and production locations of these two ivories were not the same. The famous sixth- to seventh-century miniature from the Etchmiadzin Gospel provides another example of a similar rendering of the Adoration, indicating a great popularity of this visual formula across media in late antiquity.<sup>45</sup>

The position of Mary's arms on both ivories is noteworthy. They are oriented downward and create a mandorla-shaped space around Christ.<sup>46</sup> This feature differentiates the ivory images from the iconography customary in Early Byzantine art, where Mary is usually portrayed with her hands positioned differently, with one arm bent so that her hand can rest on Christ's shoulder. There is a series of early representations of Mary in which the symmetrical, embracing gesture of her arms is reproduced, with the Panagia Kanakaria apse mosaic (sixth c.) and aforementioned mural in Deir al-Surian both providing important evidence among monumental decorations. Whether or not this element should be taken as an indication of a specific type of Marian representation, based on a particular prototype, and whether that prototype should be identified with the image that once decorated the Bethlehem church are the topics for future investigation. However, such similarities between different representations of Mary appearing frontally on the throne within the Adoration scene are worth emphasizing.<sup>47</sup>



Figure 10.7 Adoration of the Magi and Nativity, ivory, The British Museum, sixth century. Photo: author.

### The magi paradigm and gift giving

When discussing certain compositions on the Palestine *ampullae*, Vikan remarks on the potential link between their iconography and actual liturgical actions and acts of veneration witnessed and experienced by travelers on the spot.<sup>48</sup> He highlights how, in the *Resurrection* and *Women at the Tomb* scene, the setting is changed from a representation of the Biblical account's historic site to actual man-made architectural structures created on top of the tomb. Vessels with oil are also substituted with censers in the women's hands, thus transforming them into officiants performing liturgical actions. Similarly, Vikan draws attention to the compositions focused around the image



Figure 10.8 Adoration of the Magi and Nativity, ivory, John Rylands Library, Manchester, sixth century. Photo: author.

of the cross, which often include two kneeling male figures shown in an act of veneration. He remarks that their appearance closely resembles that of the Magi in the depictions of the Adoration on other *ampullae*. Vikan sees this treatment of figures as an indication of the fact that pilgrims were foreigners, just like Magi, and hence could acquire a close resemblance to them among the characters represented on the *ampullae*: “As foreign travelers and bearers of votive gifts, pilgrims in effect *became* Magi and the goal of their pilgrimage – whether holy site or holy man – *became* Christ.”<sup>49</sup> Vikan

further develops his argument by outlining that an absolute majority of pilgrims' tokens and private golden *encolpia* and *fibulae* depict the Adoration of the Magi, making the Bethlehem event the most widespread and commonly used by individual Christian worshippers.

Natalia Teteriatnikov argued that the images of Magi and "gift giving" in Byzantine art were regularly used by emperors and church donors as an expression of their reverence to God, and also as a Biblical parallel for their individual offerings and acts of sponsorship.<sup>50</sup> It has been further established that there were links between ceremonial conduct at court and Adoration of the emperor and the way the veneration of Christ by the Magi was perceived. The extent of this was such that the visual rendering of barbarian kings offering gifts before the Roman Emperor used iconographies identical to those used to depict the story of Jesus.<sup>51</sup> Judging by the available material, it can be said that the associations with the Magi were not restricted to one particular group, be it pilgrims, emperors, or donors, nor even to specific actions. They had a far greater significance in Christian daily life, church and court culture.

Parallels between members of the Christian community and the Magi are common in written sources, featuring in the works of the early church fathers.<sup>52</sup> Suffice it to remember the Homily 7 on Mathew, by John Chrysostom (347–407), in which he interprets the Gospel narrative on the Nativity in a way relevant for the members of his congregation, insistently inciting them to follow the example of the Eastern Kings:

Let us then also follow the magi, let us separate ourselves from our barbarian customs, and make our distance therefrom great, that we may see Christ, since they too, had they not been from their own country, would have missed seeing Him.<sup>53</sup>

The same ideas reappear in his homily on Blessed Philogonius, delivered – according to the title – just five days before the feast celebrating the birth of Christ in connection with a discussion of the Eucharist and appropriate behavior for taking communion:

(Or) when the Magi, who were barbarians and foreigners, hurried from Persia to see him lying in the manger? But you, a Christian, can't be bothered to travel even a short distance in order to enjoy this blessed sight? For if we're present in faith we'll certainly see him lying in the manger: this table fulfils the role of the manger.

Indeed, here lies the body of the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes as formerly, but attired completely with the Holy Spirit. Those who are initiated know what I'm saying. The Magi merely worshipped him, whereas you, if you approach (to communicate) with a clear conscience, we permit to consume him and go back home. Approach, then, bringing gifts – not gifts like the Magi brought but ones that are much more solemn.<sup>54</sup>

Besides John Chrysostom, there was also Romanos the Melodist's *kontakion* on the Resurrection VI, read on the day of Nativity in Hagia Sophia and already cited by Natalia Teteriatnikov in her paper:

Let us go, let us hasten like the Magi,  
And let us kneel down and bring with us  
The spices as gifts – not to Him in swaddling clothes  
But to Him wrapped in a shroud.<sup>55</sup>

This analogy reappears in later centuries as well, attested by the writings ascribed to Patriarch Germanos and others.<sup>56</sup>

These texts and readings of Gospel events indicate that the Adoration scene functioned in Early Christian art as a vehicle for transmitting the idea of appropriate worship, visually propagating reverential conduct before the image of the Son of God and the Virgin.<sup>57</sup> This latter aspect is closely related to the importance and profound religious significance of gift giving, which still forms a significant part of Christian life in the church, where gifts take the form of expensive grand commissions, as well as simple candles lit before images of saints and various votives, both considered small but meaningful offerings.<sup>58</sup>

The most vivid attestation to the fact that this parallelism between church worshippers and the Magi was intentional in the Early Byzantine period is found on the ornament of Theodora's dress in the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna. The emperor and empress are portrayed facing each other across the sanctuary, holding gifts in their hands, in the hope of worshipping the Lord in the style of the three Magi, whose silhouettes are visible on the lower edge of Theodora's cloak.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, the essence of the Adoration was not reduced to just the story of the Magi. It is worth pointing out that a great majority of early Marian representations are indeed variations on the theme of the Adoration showing saints or living patrons approaching the Mother of God. Starting with the lost fifth-century composition from S. Maria Maggiore church in Rome – in which Mary was represented with a company of saints bringing her wreaths as “witnesses of her fruitfulness”, according to the titular inscription – to the images found on a silver reliquary box from Milan, the palimpsest wall of S. Maria Antiqua and finally the conch of Euphrasius church in Poreč, all are scenes of the Adoration and gift offering before Mary with Child seated on the throne.<sup>60</sup> Taking into consideration these connotations and the iconic rendering of the Adoration as discussed in the previous section, it can be argued that the assimilation with the wise men was indeed intentional. It is not surprising, therefore, that the reenactment of the Epiphany and solemn performance of the event would become a custom in many European cities.<sup>61</sup> Thereafter, when standing in a church and directing their gaze to the figure of the enthroned Mother of God in the apse, all worshippers would in fact find themselves in the role of supplicants and humble servants, expected to adore the Virgin with Child and bring spiritual gifts of their faith in a way similar to the Magi.

### **Bethlehem and Holy Land in liturgy and church space**

The appearance of references to Holy Land within the space of the sanctuary is also more than occasional. Beginning with the interpretations of John Chrysostom, the altar space of Christian churches was regularly compared to the Nativity cave, and more direct references to Bethlehem were also drawn in connection with the sanctuary and the Eucharist, starting from the fact that the name of Bethlehem itself – literally meaning “the house of bread” – quickly attained Christian liturgical connotations.<sup>62</sup> As we have already discussed, John Chrysostom openly compares the altar with the manger: “this table fulfils the role of the manger.”<sup>63</sup> Considering that the author of these words compiled the most important liturgical rite for the Eastern church, his understanding of the Eucharist, altar space and connections to the Holy Land site becomes particularly important.



Atticus of Constantinople (406–425) follows this same interpretation in his homily on the Nativity:

Today the Lord, who fill the world, or rather who is the creator of the whole world for He made the Virgin's uterus from which is incarnate heaven and He made the manger an altar [the sacrificial table], summoned (as) apostles, the Magi, from Persia.<sup>64</sup>

This tradition continued in later centuries, receiving its richest expression in the writings attributed to Patriarch Germanos (715–730):

The church is an earthly heaven in which the super-celestial God dwells and walks about. It represents the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ [...] The apse corresponds to the cave in Bethlehem where Christ was born, as well as the cave in which he was buried.<sup>65</sup>

These liturgical interpretations of the space indicate that such associations became common understanding within the complex sacred topography of Christian shrines.<sup>66</sup> To use Slobodan Ćurčić's words, "... symbolizing the beginning and the end of Christ's earthly life, the bema of a Byzantine church may be said to have encapsulated in the minds of the believers the Holy Land itself."<sup>67</sup>

Liturgical interpretations of the space form the basis for the more direct associations and references to Bethlehem and Golgotha during the Proskomide ritual and the preparation of the gifts introduced in practice at a much later stage.<sup>68</sup> This part of the liturgy only took shape in the Middle Byzantine period, but probably accumulates some of the views and ideas circulating previously and continues to be in use today. It presupposes the extraction of the square piece of bread out of a larger round *proskhomon*. The remaining cube is seen as the Lamb and is used for the Eucharist. The placement of the Lamb on the discos (a flat plate) is traditionally interpreted as the coming of the Lord into the world, since the liturgical dish is seen as the Bethlehem cave, but also as Golgotha. On top of it, the priest places an asterix, or star-shaped metal cover, which is associated with the Bethlehem star and also with the cross.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly to the double reading of the sanctuary space, the preparation of the gifts and "minor architecture" – recreated with the help of vessels and textiles around the bread and wine during each and every liturgy – are understood as signifying simultaneously the incarnation, as well as the Passions of Christ which become explicit in the priest's prayers during the ritual. In a way, the liturgical actions presuppose the creation of space around the gifts, and through this spatial arrangement, the material objects record and evoke the events that took place in the Holy Land. The micro-architecture interacts with and replicates the container-like structure of the altar space and the church interior in general, with the same idea of bringing together and merging the heavenly and earthly dimensions, saints and worshippers, and the historic, momentary and eternal. As noted by Nilgen, in the Middle Byzantine period, the prosthesis itself where the Proskomide rite took place was often called Bethlehem.<sup>70</sup> The performance aspect of the priest's actions and prayers becomes the means of reenacting and reproducing specific events and creating a Holy Land context in the real place where the Proskomedia is performed.

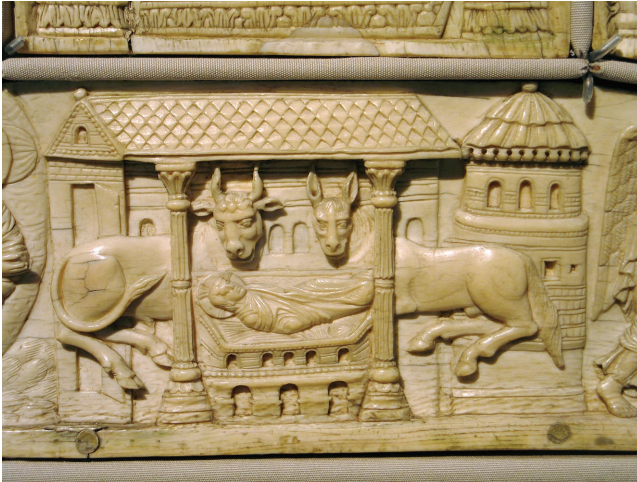
While most of our sources containing a liturgical interpretation of the sanctuary space date from later periods, there is a clear proof of similar ideas circulating in the preiconoclastic period thanks to two *ampullae* now in the Dölger Institut collection in Bonn.<sup>71</sup> These render the historic space of the Nativity and Christ's manger as the church space and the altar (Figure 10.9).



Figure 10.9 Nativity, fragment of an ampulla, Dölger Institut collection in Bonn, sixth–seventh century. Photo: courtesy of Dölger Institut collection in Bonn.

Interestingly enough, this visual tradition of providing a more liturgical and architectural setting for the scene continues. While on the *ampullae*, made in the Holy Land, it looks like a perpetual liturgical environment, later depictions of the Adoration would try to represent the location of the Gospel narrative as a space that looked like a church or even basilica rather than a cave, potentially reflecting the real structures built over the site in the Holy Land. They bring to mind the luxurious building, surrounding the Adoration of the Magi in the miniature of the Etchmiadzin Gospel, or the composition on the lower plaque of the Lorsch ivory (around 810) today in Victoria and Albert Museum, characterized by an incredibly detailed rendering of the ecclesiastical setting around the manger and the baby Jesus<sup>72</sup> (Figure 10.10).

This spatial dimension and its visual associations correlate with a more general practice of comparing the church space and architecture with the body and/or image of the Virgin. For instance, the tenth-century mosaic above the Southern entrance vestibule to Hagia Sophia portrays Mary seated on the throne receiving the gifts from the founder of the city and builder of the first church – Constantine – and Justinian who was responsible for the sixth-century building.<sup>73</sup> It is obvious that in this composition the figure of the Virgin, besides being the protector of the city and the Mother of God, also appears as an allegorical representation of the Hagia Sophia church itself, in terms of both church dedication and actual structure. Mary received the Emperors' offerings because she embodied in two-dimensional form the heavenly recipient and protector of the city and, at the same time, the main church of the realm itself, with all the interior space of Hagia Sophia dominated by iconographically similar, ninth-century image in the apse. Let us not forget in this case the atemporal and scriptural



*Figure 10.10* Adoration of the Magi, Lorsch ivory, Victoria and Albert Museum, around 810. Photo: author.



*Figure 10.11* Niccolò di Cecco del Mercia, Dormitio Virginis, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Prato, 1359–1360. Photo: author.

dimension of the scene, in which, in accordance with Gospel narrative, it is appropriate for the Mother of God and the Christ Child to receive the gifts of earthly Kings.<sup>74</sup>

A completely different approach, but with equal ambiguity between space and the two-dimensional pictorial image, is attested in a later medieval Western tradition practiced in Pisa in connection with the feast of the Dormition.<sup>75</sup> On that day, a huge textile girdle was taken around and placed along the walls of the church, replicating in a performative way the story of Mary's gift to Thomas, who, being late for the event, receives the belt from the hands of the Mother of God (Figure 10.11). Every year the congregation in Pisa would reenact the gift giving from Mary (otherwise well-known



*Figure 10.12* Gaetano Ciuti, Pope Gelasius II consecrates the cathedral of Pisa, ca. 1800–1810. Photo: author.

from two-dimensional, Tuscan, pictorial and sculptural renderings) by placing the belt back in its place on the outer side of the Marian cathedral, thereby transforming the architectural structure, which on the occasion was perceived and experienced as the body of the Mother of God (Figure 10.12).

## **Conclusions**

This paper attempts to argue that references to Bethlehem, complex interpretations of sacred spaces and liturgical “readings” that evoke events and places in the Holy Land might not be mere metaphors or figures of speech nor even the result of a simple development of rhetoric and liturgical tradition. They could in fact be reflective of the process of recreating the actual sacred space at the heart of the conception of church structures in late antiquity.

The mystical perception of the altar space as the Nativity cave, with its physical counterpart present in the Holy Land, created the necessary premises for placing the image of Mary and Christ inside the apse. It is quite possible that this imagery was originally developed for the churches connected to Mary and also those shrines around the Christian world that attempted to imitate or evoke the site of the Nativity.

Unfortunately, we cannot trace different phases of this development or the sequence in building up the connection between a newly constructed site and *locus sanctus*. Perhaps, in some cases, the reference to the Holy Land shrine was laid at the beginning of the building initiative or, in others, the association was acquired subsequently, perhaps as a result of particularly significant liturgical celebrations of the feast of Nativity, the arrival of relics or even local pilgrimage traditions. For instance, the original apse decoration of the earliest surviving Marian church in the West – S. Maria Maggiore – is still a matter of debate for scholars. What distinguishes this site, however, is that from at least the seventh century onward, judging by the surviving evidence, the Roman basilica was considered to house the precious relics of Christ’s manger.<sup>76</sup> The association of the Marian basilica with the location of Nativity was reflected in its title *ad praesepe*, commonly featured in early medieval sources. Furthermore, several subsequent Marian shrines in the city, such as the church of S. Maria in Trastevere and the chapel of John VII (705–707) in the basilica of Old St. Peter’s, followed the same tradition and references to them in various sources were also characterized by the same title.<sup>77</sup>

As a rule, the importance of the Nativity and Adoration stories in shaping the perception of Mary was reduced to the meaning of the Gospel textual narrative and theological interpretation. However, the existing imagery, relic tradition and rich connotations embedded within visual renderings all provide further insights into the question of why the images of Mary and Child appeared in the apse.

In many respects, the complicated transition discussed in this paper evokes the principles of the architectural reproduction of a sacred site and imitation of its forms elsewhere. The tradition of reproducing structural and compositional elements of Holy Land architecture is well studied in the literature,<sup>78</sup> which often relies on Richard Krautheimer’s methodological approach, known as the “iconography of architecture.”<sup>79</sup> The main difference of this study is its attempt to go beyond the specificity of individual artistic media and to trace a more profound layer which is not limited to the straightforward imitation of forms or the reproduction of a setting. Hierotopy introduces another dimension to the consideration of space, which can be expressed not only as a concrete environment but also as a two-dimensional image and a mental evocation.

Various strands, such as the liturgical use and rhetoric connected to the altar, the real and literary experience of pilgrimage sites, Holy Land topography and finally elements of embellishment and decoration – which assume a strong association with a particular site and become visual expressions of a place or space – all came together to create a functional religious space. It is evident that the main apse has undergone a series of experiments in search of the most adequate image. When Marian representation was introduced, it became a visual connector, evoking within the interior of a given church the reality of the iconic space of Bethlehem. The Virgin enthroned interacted with congregations in a particular way and invited perpetual veneration, similar to the very first “worshippers” mentioned in the Gospels. Finally, in its pictorial, two-dimensional form, it could still be perceived as a quintessence of a sacred space – a characteristic which lies at the basis of the image conception in Byzantium.

## Notes

- 1 In the art of the Middle and Late Byzantine period, this type is commonly defined as *Kyriotissa* (or Sovereign) and, more rarely, as *Panachranta*. To cite just a few studies addressing the image of the Virgin enthroned: Nikodim Kondakov, *Ikonoграфия Богоматери [The*

- Iconography of the Mother of God*] (St. Petersburg: Academia Nauk, 1914–1915, reprint Moscow: Pravoslavnyi palomnik, 1998), vol. I, 216–320; Vol. II, 316–356; Gerard Wellen, *Theotokos: eine ikonographische Abhandlung über das Gottesmutterbild in frühchristlicher Zeit* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1961), 147–176. On imagery of Mary between the angels, see: Joan E. Barclay Lloyd, “Mary, Queen of the Angels: Byzantine and Roman Images of the Virgin and Child Enthroned with Attendant Angels,” *Melbourne Art Journal* 5 (2001), 5–24; Maria Lidova, “The Heavenly Guard of the Mother of God: Mary between the Angels in Early Byzantine Art,” in *The Early Middle Ages (Bible and Women 6.1)*, eds. Franca Ela Consolino and Judith Herrin (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 121–166 (with further bibliography).
- 2 On the apse as a place for images in late antiquity: Christa Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1960), esp. 52–68; Maria Andaloro and Serena Romano, “L’immagine nell’apside,” in *Arte e Iconografia a Roma da Costantino a Cola di Rienzo*, eds. Maria Andaloro and Serena Romano (Milano: Jaca Book, 2000), 93–132; Beat Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon: An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2010), esp. 57–88; Erik Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For the later tradition of representing Mary in the apse and more generally on the decoration of the sanctuary: Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London: Kegan Paul, 1947), 21; Sharon Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle, WA: Published by College Art Association in association with University of Washington Press, 1999). See also Cormack in note 6, Spieser in note 8 and Evangelatou in note 13.
  - 3 Ann Terry and Henry Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007). For a Christological interpretation of this program: Marina Vicolja-Matijašić, “Christological Program in the Apse of Basilica Eufrasiana in Poreč,” *IKON* 1 (2008), 91–102.
  - 4 Iakov Smirnov, “Khristsianskie Mozaiki Kipra,” *Vizantiyskiy Vremennik* 4/1 (1897), 1–93; Marina Sacopoulo, *La Theotokos à la mandorle de Lythrankomi* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1975); Arthur H. S. Megaw and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, *The Church of the Panagia Kanakarià at Lythrankomi in Cyprus: Its Mosaics and Frescoes* (Washington, DC and Locust Valley, NY: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1977). See also Brooke Shilling’s dissertation: Brooke L. Shilling, “Apsè Mosaics of the Virgin Mary in Early Byzantine Cyprus.” PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013. Another apse decoration characterized by the figure of the Virgin and Child was once made (probably in the early sixth century) in the S. Maria Maggiore church in Ravenna, in which, according to Agnellus, “the vault of the apse and the façade decorated with gold, and in this vault of the apse the image of the holy mother of God, the like of which can never be seen by human eyes”: Agnellus, trans. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna, Medieval Texts in Translation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 171; Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 222–223. One more image of the Virgin in the apse is mentioned by Choricus in the St. Sergius church in Gaza (early sixth century): Félix-Marie Abel, “Gaza au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle d’après le rhéteur Choricus,” *Revue Biblique* 40/1 (1931), 5–31; Glanville Downey, *Gaza in the Sixth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 117–139; Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 60–68.
  - 5 It is possible that some of the Marian churches were already decorated with her image in the apse by the fifth century. This could be the case of S. Maria Maggiore church in Rome (432–440) or S. Maria Maggiore in Capua Vetere and of the decoration commissioned by Emperor Leo I (457–474) in the Blachernae church in Constantinople, the latter known to have been placed over the altar. Neither monument survives, nor is it always certain that the testimonies available to us refer specifically to apses.
  - 6 Cyril Mango and Ernest Hawkins, “The Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. Report on Work Carried Out in 1964,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19 (1965), 115–151; Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London: George Philip, 1985), 141–178. See also: Robin Cormack, “The Mother of God in the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople,” in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000), 107–123.

- 7 Sixth century is often considered to be the time of the definitive establishment of the Marian cult: Averil Cameron, "The Theotokos in the Sixth-Century Constantinople. A City Finds Its Symbol," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978), 79–108; Cyril Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokopolis," in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Athens and Milan: Skira, 2000), 17–25.
- 8 Jean-Michel Spieser, "The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches," *Gesta* 37/1 (1998), 63–73. There are a few notable exceptions, when a figure of a saint appeared as the main image in the conch, as, for example, in the case of the seventh-century decoration in Sant'Agnese church in Rome. For a more detailed discussion of the tradition of placing images of saints in apses: Maria Lidova, "Placing Martyrs in the Apse. Visual Strategies for the Promotion of Saints in Late Antiquity" (forthcoming).
- 9 On *Traditio Legis* to cite just one publication among a very vast bibliography: Robert Couzin, *The Traditio Legis: Anatomy of an Image* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015). On St. Peter's decoration most recently: Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1994), 458–459; Maria Andaloro and Serena Romano, eds., *L'orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini 312–468. Corpus della Pittura Medievale a Roma. Vol. I* (Milano: Jaca book, 2006), 87–91; Hugo Brandenburg, *Die Konstantinische Petersbasilika am Vatikan in Rom. Ammerkungen zu ihrer Chronologie, Architektur und Ausstattung* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2017), 53–63.
- 10 Pasquale Testini, "Osservazione sull'iconografia del Cristo in trono fra gli apostoli," *Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte* 11/12 (1963), 230–300.
- 11 Giuseppe Bovini, "I mosaici del S. Aquilino di Milano," *Corso di cultura dell'arte ravennate e bizantina* 17 (1970), 61–82; Carlo Bertelli, "I mosaici del sacello di S. Aquilino," in *Milano Capitale dell'Impero Romano. 286–402 d. C.: Mostra, Palazzo Reale, Milano, 24 Gennaio–22 Aprile 1990: Catalogo* (Milano: Silvana, 1990), 140–142. On the decoration in Santa Pudenziana church most recently: Andaloro and Romano, eds., *L'orizzonte Tardoantico*, 114–124; Ivan Foletti, "God from God: Christ as the Translation of Jupiter Serapis in the Mosaic of Santa Pudenziana," in *The Fifth Century in Rome*, eds. Ivan Foletti and Manuela Gianandrea (Rome: Viella), 11–29.
- 12 From the fifth century onward, the image of Theophany started to play an important role. On this imagery most recently: Armin F. Bergmeier, *Visionserwartung: Visualisierung und Präsenzerfahrung des Göttlichen in der Spätantike* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2017).
- 13 André Grabar, *L'iconoclisme byzantine: dossier archéologique* (Paris: Collège de France, 1957); Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*, 52–68; Brenk, *The Apse*, 57–81. On the later tradition of representing Mary in the apse: Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, 21; Robin Cormack, "Mother of God in the Apse Mosaics," in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Athens and Milan: Skira, 2000), 91–105. Also see a very important paper by Maria Evangelatou: Maria Evangelatou, "Krater of Nectar and Altar of God: The Bread of Life: The Theotokos as Provider of the Eucharist in Byzantine Culture," in *The Reception of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, eds. Thomas Arentzen and Mary B. Cunningham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 77–119.
- 14 Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons*; Cormack, "Mother of God in the Apse Mosaics," 91; Jean-Michel Spieser, "Liturgie et Programmes Iconographiques," *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991), 575–590, esp. 588–589.
- 15 To cite just a few studies: Kondakov, *Ikonografija Bogomateri*, 28–59; Franz Cumont, "L'adoration des Mages et l'art triomphal de Rome," *Memorie della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* III/3 (1932), 81–105; Johannes G. Deckers, "Die Huldigung der Magier in der Kunst der Spätantike," in *Die Heiligen Drei Könige, Darstellung und Verehrung* (Köln: Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle, 1982), 20–32; Richard C. Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi: Meaning in History of a Christian Story* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Natalia Teteriatnikov, "The 'Gift Giving' Image: The Case of the Adoration of the Magi," *Visual Resources* 13/3–4 (1998), 381–391; Fabrizio Bisconti, ed., *Temì di iconografia paleocristiana* (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 2000), 205–211; Jutta Dresken-Weiland, *Bild, Grab und Wort. Untersuchungen zu Jenseitsvorstellungen von Christen des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2010), 267–276.

- 16 Most recently see the discussion with further bibliography in: Maria Lidova, "Embodied Word: Telling the Story of Mary in Early Christian Art," in *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, eds. Mary B. Cunningham and Thomas Arentzen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 17–47.
- 17 The catacomb images featuring Mary as a central figure are found in Sts Peter and Marcellinus and Domitilla catacombs: Johannes Georg Deckers, Gabriele Mietke and Hans Reinhard Seeliger, *Die Katakombe "Santi Marcellino e Pietro": Repertorium der Malereien = La catacomba dei Santi Marcellino e Pietro: repertorio delle pitture*, Roma sotterranea cristiana; 6 (Città del Vaticano: Münster: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia cristiana; Aschendorff, 1987); Raphaella Giuliani, "Il cubicolo della Madonna con due Magi nelle catacombe romane dei SS. Marcellino e Pietro dopo il restauro. Declinazioni iconografiche della scena di Epifania," *Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie* 25 (2019), 41–60. A similar scene is carved on the surface of the marble crater in the collection of the National Roman Museum in Palazzo Massimo alle Terme: Carlo Gasparri and Rita Paris, *Palazzo Massimo Alle Terme. Le Collezioni* (Milano: Electa, 2013), 358–359. Frontal figure of the Virgin within the scene of the Adoration of the Magi also features in late antique sarcophagus recorded in Marseille and in the carved ambo in Thessaloniki: Jutta Dresken-Weiland, "Ein oströmischer Sarkophag in Marseille," *Römische Quartalschrift* 92/1–2 (1997), 1–17; Nino Zchomelidse, "The Epiphany of the *logos* in the Ambo in the Rotunda (Hagios Georgios) in Thessaloniki," in *Synergies in Visual Culture – Bildkulturen im Dialog*, eds. Manuela de Giorgi, Annette Hoffmann and Nicola Suthor (Paderborn: Fink, 2013), 85–96.
- 18 Kondakov, *Ikonografiia Bogomateri*, 50; Belting-Ihm, *Die Programme*, 52–54; Gerard Welten, *Theotokos*, 147–148; Barclay Lloyd, "Mary, Queen of the Angels," esp. 5–7.
- 19 Cumont, "L'adoration des Mages et l'art triomphal de Rome." The idea that an imperial connotation underlies this imagery has been heavily criticized by Thomas Mathews, but not all of his criticisms are grounded. Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 79–86.
- 20 The most detailed discussion being: Barclay Lloyd, "Mary, Queen of the Angels: Byzantine and Roman Images of the Virgin and Child Enthroned with Attendant Angels," but the author of this paper was not interested in the placement of this imagery in the apse.
- 21 Beat Brenk is among the few scholars who have tried to address the problem of the appearance of the Marian image inside the apse: Brenk, *The Apse*, 57–81.
- 22 On the way it worked in the late Middle Ages: Michele Bacci, "Locative Memory and the Pilgrim's Experience of Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, eds. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai and Hanna Vorholt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 67–75. On "mental images" in connection with early Christian liturgy: Georgia Frank, "'Taste and See': The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century," *Church History* 70/4 (2001), 619–643.
- 23 Maria Losito, *La Basilica della Natività di Betlemme e il "De anno Natali Christi" di Johannes Kepler. Architettura, liturgia e astronomia* (Bari: Maria Adda Editore, 2014); Michele Bacci, *The Mystic Cave: A History of the Nativity Church at Bethlehem* (Brno, Roma: Masaryk University, Viella, 2017) (with previous bibliography).
- 24 Recent excavations have unveiled early Christian mosaic floors that could belong to the fourth-century building.
- 25 On this architectural type most recently with further bibliography on the topic: Dale Kinney, "The Type of the Triconch Basilica," in *The Red Monastery Church*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 36–47.
- 26 James Keith Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Nativity and Infancy Narratives, New Testament Tools and Studies*, v. 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 87.
- 27 See the pilgrims' accounts: John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977).
- 28 Peter W. L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?: Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 184–194; Slobodan Ćurčić, "Cave and Church. An Eastern Christian Hierotopical Synthesis," in *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 216–236; Maria Losito, *La Basilica della Natività di Betlemme*, 45–51; Bacci, *The Mystic Cave*, 82–84.



- 29 “In the same country he discovered three places venerable as the localities of three sacred caves: and these also he adorned with costly structures, paying a fitting tribute of reverence to the scene of the first manifestation of the Saviour’s presence; while at the second cavern he hallowed the remembrance of his final ascension from the mountain top; and celebrated his mighty conflict, and the victory which crowned it, at the third.” The third being the place of Ascension. Eusebius, *de Laud. Const.* 9, PG 20. 1369. The discussion of the cave as a topos in church architecture: Ćurčić, “Cave and Church”, 217.
- 30 Joseph Munitiz, *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and Related Texts* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1997), 42.
- 31 On the late antique practice of creating external mosaics on buildings and vaults: Elisabeth Alföldi-Rosenbaum, “External Mosaic Decoration on Late Antique Buildings,” *Frümittelalterliche Studien* 4 (1970), 1–7.
- 32 For a general discussion of the decoration in the Bethlehem church: Bacci, *The Mystic Cave*, 90–95.
- 33 For similar views: Gary Vikan, *Sacred Images and Sacred Power in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2003), 10.
- 34 Smirnov, “Khristianskie Mozaiki Kipra,” 91–92; Dmitry Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), 224–248, esp. 232–233. For a detailed discussion of this theory with subsequent bibliography, various opinions and arguments for and against: Gary Vikan, “Early Byzantine Pilgrimage *Devotionalia* as Evidence of the Appearance of Pilgrimage Shrines,” *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie. Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum/Ergänzungsband* 1/20 (1995), 377–388.
- 35 On the *ampullae*, see: André Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza, Bobbio)* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1958); Jaś Elsner, “Replicating Palestine and Reversing the Reformation: Pilgrimage and Collecting at Bobbio, Monza and Walsingham,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 9/1 (1997), 117–130. See also the most recent discussion: Laura Veneskey, “Jerusalem Refracted: Geographies of the True Cross in Late Antiquity,” in *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500–1500*, eds. Renana Bartal, Neta Bodner and Bianca Kühnel (New York: Routledge, 2017), 68–72.
- 36 Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte*, 16–21. A detailed discussion of these *ampullae* and their differences: Innemée Karel, “A Newly Discovered Painting of the Epiphany in Deir Al-Surian,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 14/1 (2011), 63–85, 72–73.
- 37 This has been suggested by Ainalov the ampulla with Madonna and Child, with an angel on either side, apparently also refers to a revered image in Bethlehem Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins*, 244.
- 38 Vikan, “Early Byzantine Pilgrimage.”
- 39 Kurt Weitzmann, “Loca Sancta and the Representational Arts of Palestine,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974), 31–55; Margot Elsbet Fassler, “The First Marian Feast in Constantinople and Jerusalem: Chant Texts, Readings, and Homiletic Literature,” in *The Study of Medieval Chant. Paths and Bridges, East and West*, ed. Peter Jeffery (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), 25–88; Vikan, *Sacred Images*; Vered Shalev-Hurvitz, *Holy Sites Encircled: The Early Byzantine Concentric Churches of Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- 40 The echo of this tradition of semi-iconic, semi-narrative representation combining the image of Mary in Glory with the Adoration can be found in the medieval apse decoration in Catalonia (1100 ca) from the Santa Maria d’Àneu, Santa Maria Cap d’Aran, now at The Cloisters Museum in New York (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/472381>) and twelfth-century decoration of Santa Maria de Taüll. Marcello Angeben, “La Vierge à l’Enfant comme image du prêtre officiant. Les exemples des peintures romanes des Pyrénées et de Maderuelo,” *Codex Aquilarensis* 28 (2012), 29–74; Maria Lidova, “The Epiphany of the Mother of God. Early Byzantine Prototypes of Catalan Apse Decorations,” *Arts* 8/4 (forthcoming).
- 41 Karel, “A Newly Discovered Painting,” 74.
- 42 This is similar to the iconographic parallelism and certain interaction between the Roman gold glass vessels and mosaic decoration of conches in early Christian Roman churches: Fabrizio Bisconti, “Vetri dorati ed arte monumentale,” *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 74 (2001/2002), 177–193.

- 43 Marvin C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1965), vol. II, 33–35; Philip Grierson, “The Date of the Dumbarton Oaks Epiphany Medalion,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961), 221–224.
- 44 Other fragments of this ivory and second panel with the image of Christ are now dispersed between a number of European museums: Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1976), 87–90; Kurt Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), 531–532; Anthony Eastmond, “Plaque of the Adoration of the Magi and the Miracle of Salome,” in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000), 266–267; Maria Lidova, “Diptych iz Murano – Vizantiyskiy oklad VI veka [The Murano Diptych: Byzantine Ivory Cover of the Sixth Century]” (forthcoming).
- 45 Thomas F. Mathews, “The Early Armenian Iconographic Program of the Ejmiacin Gospel (Erevan, Matenadaran Ms 2374, Olim 229),” in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, eds. Nina G. Garsoïan, Thomas F. Matthews and Robert W. Thomson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 199–215; Vrej Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark. 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art* (Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), 157–158.
- 46 Dmitry Ainalov, “Chast’ ravenskogo diptikha v sobranii grafa Krowforda [Fragment of the Ravenna Diptych in the Collection of Count Crowford],” *Vizantiyskiy Vremennik* 5 (1898), 153–186, esp. 160.
- 47 Another image characterized by the same position of Mary’s arms is a Carolingian copy of an Early Christian ivory pyxis from Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna Museum: Ernst H. Gombrich, “Eine verkannte Karolingische Pyxis im Wiener Kunsthistorischen Museum,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 7 (1933), 1–14.
- 48 Gary Vikan, “Pilgrims in Magi’s Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art,” in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 97–107.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 103.
- 50 Teteriatnikov, “The ‘Gift Giving’ Image,” 381–391. Similar practice was characteristic of Western Europe: Agheben, “La Vierge à l’Enfant,” 36–39.
- 51 Ekaterina Nechaeva, *Embassies - Negotiations - Gifts : Systems of East Roman Diplomacy in Late Antiquity* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 173–174.
- 52 Ursula Nilgen, “The Epiphany and the Eucharist: On the Interpretation of Eucharistic Motifs in Mediaeval Epiphany Scenes,” *The Art Bulletin* 49/4 (1967), 311–316, esp. 311.
- 53 PG 58, 503–510.
- 54 De Beato Philogono 30-40 (PG 48, 747–756). Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (London: Routledge, 2000), 191–192.
- 55 Teteriatnikov, “The ‘Gift Giving’ Image,” 387. See also: Georgia Frank, “Singing Mary: The Annunciation and Nativity in Romanos the Melodist,” in *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, eds. Mary B. Cunningham and Thomas Arentzen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 170–179.
- 56 “...here, like the Magi, we bring gifts to Christ – faith, hope, and love like gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Germanus I, *On the Divine Liturgy*, trans. Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 75.
- 57 For similar views, see: Brenk, *The Apse*, 79, in which the author states “The Adoration of the magi teaches the onlooker how to approach and how to worship Christ and the Virgin.”
- 58 Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi*, 17–22.
- 59 André Grabar, “Quel est le sens de l’offrande de Justinien et de Théodora sur les mosaïques de Saint-Vital?” *Felix Ravenna* 30–31 (1960), 63–77, esp. 68. In this paper, the author denies any connection of the Adoration of the Magi to the Eucharist: “L’Adoration des Mages n’est pas une image du cycle eucharistique, mais du cycle triomphal et royal, celui qui magnifie la Majesté Divine et le pouvoir universel du Dieu. [...] Tout ceci est en dehors des thèmes eucharistiques.” For an alternative view on Eucharistic reading of the theme in Early and Later Middle Ages: Nilgen, “The Epiphany and the Eucharist.”
- 60 Maria Lidova, “The Imperial Theotokos: Revealing the Concept of Early Christian Imagery in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome,” *Convivium* II/2 (2015), 60–81; Maria Lidova,

- “*Maria Regina* on the “Palimpsest Wall” in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome. Historical Context and Imperial Connotation of the Early Byzantine Image,” *Iconographica* 16 (2017), 9–25; Terry and Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor*.
- 61 Nilgen, “The Epiphany and the Eucharist”; Ilene Haering Forsyth, “Magi and Majesty: A Study of Romanesque Sculpture and Liturgical Drama,” *The Art Bulletin* 50/3 (1968), 215–222.
- 62 See the discussion in Ann Van Dijk, “‘Domus Sanctae Dei Genetricis Mariae’ Art and Liturgy in the Oratory of Pope John VII,” in *Decorating the Lord’s Table. On the Dynamics between Image and Altar in the Middle Ages*, eds. Søren Kaspersen and Erik Thunø (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 13–42. See also: Robert Taft, “The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve Iconoclasm,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34 (1980–1981), 45–75.
- 63 Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, 192.
- 64 Francis J. Thomson, “The Slavonic Translation of the Hitherto Untraced Greek Homilia in Nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi by Atticus of Constantinople,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 118 (2000), 5–36, 19.
- 65 Germanus I, *On the Divine Liturgy*, 59. For an alternative translation, see: Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 141–143.
- 66 On the contamination of different semantic planes in connection with the apse: Josef Engemann, “Zu den Apsistituli des Paulinus von Nola,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 17 (1974), 21–46. For later Western tradition: Nilgen, “The Epiphany and the Eucharist”; Agheben, “La Vierge à l’Enfant.”
- 67 Ćurčić, “Cave and Church,” 216.
- 68 Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites. History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1978), vol. II.
- 69 Hans-Joachim Schulz, *Die Byzantinische Liturgie: vom Werden ihrer Symbolgestalt* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Lambertus-Verlag, 1964), 162–164; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*, 40–44.
- 70 Nilgen, “The Epiphany and the Eucharist,” 312.
- 71 Josef Engemann, “Palästinensische Pilgerampullen im F. J. Dölger-Institut in Bonn,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 16 (1973), 5–27.
- 72 On the Etchmiadzin Gospels: Mathews, “The Early Armenian Iconographic Program.” On Lorsch ivory: Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, n. 224; Paul Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings. Early Christian to Romanesque* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), 168–175.
- 73 Thomas J. Whittemore, *The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul, Second Preliminary Report, Work Done in 1933 and 1934; The Mosaics of the Southern Vestibule* (Paris: Oxford University Press, 1936).
- 74 This association drawn by me independently has already been noted by Nikodim Kondakov: Kondakov, *Ikonoграфия Богоматери*, 223, 229; Whittemore, *The Mosaics of St. Sophia*, 26–27.
- 75 Francesca Dell’Acqua, “Trame mariane. Le cintole di Maria nella Toscana medievale – prodromi,” in *Il Pane di Segale. Diciannove esercizi di storia dell’arte presentati ad Adriano Peroni*, ed. Saverio Lomartire (Varzi: Edizioni Guardamagna, 2016), 67–84; Francesca Dell’Acqua, “The ‘Cintola’ (Girdle) of Pisa Cathedral and Mary as Ecclesia,” in *Le Rideau, le voile et le dévoilement du Proche-Orient ancien à l’Occident médiéval*, eds. by Eric Palazzo, Lucien-Jean Bord and Vincent Dibiais (Paris: Geuthner, 2019), 283–311.
- 76 De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, vol. I, 400–401; 406–408.
- 77 Dale Kinney, “The Praesepia in Santa Maria in Trastevere and Santa Maria Maggiore,” in *Marmoribus Vestita. Miscellanea in onore di Federico Guidobaldi*, eds. Olof Brandt and Philippe Pergola (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2011), 777–795.
- 78 Maria Losito, *Il Santo Sepolcro e la Gerusalemme Celeste. Da architettura costantiniana a modello universale* (Bari: Mario Adda Editore, 2011).
- 79 Richard Krautheimer, “Introduction to an ‘Iconography’ of Mediaeval Architecture,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), 1–33.

# 11 Encountering presence

## Icon/relic/viewer

*Ljubomir Milanović*

Historians and theorists of the icon have stressed its status as a liminal object, through which God observes the viewer, and by which the viewer gains access to divine presence.<sup>1</sup> The icon's power is therefore understood not to derive from what is depicted on its pictorial surface, but through its ability to mediate the relation between the human and the sacred. The capacity of the icon to function as a threshold between earthly and heavenly realms is both underscored and problematized in paintings in which icons themselves are figured as discrete objects within historical contexts. Such representations raise the question of how the special status of the icon, of its promise of access to atemporal Being, operates within a purportedly real setting that records specific events and actual sacred ceremonies. This tension between a historicizing representation and the essentially atemporal operation of the icon is further complicated when an icon is placed in dialogue with a relic, namely, the body of a dead saint. This is precisely the case in the remarkable thirteenth-century fresco painting showing the *translatio* of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja from Mount Athos to the Studenica monastery in 1207. The fresco depicting the *translatio* of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja is part of a cycle representing his life, first painted in the chapel dedicated to the saint in the Studenica monastery, and subsequently painted in a similar manner in the Sopoćani and Gradac monasteries (Figure 11.1).<sup>2</sup> In the fresco, the body of the saint is



Figure 11.1 The translation of the body of St. Simeon, fresco, 1270–1276, south chapel of the katholikon, Sopoćani monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.

placed in front of the icon of the Theotokos. She operates here as a type of mediatrix, as an intercessor between earthly and divine realms, anticipating the position of St. Simeon Nemanja who, as a saint, will move between these two realms.<sup>3</sup> The icon has been turned toward the saint's body, directing the Holy Mother's gaze and beneficence to the dead saint whose head is elevated as if the relic is in the dialogue with Her.

The relic of the saint in the frescoes at Studenica, Sopoćani, and Gradac takes the position of the viewer of the icon. The saint's body had an indeterminate status both in the ritual of *translatio* itself and in representations of the ceremony. Being neither fully alive nor dead, it was understood to be in a state of perpetual non-decay and endowed with supernatural powers of healing and protection for the faithful.<sup>4</sup>

Being placed within a single depiction effaces ontological difference by showing the icon and the relic in relation to living bodies within a specific historical context. The special status of the icon, as a non-representation that promises access to the divine, and the relic, as a living-dead holy body, is here formally subsumed within an overarching representational schema in relation to an actual, embodied viewer. This paper investigates the complex interplay of modes of representation in relation to the different functions and ontological claims made by the icon and the saintly corporal relic. Their having been brought together within a single representational schema simultaneously challenges and underscores their respective claims to mediate divine presence and create sacred space.

As noted above, the scene of the *translatio* of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja is part of a hagiographical cycle dedicated to the saint.<sup>5</sup> To better comprehend this image, it is necessary to understand the context in which it was created. There are three fresco cycles depicting the Life of St. Simeon Nemanja known to us: in Studenica, Sopoćani, and Gradac, the last of which is no longer visible.<sup>6</sup> The oldest cycle was painted for the chapel of St. Simeon in the exonarthex of the Studenica monastery (Figure 11.2). Studenica was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and its construction began at 1186 by Stephen Nemanja (*ca.* 1113–1199) as his mausoleum church.<sup>7</sup> The exonarthex was later added to the church by King Radoslav (1228–1234), grandson of Stephen Nemanja. Scholars generally agree that exonarthex was built between 1233 and 1236 when it was also decorated with frescoes.<sup>8</sup> It was used as a funeral site, but there are no indications that King Radoslav was buried there.<sup>9</sup> Subsidiary chapels were built on both sides of the exonarthex; the north was dedicated to St. Nicholas, and the south was dedicated to St. Simeon Nemanja.<sup>10</sup> For this inquiry, the most interesting is the south parekklesion. The fresco scenes in the chapel are heavily damaged, and it is possible to identify some scenes only by comparison with a similar, later fresco cycle from the Sopoćani monastery, which is better preserved.<sup>11</sup>

The east wall of the chapel has a small niche under the window, which depicts a Virgin of the Blachernitissa type with her hands in a praying position and the Christ child in a medallion on her chest (Figure 11.3).<sup>12</sup> Four bishops carrying unfurled scrolls flank the niche. Standing figures occupy the lower register of the chapel. The south wall and part of the west wall display portraits of members of the Holy Nemanjić dynasty (Figure 11.4).<sup>13</sup> St. Simeon Nemanja is dressed in his monk's garb holding an open scroll in his hand. Next to him, we find the kneeling figure of a *hegumenos*.<sup>14</sup> Beside St. Simeon stands Stephen the First-Crowned (Prvovenčani) Serbian king (1217–1228). He too wears monastic garb and is shown in company of his son, King Radoslav, the founder of the exonarthex with his wife, Anna. In the donor composition, King Radoslav offers his earthly gift to his saintly grandfather, thereby soliciting the protection of his ancestors in the heavenly realm.



Figure 11.2 The entrance to the south chapel of the exonarthex, 1233–1236, Studenica monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.

The lower register of the north wall exhibits portraits of other important members of the ruling family and the Serbian church (Figure 11.5). Close to the west wall is a representation of *hieromonk* Sava who would become the third Serbian archbishop as Sava II (1263–1271).<sup>15</sup> Next to him, one finds an image of Arsenije (Arsenius) I (1233–1263), the second Serbian archbishop and successor of Sava I, on the throne of the church. He is followed by a portrait of Sava I (1219–1233), next to the door. On the other side of the door, on the north wall, is a small niche with a bust-length representation of Christ. Deacon-angels, as Gordana Babić has defined them, are painted above the niche.<sup>16</sup>

The entire upper register of the chapel shows a hagiographical cycle dedicated to St. Simeon Nemanja, a novelty in Serbian medieval painting. This series illustrates the life, death, and translation of the saint's relics from the Hilandar monastery to Studenica. The cycle of four scenes starts on the east wall where two, severely damaged scenes are depicted. The first likely shows the departure of Stephen Nemanja to Mount Athos, or alternatively, Nemanja taking monastic vows.<sup>17</sup> The cycle continues on the south wall where the upper register contains a representation of Nemanja's arrival at Mount Athos. Although the composition is almost entirely effaced, traces of what



Figure 11.3 The Virgin of the Blachernitissa type, fresco, east wall, south chapel of the exonarthex, 1233–1236, Studenica monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.

look to be hooves indicate the presence of a horse and, likely, a rider.<sup>18</sup> By analogy with a similar cycle from the Sopoćani monastery, one may conclude that this scene represents the arrival of Stephen Nemanja to Mount Athos and the Vatopedi monastery. The composition on the west wall is completely destroyed, but again, based on the Sopoćani cycle, one may safely assume that this was the scene of St. Simeon Nemanja's death (Figure 11.6). At Sopoćani, the west wall's upper register was reserved for the death of St. Simeon Nemanja. The dominant feature of the image is a rush mat on which the body of the saint has been laid out. Three figures in monk's cloaks lean over his body, while one figure, whose head is now missing, is located near the head of the saint. According to Sava's description of his father's death, this probably represents him kissing his father's corpse, which was a common manner for representing the death of a monk.<sup>19</sup>

The upper register of the entire north wall is reserved for the most important composition from the cycle of St. Simeon Nemanja: the *translatio* of his relics to Serbia (Figure 11.7).<sup>20</sup> The scene of the *translatio* on the north wall is bisected by the representation of an icon of the Virgin. The right side of the composition has a building in



Figure 11.4 Standing figures, fresco, south wall, south chapel of the exonarthex, 1233–1236, Studenica monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.



Figure 11.5 Standing figures, fresco, north wall, south chapel of the exonarthex, 1233–1236, Studenica monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.





*Figure 11.6* The death of St. Simeon Nemanja, fresco, 1270–1276, south chapel of the katholikon, Sopoćani monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.



*Figure 11.7* The translation of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja fresco, south wall, south chapel of the exonarthex, 1233–1236, Studenica monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.

the background, which resembles the monastery of Studenica (Figure 11.8). The main building represents a single-nave church, with a gabled roof, marble façade, and a red dome covered with lead, which is the characteristic feature of the roof of the church of the Virgin Mary at Studenica. Evidence has been found indicating that the dome was originally built out of brick and, after having been restored, now appears identical to



Figure 11.8 The translation of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja, detail, fresco, south wall, south chapel of the exonarthex, 1233–1236, Studenica monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.

the one in the fresco.<sup>21</sup> The depicted church is surrounded by a crenellated wall with towers, which probably symbolizes the walls of the Studenica monastery.<sup>22</sup>

In front of the monastery's wall, a large group of people is painted of whom all those visible are bearded and wear purple, white, or red monk's cowls or *koukoulion*. The other members of the welcoming delegation are dressed as deacons with tonsures on their heads.<sup>23</sup> The groups are connected by two principal figures standing in the foreground, one of whom wears the vestments of a bishop, likely the bishop of Rascia Kallinikos, while the other appears to have only a plain, white robe.<sup>24</sup> Both of them carry books, presumably the Gospel, in their left hands. The bishop makes a gesture of greeting toward the approaching body of the saint with his right hand.

The remaining portion of the left side of the composition shows a group of people carrying the body of St. Simeon Nemanja. The best preserved is the front bearer of the bier who is dressed in an elaborate costume with bands of jeweled decoration. Judging by his costume, another individual of noble origin assists him.<sup>25</sup> The legs of the saint on the bier are only partially visible as are the legs of the other participants in the *translatio*. What connects the two sides of the composition is the icon of the Virgin Mary, positioned exactly above the entrance that leads from the exonarthex into the chapel. The image of the Virgin is above an image of Christ placed on a painted *mandilion* in the door's lunette. As mentioned above, the icon belongs to a series of representations of the Mother of God holding a scroll.

Once established, the iconographical program depicting the life and death of St. Simeon Nemanja would be repeated in other royal mausoleum churches of the Nemanjić dynasty in the thirteenth century, namely those at the Sopoćani and Gradac monasteries. While the fresco cycle in Gradac (ca. 1276–1282) is no longer visible and partially known only through old photographs, the best-preserved example comes from the Sopoćani monastery, constructed by the King Stephen Uroš I (1243–1276) and painted between 1270 and 1276.<sup>26</sup> As in the Studenica cycle, the cycle in Sopoćani was located in the south subsidiary chapel of the catholicon church dedicated to the Savior. The north chapel was dedicated to St. Stephen Protomartyr, and only fragments of the cycle are preserved today.<sup>27</sup>

The cycle of St Simeon Nemanja in the Sopoćani follows an iconographic schema, which echoes that of Studenica. The *translatio* of St. Simeon Nemanja at Sopoćani is represented in the upper register on the north wall of the chapel (Figure 11.1). As in Studenica, the scene is divided into images of a procession (Figure 11.9) and the reception of his relic (Figure 11.10). The main part of the composition shows a bier bearing the saint's body whose front end is being carried by a nobleman dressed in an elaborate garment with a red cloak decorated with patterned gold trim fastened centrally by a large, round, bejeweled clasp. Next to him are several figures of whom only the heads are visible. On the opposite side, another noble person dressed similarly to the leader supports the bier. He is surrounded by a group of people one of whom holds his



*Figure 11.9* The translation of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja, left detail, fresco, 1270–1276, south chapel of the catholikon, Sopoćani monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.



Figure 11.10 The translation of the body of St. Simeon Nemanja, right detail, fresco, 1270–1276, south chapel of the katholikon, Sopoćani monastery, Serbia. Photo: author.

arm. This figure has a long gray beard and is dressed in a purple garment.<sup>28</sup> These two bearers are clearly noble figures and very likely represent King Stephen Prvovenčani and his brother Vukan (ca. 1165–1207).<sup>29</sup> The bier itself is covered with a long reddish fabric on top of which the body of St. Simeon Nemanja has been laid. His arms are crossed at his chest. He wears monk's clothes and has a nimbus. The body is turned in a position such that he faces the icon of the Virgin and the reception scene.

The historical moment depicted in the scene of *translatio* is important because it shows not only the translation of Nemanja's body from Hilandar to Studenica and the political implications generated by such an action, but the formation and translation of his cult. The Grand Duke (župan) Stephen Nemanja, who ruled Serbia, abdicated and took monastic vows in 1196 at the Studenica monastery.<sup>30</sup> A year later, Nemanja, now monk Simeon, traveled to Mount Athos, where he would spend the last years of his life. After spending a year at the Vatopedi monastery, Simeon, joined by his son Sava, founded a new religious community at the site of an abandoned Byzantine monastery known as Hilandar. Simeon died there in 1199 and was buried in the church dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin.<sup>31</sup>

Due to the uncertain political situation at Mount Athos after the fall of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade and at the behest of his brothers Stephen and Vukan, Sava decided eight years after the death of his father to open the tomb

in order to elevate and translate his body.<sup>32</sup> This was another important step in the formation of his saintly cult.<sup>33</sup> Sava wrote little about this event except to note that he opened his father's tomb and that the body was discovered whole and intact.<sup>34</sup> As Golubinski notes, the word intact does not necessarily mean uncorrupted but that the skeleton was complete. Moreover, the word intact describes the situation of the body as we would call it today, *in situ*.<sup>35</sup> His other son, Stephen the First-Crowned, describes the remains of his father as a relic and a victorious body that gave off a pleasant odor but does not describe the body's state of preservation in detail.<sup>36</sup>

As the two oldest hagiographies of St. Simeon Nemanja assert, it is not clear what state of preservation the body was in when it was found after eight years in the tomb. Some scholars have, however, convincingly argued that it was uncorrupted.<sup>37</sup> The question therefore arises as to why, in the case of St. Simeon Nemanja, the Byzantine model of *translatio* in which the sarcophagi or reliquary was represented as closed was abandoned, in preference for the open display of the uncorrupted body, which was largely a Western tradition.<sup>38</sup> Scholars such as Vojislav Djurić and Gordana Babić see the possibility that the iconographic origins of the cycles of the *translatio* of St. Simeon Nemanja in Studenica, Sopoćani, and Gradac are found in the thirteenth-century painting from the chapel of St. Stephen at Žiča.<sup>39</sup> The most relevant iconographic precedents for the representation of the translation of St. Simeon Nemanja in Studenica and Sopoćani, as well as that of St. Stephen in Žiča, are those that show the *translatio* of the body of the saint exposed to the beholder. The fresco in San Clemente in Rome painted *ca.* 1085 depicts the translation of St. Clement or St. Cyril with his body exposed.<sup>40</sup> There is another example from Italy that more closely resembles the *translatio* of St. Simeon Nemanja in which the body is displayed on a bier without any covering. In the crypt of the cathedral of Anagni, there is a hagiographic cycle in the central apse dedicated to the passion and translations of the patron saint of Anagni, St. Magnus *ca.* 1200.<sup>41</sup>

One can speculate several possible explanations for the decision to openly display the body of the saint in the representation of the translation of St. Simeon Nemanja. First, perhaps the most obvious reason is simply that body was uncorrupted. Saint Sava's words in his Life of St. Simeon are not definitive as to the status of the body. He saw his honorable body whole and intact and further adds that this is always the case with those who pleased God.<sup>42</sup>

There could also be a political motivation for openly displaying the body of St. Simeon during the *translatio*. The body of St. Simeon Nemanja had a twofold function in the construction of the ideology of the royal saint and the establishment of the holy Nemanjić dynasty.<sup>43</sup> After his abdication, Simeon Nemanja left his crown to his younger son Stephen, which went against the usual practice of the eldest male inheriting his father's throne. He left some provinces under the jurisdiction of his first son Vukan.<sup>44</sup> Sava obviously approved his father's decision, but also wanted to secure peace between the brothers. For that reason, he decided to use the body of Simeon Nemanja as a means by which to establish a new line of inheritance to the throne. As Peter Brown has argued: "high prestige objects as relics can play an important role in deeply divided communities."<sup>45</sup> Sava's political agenda is reflected in the representation of the *translatio* of St. Simeon where one finds a scene showing both brothers at peace, carrying the saint's body together. In this instance, the scene of *translatio* served to legitimate a change on the throne and to promote the establishment of a new line of royal patrimonial descent.

One can find a third, potential motivation for the open display of St. Simeon Nemanja's body in the shift regarding the perception of the saintly body that occurred between eleventh and thirteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> There was a change in people's attitudes toward the dead in the West. The transition from one realm to the next, the notion of the trespassing of mortal boundaries, evoked images of a lengthy corporeal progression that was no longer seen to end in a totally disincarnated world. The body was not understood only as the vehicle for the soul, which should be left to decay. As Nadia Tazi has written: "the bond with heaven may manifest itself in a supernaturally preserved corpse, but only a body endowed with a particularly rarefied texture can earn the Kingdom of God."<sup>47</sup> The body, especially that of the saint, was purified of death and thus worthy of being publicly displayed.

A unique iconographic solution in the scene of the translation of St. Simeon Nemanja's relics is the representation of the icon of the Virgin Mary, which connects the two sides of the composition. The Virgin intercedes on behalf not only of St. Simeon Nemanja, but the entire ruling family who are included in the composition. Ivan Djordjević and Miodrag Marković have reconstructed the text on the scroll according to a similar one preserved in the Sopoćani fresco. The intercessory text of a typical prayer of supplication was here reduced to a single sentence, likely due to the lack of a space; it reads: "Accept, o Lord, the petitions of those praying to Thee."<sup>48</sup> Vojislav Djurić argued that there was a relationship between the fresco and the main cult icon in the Studenica monastery.<sup>49</sup> A Virgin of the mediatrix type was probably painted on the east pair of pillars, next to the iconostasis, where it was coupled with a representation of Christ. It is possible that the icon of the Virgin was portable and was the one that was used to welcome the body of the saint during its translation in 1207.<sup>50</sup>

The icon of the Virgin mediatrix in the composition of the translation of St. Simeon's body is placed in dialogue with saint's relic. This unique encounter between the relic and the icon raises the question of their relationship. Relics and icons have long been associated with each other.<sup>51</sup> For the Byzantines, icons were exact likeness of their models and, in words of Dagron, "they were both the reproduction of (ἐκτύπωμα) and equivalent to (ὁμοίωμα) the models."<sup>52</sup> According to John of Damascus, they are representations of the invisible, tangible models of incomprehensible essence that bring man closer to the comprehension of the glory of God.<sup>53</sup> Depictions of icons elucidate the primordial need of a man to present a higher, self-indivisible world through matter accessible to his senses. The Incarnation of the Son of God when the Word was made flesh (Jn 1:14) is the core of Damascus's thought, which justifies the conception of Christ's human figure.<sup>54</sup> The icon represented is similar to its prototype, but it is not identical to it; rather, it implies a likeness to the holy image and provides material evidence of invisible God. The miracles that took place by means of icons were for the faithful evidence of the omnipresence of God and that the Incarnation was the foundation for the contemplation of the archetype.<sup>55</sup>

As for relics, saints' bodies also provided material evidence through which we are able to address a glorified saint. The uncorrupted bodies of saints, as holy relics, became conduits between earth and heaven, humanity and the divine. In the words of Gregory of Nazianzos (ca. 329–390), "the bodies of the martyrs have the same power as their holy souls, whether one touches them or just venerates them."<sup>56</sup> Thus, saints were able to intercede with God on behalf of humankind. As such, saints and their bodies had an important role in the economy of salvation.

In his first Oration on the Icons, John of Damascus argued that:

The saints during their earthly lives were filled with the holy spirit and when they fulfill their course, the grace of the holy spirit does not depart from their souls or their bodies in the tombs, or from their likenesses and holy images; not by the nature of these things, but by grace and power.<sup>57</sup>

According to Damascus's writings, the bodies and icons of saints contain the grace of the Holy Spirit and thus are imbued with holiness and become objects suitable for worship. In other words, as Charles Barber has argued, "for John of Damascus, the icon and the saint's body marked a continuing and present space for the holy."<sup>58</sup>

As we have seen, both icons and relics can intercede on behalf of humankind. They are also material evidence of the miracle of the Incarnation. Shown together, as at Studenica and Sopoćani, they merit special attention. In the words of Alexei Lidov, an art object should never be observed as a flat surface, but interpreted in a broader context that includes an analysis of its function within the experience of the beholder and his or her surroundings.<sup>59</sup> According to the Lidov's observation, the fresco of the translation of St. Simeon Nemanja shows several modes of address to the beholder: within the composition; between the icon, the relic, and participants in the historical scene depicted; and from without, between the image and the beholders in the chapel.

Juxtaposed in an imaginative dialogue, both holy and performative, the icon and the relic in the fresco of the *translatio* of St. Simeon Nemanja define a hierotopical setting by creating a sacred space.<sup>60</sup> Lidov agrees that "the most significant aspect of relics and miraculous icons was the role they played in the creation of particular sacred spaces."<sup>61</sup> In the fresco of the *translatio* of St. Simeon, the icon and the relic symbolically unite two physically separated *topoi* and create a unique sacred space. One *topos* is that of the Hilandar monastery, as represented by the body of the saint; the other one is that of the Studenica monastery in the sign of the icon of the Virgin mediatrix. Dragan Vojvodić has previously noted the strong link between the Hilandar monastery and the miracles that occurred at the tomb of the saint in Studenica. Vojvodić points out that *The Service of St. Simeon Nemanja*, written by his son Sava around 1227–1233, already emphasized the strong connection between these two places. Simeon's decision to spend his last year at the Hilandar monastery was a source of blessing for him, one that would receive its final, physical manifestation in the form of myrrh flowing from his tomb at the Studenica monastery.<sup>62</sup> A mystical link was thereby established between the sacred spaces of Hilandar and Studenica, and the fresco of translation represents its visual confirmation.

The sacred space created between the icon and the body of the saint also includes the other participants present at the historical event. The sacredness of the space is further underscored by the presence of a censor and burned incense as part of the services held by the bishop. The whole scene depicts the symbolic unification of the state, represented by the body of the ruler-saint, and the church through the icon of the Virgin mediatrix and an officiating bishop. This is an exemplary manifestation of the paradigm of the formation of the royal saint's cult, based on the triadic ruler-monk-saint model. Namely, Sava Nemanjić created the cult of his father and later the Nemanjić dynasty based on the threefold model of ruler, monk, and saint. Within the royal saint cult, Stephen Nemanja was presented as an ideal model of an earthly ruler: a warrior who fought not only for the liberation of his own state, but for the Christian

faith as well.<sup>63</sup> As an ideal ruler, he was selected by God as head of the state with all the accompanying attributes that pertained to such a figure.<sup>64</sup> Nemanja's equally important status as a monk is based on the model that derives from the Byzantine hagiographic legacy.<sup>65</sup> The last component, the sanctity of a triadic ruler-monk-saint, was emphasized by the image of *translatio* of Nemanja's body. Thus, the scene does not only represent the translation of the saint's body to Studenica, but the translation of his cult from the Hilandar monastery to Serbia and Studenica monastery. There the cult would receive its final stage of formation, which would result in its physical confirmation by the discovery of myrrh flowing from St. Simeon Nemanja's tomb.<sup>66</sup> This would be also the final step in the formation of Nemanjić's royal ideology.<sup>67</sup>

The Virgin on the icon with the inscription on the scroll does not communicate only with the saint and his retinue but, along with the saint's body, also addresses the beholder.<sup>68</sup> According to Hans Jørgen Frederiksen, through the icon and the relic in the fresco, "the believer moves into dimensions of the holy space and the holy time."<sup>69</sup> The creation of a sacred space inside the image is transformed and projected into the chapel. The whole fresco creates another space, inside the chapel, where the believer can actually read the inscription of the prayer on the scroll of the icon.<sup>70</sup> In this way, the reader-viewer articulates the inscription, thereby becoming a participant and having access to the holy. As Robert Nelson informs us, however, this does not provide access to the divine itself: "The words are animated and voiced by the readers. The images are seen and venerated by the viewers. Both are means of access to the holy, but not the divine itself."<sup>71</sup> The place of the beholder is important for the creation of the spatial image and is the most characteristic component of Byzantine hierotopy. Since, in Byzantium, the icon was not considered a flat painting, it was always supplemented with a spatial vision that extended from depicted space into the real space between the image and the beholder, as is the case in Studenica and Sopoćani.<sup>72</sup>

In the Studenica chapel, where the whole cycle of the *Life* of St. Simeon Nemanja was initiated, the scene of the *translatio* of saint's body has a hierotopical setting. The designer of the fresco program accommodated the compositions to an irregular, small space but ingeniously positioned the icon of the Virgin Mary in the composition of the *translatio* so that she would be located above the doorway, just above the *mandilion* in the lunette with the image of Christ. Furthermore, the placement of the icon above the doorway in the Studenica chapel instructs the beholder that their prayers will only be fulfilled through the intercession of the new royal saint whose body is laid inside the church, aided by the Virgin Mary and Christ. By observing the fresco of the translation of St. Simeon in the Studenica chapel, a spectator participates in a reenactment of the historical moment. At the same time, the beholder is connected with the sacred place, namely with the tomb of St. Simeon located in the southwest bay of the church nave. Here, two sacred spaces, atemporal and temporal, coexist. The physical presence of the body of the saint in Studenica, together with the icon of the Virgin mediatrix, is contextualized through the scene of the translation of St. Simeon's body.

The impact on spectators of the depiction of the encounter between the icon and the relic in the fresco of the translation of St. Simeon Nemanja is perhaps best understood in light of the concluding remarks of Sava Nemanjić in his father's biography:

For this reason, my dear brothers, we should grieve and imagine ourselves in our lives as those who are beyond the world, as those who have life in the heavens, carrying out this life peacefully, having the hope that we will receive eternal good in



Jesus Christ our Lord by the intercession of our holy Virgin as our protector and by the prayers of our most honorable and blissful father and the ktetor, Simeona (Nemanja).<sup>73</sup>

The body of the first Serbian royal saint St. Simeon Nemanja was used as a visible sign of a promised resurrection in the formation of the cult of royal Serbian saints and thereby served as a means of legitimating dynastic rule. The icon of the Virgin mediatrix, together with the body of the saint, reveals the formation of sainthood that was followed by miracles in Studenica that confirmed his holiness. This signaled the fulfillment of the saint's new role of securing the prosperity of the holy dynasty of the Nemanjić, as well as the Serbian state and people.

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### Notes

- 1 Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), 83–151; Georgije Ostrogorski, *O verovanjima i shvatanjima vizantinaca* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1970), 182–203; Richard Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London: George Philip, c 1985); Gilbert Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 45 (1991), 23–33; Leonid A. Ouspenski, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Maria Zoubouli, "L'icône e(s) t l'original," in *L'icône dans la pensée et dans l'art. Constitutions, contestations, réinventions de la notion d'image divine en contexte chrétien*, eds. Kristine Mitalaitė and Ancu Vasiliu (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2017), 93–111.
- 2 For the fresco cycles, see P. Winfield, "Four Historical Compositions from the Medieval Kingdom in Serbia," *Byzantinoslavica* 19 (1958), 251–278; Vojislav J. Djurić, "Istorijske kompozicije u srpskom slikarstvu srednjega veka i njihove književne paralele," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 8/2 (1964), 69–90, 72–90; Gordana Babić, *Les chapelles annexes des églises byzantines; fonction liturgique et programmes iconographiques* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969); Branislav Todić, "What Was the Opening Scene of the Cycle of St. Simeon Nemanja at Studenica?" in *Obraz Vizantii: Sbornik statei v cest' O. S. Popovoi* (Moscow: Severnii Palomnik, 2008), 519–524. For the date of the translation, see Ljubomir Maksimović, "O godini prenosa Nemanjinih moštiju u Srbiju," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 24/25 (1986), 437–443.
- 3 Often, this type of representation of the Virgin is accompanied by the epithet ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΤΙΣ and ΑΓΙΟΣΟΤΙΤΙΣΣΑ. For the iconographic type of the Virgin mediatrix, see: Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Ikonografiia Bogomateri* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1914), 294–315; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Two images of the Virgin in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14 (1960), 69–86; Nancy P. Ševčenko, "Icons in

- the Liturgy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991), 45–57; Ivan M. Djordjević and Miodrag Marković, “On the Dialogue Relationship between the Virgin and Christ in East Christian Art,” *Zograf* 28 (2000–2001), 13–48 with older bibliography.
- 4 Ljubomir Milanović, “The Politics of Translatio: The Visual Representation of the Translation of Relics in the Early Christian and Medieval Period, The Case of St. Stephen.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2011, 36–40. More on relics, see *Vostochnokhristianskie relikvii*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-traditsiia, 2003); Irina A. Shalina, *Relikvii v vostochnokhristianskoj ikonografii* (Moscow: Indrik, 2005); Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2009); *Treasures of Heaven. Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and James Robinson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); *Saints and Sacred Matter. The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015).
  - 5 The Life of St. Simeon Nemanja is described by several hagiographers, starting with his sons, Sava and Stefan, the First-Crowned king (Prvovenčani) and later, in the mid- and late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, by Domentijan (Domentianos) and Teodosije (Theodosios). Sveti Sava, “Život Stefana Nemanje (Svetog Simeon),” in *Stare srpske biografije*, trans. Milivoje Bazić (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1924), 3–29; Stefan Prvovenčani, “Život svetog Simeona,” in *Sabrani spisi*, ed. Ljiljana Juhas-Georgievska (Beograd: Prosveta, Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), 61–103; Domentijan, *Životi svetoga Save i svetoga Simeona*, ed. Lazar Mirković (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1938); Teodosije, *Žitije svetoga Save*, ed. Lazar Mirković (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1984).
  - 6 The fresco cycle of the *translatio* of Simeon Nemanja from the south chapel in the Gradac monastery was visible until the beginning of the twentieth century but due to the missing roof, the fresco becomes unreadable. For old photographs, see: Gabriel Millet, *La peinture du Moyen Âge en Yougoslavie* (Serbie, Macédonie et Monténégro), Album (Paris: Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1957), vol. II, 49–67.
  - 7 On Studenica, see Milan Kašanin, Milka Čanak-Medić, Jovanka Maksimović, Branislav Todić and Mirjana Šakota, *Manastir Studenica* (Beograd: Književne novine, 1968); Gordana Babić, Vojislav Korać and Sima Ćirković, *Studenica* (Beograd: Jugoslovenska revija, 1986); Milka Čanak-Medić and Djurdje Bošković, *Arhitektura Nemanjinog doba I*, Spomenici arhitekture srednjeg veka-korpus sakralnih gradjevina (Beograd: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture SR Srbije: Arheološki institut, 1986), 79–146; *Osam vekova Studenice. Zbornik radova*, eds. Episkop Žički Stefan, Ljubomir Durković-Jakšić, Atanasije Jeftić, Dušan Lj. Kašić, Svetislav Mandić and Djordje Trifunović (Beograd: Sveti arhijerejski sinod Srpske pravoslavne crkve, 1986); Jovanka Kalić, “L’époque de Studenica dans l’histoire serbe,” in *Studenica i vizantijska umetnost oko 1200. godine. Međunarodni naučni skup povodom 800 godina manastira Studenice i stogodišnjice SANU, septembar 1986*, ed. Vojislav Korać (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1988), 23–32; Ljubomir Maksimović, “L’idéologie du souverain dans l’Etat serbe et la construction de Studenica,” in *Studenica i vizantijska umetnost oko 1200. godine. Međunarodni naučni skup povodom 800 godina manastira Studenice i stogodišnjice SANU, septembar 1986*, ed. Vojislav Korać (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1988), 35–48.
  - 8 For the different dates of the exonarthex and its painting, see Djurić, “Istorijske kompozicije,” 73; Svetislav Mandić, “Dva predloga o freskama studeničke spoljne priprate,” *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 2 (1966), 87–103; Babić, *La chapel*, 142; Kašanin, Čanak-Medić, Maksimović, Todić and Šakota, *Studenica*, 73–74; Babić, Korać and Ćirković, *Studenica*, 53–58; Ivan M. Djordjević, “Mileševa i Studenica,” in *Mileševa u istoriji srpskog naroda. Međunarodni naučni skup povodom sedam i po vekova postojanja, juni 1985. Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti* (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1987), 69–80. Danica Popović, *Srpski vladarski grob* (Beograd: Institut za istoriju umetnosti, 1992), 46; Branislav Todić, “Sopoćani i Gradac. Uzajamnost funerarnih programa dve crkve,” *Zograf* 32 (2006–2007), 59–77; Todić, “What Was the Opening,” 520; Milka Čanak-Medić and Branislav Todić, *Manastir Studenica* (Novi Sad: Platoneum 2015), 97–111. For a different interpretation on the ktetor of the exonarthex, see Radomir Nikolić, “Ko je ktitor priprate Bogorodičine crkve u Studenici?” *Saopštenja XIII* (1981), 57–66.

- 9 Popović, *Srpski vladarski grob*, 46–47; see also Marko Popović, *Manastir Studenica, arheološka otkrića* (Beograd: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture: Arheološki institut, 2015), 43–59.
- 10 Čanak-Medić and Todić, *Manastir Studenica*, 98.
- 11 Vojislav J. Djurić, *Sopoćani* (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga: Prosveta, 1963); Todić, “What Was the Opening,” 521; Oliver Tomić, “Zidno slikarstvo XIII veka u Sopoćanima.” PhD Thesis, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, 2010, 519–523.
- 12 On the Blachernatissa type, see Mirjana Tatić-Đurić, “Vrata slova. Ka liku i značenju Vlahernitise,” *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 8 (1972), 61–89; Michele Bacci, “With the Paintbrush of the Evangelist Luke,” in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira Editore; London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 79–89; Chryssanthi Baltoyanni, “The Mother of God in Portable Icons,” in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira Editore; London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 139–155; Robert Cormak, “The Mother of God in Apse Mosaics,” in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira Editore; London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 91–105; Euthymios Tsigaridas, “The Mother of God in Wall-Painting,” in *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira Editore; London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 125–137; Bisera Pentcheva, “Rethorical Images of the Virgin: The Icon of the ‘Unusual Miracle’ at the Blachernai,” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 38 (2000), 34–55.
- 13 Svetozar Radojčić, *Portreti srpskih vladara u srednjem veku* (Skoplje: Muzej Južne Srbije u Skoplju, 1934), 15–17.
- 14 According to the reading of Gordana Babić, see: Babić, *Les chapelles*, 142.
- 15 Hieromoines was a monk who received the holy orders; see, Caesarius Tondini, “The Future of the Russian Church I,” *The Catholic World* 20/118 (1875), 544–557, 555.
- 16 Babić, *Les chapelles*, 144, see also Gordana Babić, “Nizovi portreta srpskih episkopa, arhiepiskopa i patrijarha u zidnom slikarstvu XIII -XIV v.,” in *Sava Nemanjić Sveti Sava. Istorija i predanje, Medjunarodni naučni skup, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, decembar 1976*, ed. Vojislav J. Djurić (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1979), 319–342, 320–321.
- 17 The only preserved part of the composition is the left-hand corner. Here, one sees several figures led by a nobleman who are grouped around a town building or a gate with a gabled roof. They appear to be wishing farewell to someone who, based upon what remains of the lower part of the garment, was dressed as a monk, see Djurić, “Istorijske kompozicije,” 76. According to Branislav Todić, this scene represents moment when Nemanja takes monastic vows. He based his argument on a new reading of the partially preserved inscription of the scene, which he reconstructs as reading: “Saint Simeon Nemanja Receiving the Angelic Habit”; see, Todić, “What Was the Opening,” 521–522.
- 18 According to Djurić, two horses formerly stood in the left part of the composition, now known only through drawings of Svetislav Mandić, Djurić, “Istorijske kompozicije,” 76
- 19 Sava, “Život Stefana Nemanje,” 21.
- 20 Sava Nemanjić was the first who wrote about the event, Sava, “Život Stefana Nemanje,” 22–24, followed by his brother Stephan Prvovenčani who were witnesses to, and participants in, the ritual, Prvovenčani, “Život svetog Simeona,” 87–88. Later, we have record of two St. Simeon’s biographers, Domentijan, *Životi svetoga Save i svetoga Simeona*, 303–304, and Teodosije, *Žitije svetog Save*, 82–85.
- 21 Čanak-Medić and Bošković, *Arhitektura Nemanjinog doba*, 79–118.
- 22 Svetlana Popović, *Krst u krugu: arhitektura manastira u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Beograd, Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture: Prosveta, 1994), 131–161; Popović, *Manastir Studenica*, 54.
- 23 Winfield has argued that they appear to be deacons of the Serbian church since they have roman tonsures and beards. He reads the tonsures as a sign of catholic influence, which entered Italian painting in the thirteenth century but is rare in the Eastern Church, outside of Serbia. For the fresco of the Serbian St. Sava showing him with a tonsure in the portrait in Mileševa, see: Winfield, “Four Historical Compositions,” 251–278. On this problem, see also, Svetozar Radojčić, “Tonzure Sv. Save,” *Godišnjak muzeja Juzne Srbije* I (1937), 149–159; for more on the history of tonsures and this practice in the Orthodox church, see

- also Bojan Miljković, "Kružni postrig u pravoslavnoj crkvi," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 50/2 (2013), 987–1002, especially 994.
- 24 Todić, "What Was the Opening," 519.
- 25 According to Sava's biography, both brothers, Stephen Prvovenčani and Vukan, carried their father's body; Sveti Sava, "Život Stefana Nemanje," 24, also, Djurić, "Istorijske kompozicije," 77–78.
- 26 For images of Gradac, see Millet, *La peinture*, 59, 4. For Gradac dates, see Dragana Pavlović, "Židno slikarstvo Blagoveštenske crkve manastira Gradac." MA thesis, University of Belgrade, 2010, with older bibliography. On the monastery Sopoćani and different dates of frescoes, see: Djurić, *Sopoćani*, 23–26; Olivera Kandić and Divna Milosević, *Manastir Sopoćani* (Beograd: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika, 1985), Branislav Todić, "Apostol Andrej i srpski arhiepiskopi na freskama Sopoćana," in *Treća jugoslovenska konferencija vizantologa*, eds. Ljubomir Maksimović, Ninoslava Radošević and Ema Radulović (Beograd: Vizantološki institut, Kruševac: Narodni muzej, 2002), 361–378; Tomić, *Židno slikarstvo*, 71–82.
- 27 Babić, *La chapel*, 145.
- 28 Djurić assumed that this figure represents Saint Sava, see Djurić, "Istorijske kompozicije," 82, also Desanka Milošević, "Ikonografija svetog Save u srednjem veku," in *Sava Nemanjić Sveti Sava. Istorija i predanje, Međunarodni naučni skup, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, decembar 1976*, ed. Vojislav J. Djurić (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1979), 279–316, 291.
- 29 Djurić, "Istorijske kompozicije," 81.
- 30 For the date, see Jovanka Kalić, "Stefan Nemanja u modernoj istoriografiji," 5–20, see also Danica Popović, "O nastanku kulta Svetog Simeon," in *Pod okriljem svetosti*, ed. Danica Popović (Beograd: Balkanološki instituta, SANU, 2006), 41–75, 46.
- 31 Sava, "Život Stefana Nemanje," 22; Prvovenčani, "Život svetog Simeona," 84–86; Domentijan, *Životi Svetoga Save i Svetoga Simeona*, 283–287; Teodosije, *Žitije Svetog Save*, 59. For the location of the first tomb of St. Simeon Nemanja in the Hilandar monastery, see Dragan Vojvodić, "Hilandarski grob svetog Simeona Srpskog i njegov slikani program," *Hilandarski zbornik* 11 (2004), 27–59, see also Jelena Bogdanović, "The Original Tomb of St Simeon and Its Significance for the Architectural History of Hilandar Monastery," *Hilandarski zbornik* 12 (2008), 35–56, 37.
- 32 Sava, "Život Stefana Nemanje," 22–24. For the political motivation behind this decision, see Maksimović, "O godini," 441–442. Postmortem miracles were very important in the establishment of a saint's cult. St. Simeon Nemanja was a royal saint *traumaturogus* or wonder maker and myroblytes. However, the first signs of his holiness, which is the flowing myrrh from his tomb, occurred after the *translatio* in Studenica. Popović, "O nastanku," 59–73. The first scholar who wrote in more detail on the topic of St. Simeon's canonization was Dragutin Kostić who argued, based on the two oldest hagiographies of St. Simeon, that there was no sign of myrrh flowing in Hilandar. Dragutin Kostić, "Učešće sv. Save u kanonizaciji sv. Simeona," in *Svetosavski zbornik, Srpska kraljevska akademija knj. 1, Posebna izdanja, knj. CXIV, Društveni i istorijski spisi knj. 47* (Beograd: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1936), 131–209. Dimitrije Bogdanović, however, published a text by an anonymous monk in the Hilandar monastery entitled *Hilandarski zapis o smrti svetog Simeona*, of whom Bogdanović has argued, witnessed the opening of the tomb and who testified that myrrh first start flowing from the saint's tomb in Hilandar, see Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Kratko žitije svetog Save, Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik* 24/1(1976), 6–32. Dragan Vojvodić has rightfully disputed Bogdanović's argument that the monk was a witness and that there was any myrrh flowing from the Hilandar's tomb before the body was translated to the Studenica monastery, Vojvodić, "Hilandarski grob," 31–34.
- 33 For a detailed description of the different stages of the formation of a saintly cult and the cult of St. Simeon Nemanja in particular, see Popović, "O nastanku," 41–73.
- 34 Sava, "Život Stefana Nemanje," 22–23.
- 35 Evgenii Golubinskii, *Istoriia kanonizatsii sviatykh' v' russkoj tserkvi* (Moscow: Universitetskaja tip., 1903), 34–35, 55–57ff, also see Popović, *Pod okriljem svetosti*, 34.
- 36 Prvovenčani, "Život svetog Simeona," 88–89.

- 37 Danica Popović, "Svetiteljsko proslavljanje Simeona Nemanje: Prilog proučavanju kulta moštiju svetitelja," in *Pod okriljem svetosti*, ed. Danica Popović (Beograd: Balkanološki institut, SANU, 2006), 27–40.
- 38 Milanović, *The Politics*, 41–60.
- 39 The first narrative cycle of the *translatio* of a single saint in Serbian medieval painting was that of St. Stephen from the Žiča monastery from ca. 1220–1221; however, it is not clear if the painting visible today, which dates from the fourteenth century, faithfully repeats the previous, original iconography, see Djurić, "Istorijske kompozicije," 85–86; Babić, *Les Chapelles*, 144, Milanović, *The Politics*, 209, n. 12, also 212; Čanak-Medić, Popović, Vojvodić, *Manastir Žiča*, 347–348.
- 40 On the discussion of whose body is represented on the fresco, see: Cristiana Filippini, "The Eleventh-Century Frescoes of Clement and Other Saints in the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome." PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1999, 198.
- 41 Maria Bagnoli, "The Medieval Frescoes in the Crypt of the Duomo of Anagni." PhD dissertation, John Hopkins University, 1998, 94–96; Alessandro Bianchi, *Il Restauro della Cripta di Anagni* (Roma: Artemide, 2003); Lorenzo Cappelletti, *Gli affreschi della cripta Anagnina iconologia* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università gregoriana, 2002), 200–208 and 227.
- 42 Sava, "Život Stefana Nemanje," 23. According to Danica and Marko Popović, after the translation, the body of St. Simeon was probably laid directly in a previously prepared sarcophagus in Studenica, see, Danica Popović and Marko Popović, "Mirotočivi grob Svetog Simeona u Studenici-novi pogled," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 52 (2015), 237–257.
- 43 Milanović, *The Politics*, 220–226; Danica Popović, "Relikvije i politika: srpski pristup," in *Pod okriljem svetosti*, ed. Danica Popović (Beograd: Balkanološki instituta, SANU, 2006), 253–271, esp. 263–271.
- 44 Boško I. Bošković, *Kraljevstvo i svetost. Politička filozofija srednjovekovne Srbije* (Beograd: Javno preduzeće službeni list, 1999), 141.
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- 47 Nadia Tazi, "Celestial Bodies: A Few Steps on the Way to Heaven," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, eds. Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (New York: Zone, 1989), vol. 3, 519–551.
- 48 For other examples of the mediatrix type of Virgin, especially in Serbian medieval painting, see, Djordjević and Marković, "On the Dialogue," 27; for an explanation of this text and its possible origin, see *Ibid.*, 35–40.
- 49 Djurić, "Istorijske kompozicije," 75, n. 15.
- 50 Ivan Djordjević, "O fresko-ikonama kod Srba u srednjem veku," in *Studije srpske srednjovekovne umetnosti*, eds. Dragan Vojvodić and Miodrag Marković (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2008), 117–139, 124–125.
- 51 This was especially an issue during the iconoclastic controversies, see John Wortley, "Icons and Relics: A Comparison," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 43 (2002–2003), 161–174.
- 52 Dagron, "Holy Images and Likeness," 23.
- 53 PG 94 1232–1420, John of Damscus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 19–59, esp. 21–23. See also, Bojan Miljković, *Čudotvorna ikona u Vizantiji* (Beograd: Vizantološki institut, SANU, 2017), 66–70.
- 54 Miljković, *Čudotvorna ikona*, 69; Jelena Bogdanović, "The Performativity of Shrines in a Byzantine Church: The Shrine of St. Demetrios Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia," in *Spatial Icons, Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 275–301, 298–299.
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## **Part III**

# **Embodied experiences of sacred space**





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## 12 The shrines of the Holy King Stefan the First-Crowned in the sacral topography of Serbian lands

*Danica Popović and Branislav Todić*

We have been able to test the efficacy and the achievements of *hierotopy*, a method of researching sacral spaces – one of the key phenomena of medieval culture and art – for less than two decades.<sup>1</sup> A few years ago, while reviewing the collection of studies by Alexei Lidov, the pioneer and key protagonist of this method, we highlighted those features of the method that seemed to us the most stimulating for future research. On this occasion, instead of an introduction, we will repeat this assessment and add that it has only become more current with the passage of time: Yet, if we are to judge by the response to the conferences Lidov organized and to the volumes he edited, it seems safe to say that the hierotopic approach has already proved highly inspiring in the field of visual culture and humanities, producing very interesting outcomes and, in some cases, genuine breakthroughs. It may seem a paradox, but the hierotopic method gives best results when used by rigorous and disciplined scholars whose interpretations are based strictly on factual evidence: documentary sources and material remains. This is the strategy that Lidov himself consistently pursues, even when addressing the most intricate and controversial issues, or when looking at a problem from an unexpected and unconventional angle...Lidov has shown in the best possible way how useful and beneficial a shift in scholarly perspective can be. Or, as Lidov likes to put it – scholarship always benefits from our being able to ask the old and well-known sources new questions.<sup>2</sup>

It is precisely this change of the researcher's lens that lies at the heart of our study, which – and this should be underlined – rests on the abovementioned critical assessment of facts which is inherent to traditional historical scholarship. However, this new angle seems to yield rather promising results when applied to our topic – the unusually numerous translations of the relics of Stefan the First-Crowned, the first Serbian *holy king*. From the hierotopic point of view, this phenomenon represents a very relevant example. It seems unnecessary to remind the reader of the fact that rituals associated with the relics of a saint have played a key role in the creation of sacred spaces and *memoria* from the medieval period to our own times.<sup>3</sup>

The life and activities of Stefan the First-Crowned (r. 1196–1228), the son and successor of Stefan Nemanja, who was the progenitor of the holy Nemanjić dynasty, unfolded in the crucial, state-building period of Serbian history. From the founding of the independent state in the late twelfth century, and particularly after the proclamation of the kingdom (1217), the Serbs established the conceptual coordinates that would go on to become the lasting pillars of their identity and endurance. The idea of

*holiness* stood at the core of this program as the pledge of their legitimate position in the community of Christian peoples. This distinctive ideology, centered on the concept of the holy dynasty, was the stimulus that led to the creation of national cults of saints and sacral *topoi* in Serbian lands.<sup>4</sup> The main architect of this entire program – a concept remarkable for both its theological erudition and political functionality – was Nemanja’s youngest son: St. Sava of Serbia, the first head of the Serbian autocephalous church and one of the leading figures in the Christian world of his time.<sup>5</sup>

For the matter at hand it is important to note that Sava managed to achieve a well-rounded model of holiness with all of its relevant components (hagiographical, liturgical, ritualistic and material) in building the cult of his father Simeon Nemanja, the progenitor of the family dynasty. The main stages in this carefully elaborated process were the ruler’s taking the monastic vow toward the end of his life, his death shrouded in miracles, followed by *elevatio*, *translatio* and *depositio* of relics, and finally the creation of celebratory compositions in the service of his cult. At the same time and as part of the same conception, for the needs of the holy progenitor’s cult a ruler’s foundation was built – Studenica, the prototype of all subsequent mausolea erected by the members of the Nemanjić dynasty (Figure 12.1). Through the representative tomb, images with soteriological and dynastic accents, and the specially conceived reliquary program, the endowment communicated the most important messages of the Nemanjić ruling ideology.<sup>6</sup>

The successful reign of Stefan the First-Crowned, marked by major achievements and enduring legacies, is not the subject of this paper. Instead, it focuses on Stefan’s posthumous existence – his afterlife as a saint. Stefan the First-Crowned died on 24 September, probably in 1228.<sup>7</sup> Death – the final passing from earthly to eschatological



*Figure 12.1* Studenica, Church of the Mother of God, Serbia, ninth decade of the twelfth century. Photo: Studenica Monastery.

reality – is a watershed event in the biography of every saint and hence acts as one of the key *topoi* in hagiographical literature.<sup>8</sup> The fact that the events in the last stage of the life of Stefan the First-Crowned were shrouded in miracles by Sava's biographers is therefore very telling. For example, Sava "revived" his gravely ill brother by applying a well-known method – by using water that had been sanctified by the True Cross.<sup>9</sup> At the hour of Stefan's death, Sava briefly brought his brother back to life by bathing his body in "flaming tears" and then "inscribing the image of the cross" with his right hand on the dying king's naked body.<sup>10</sup> This was followed by Stefan's taking the vow shortly before his death under the monastic name Simon, and finally his passing. The first in the translation of his relics ensued. Stefan's body was ceremoniously transferred to Studenica and laid to rest "near St. Simeon, his father."<sup>11</sup> According to the latest research, it was laid into a carefully constructed tomb in front of Nemanja's coffin, which was originally intended to receive the remains of the monastery's ktetor.<sup>12</sup>

The act of Stefan's translation put a strong emphasis on the familial character of the Studenica mausoleum, which was conceived as the focal point of the cult of the holy progenitor of the dynasty and the new Serbian myrrh-exuding (myroblete) saint.<sup>13</sup> It also confirmed the status of Studenica as a reference point in the sacral topography of the Serbian lands.

However, the sojourn of the remains of Stefan the First-Crowned at Studenica was very brief. His relics were soon translated from Studenica to Žiča, his own foundation which also served as the cathedral and coronation church (Figure 12.2). This translation, which at the same time represented a key new chapter in the evolution of his cult, occurred in the spring of 1229, shortly before St. Sava set out on his first journey to the Holy Land, and coincided – probably not fortuitously – with the coronation of Stefan's heir, King Radoslav.<sup>14</sup> Biographers have left very interesting accounts of this event. Recounting the process of translation, Domentijan made sure to underline a key piece of information: that the First-Crowned was "completely intact in flesh."<sup>15</sup> This would mean that his remains belonged to the most venerable type of relic – intact, incorrupt bodies (*corpus incorruptum*), which were considered the visible (and therefore most reliable) sign of God's might and grace.<sup>16</sup> Teodosije confirms this statement and adds their pleasant scent ("blagouhanost") to the usual list of characteristics of a saint's body.<sup>17</sup> The same author also informs us that on this occasion Sava composed a *Service* for the translation of his relics.<sup>18</sup> The veracity of this statement, however, must be taken with a degree of caution, as no traces of such a composition have survived. The *Service* and *Vita* (Hagiography) of Stefan the First-Crowned – monk Simon – were written much later, in the first half of the seventeenth century, which will be discussed below in more detail. However, in view of the relevant characteristics of Eastern Christian and Serbian "canonization" of saints, we could allow for the possibility that this statement pertained to the stage of so-called preparatory celebration. The available facts suggest that Sava of Serbia took the usual steps with the aim of including Stefan into the ranks of the holy. This intention – whose fulfillment remained incomplete due to reasons not fully known to us – is clearly indicated by Stefan's embalmed body, which still remains in a remarkably good state of preservation.<sup>19</sup>

Biographers conclude their accounts of Stefan's translation with descriptions of their arrival in Žiča, when Stefan's relics first displayed miraculous signs. This is a well-known *topos* – *adventus reliquiarum*, the final moment in the complex ceremony of relic translation, when the relics of the saint are ceremoniously laid to rest and then begin to perform miracles. As an important element in the creation of a cult, this



*Figure 12.2* Žiča, Church of the Ascension, Serbia, second decade of the thirteenth century. Photo: Dušan Vujičić.

public announcement and manifestation of the saint's power was meant to provide evidence to the gathered community of the saint's ability to become its earthly protector and heavenly patron.<sup>20</sup> In the Serbian milieu this pattern was established during the translation of Simeon Nemanja from the Hilandar Monastery to Studenica, and the translation of the First-Crowned to Žiča served the same purpose.

The effect of the arrival of his “intact and sweet-smelling” relics is also attested by Domentijan, who underlines the higher, soteriological meaning of the miracle and, above all, its “social” and “patriotic” purpose.<sup>21</sup> Like in the case of St. Simeon, the ceremonial advent of Stefan’s relics to Žiča served as an important contributing factor in the process of building the dynastic ideology and Serbian collective identity.

At the first glance, Sava’s unusual and seemingly unclear decision to have the body of Stefan the First-Crowned – originally buried with other members of his family at the dynastic mausoleum at Studenica – transferred to Žiča after such a short period of time is certainly noteworthy. This translation, we believe, was not of a “funerary” character, but was instead part of a new and rather grand conceptual program. Its meaning was manifold. First, it needs to be seen in light of the fact that Žiča was conceived to serve as the cathedral and coronation church, an intention explicitly stated in the monastery’s founding charter.<sup>22</sup> The idea to have all subsequent Serbian kings crowned in the presence of the relics of their first and holy predecessor represented a creative reception of a practice widely used in the monarchies of medieval Europe. However, the key reason behind the translation of Stefan’s “intact” and wonder-working relics was to have them join the most venerated Christian relics associated with Christ, the Mother of God, St John the Baptist and other major figures in Holy History. Sava of Serbia shrewdly used the situation after the Fall of Constantinople in 1204, when the relics kept in the Byzantine capital not only fell victim to ruthless plunder, but were also sold at a profit and gifted.<sup>23</sup> In various ways that are now difficult to reconstruct, he managed to acquire some first-class relics – particles of the True Cross; the maphorion and sash of the Mother of God; and the right hand and a part of the head of St. John the Baptist, all of which are individually listed in the founding charter for the Žiča Monastery. Since all of these relics were already included in Žiča’s original treasury, the relics of the First-Crowned were moved to a setting that, according to the criteria of the time, represented an emulation of Jerusalem and Constantinople, a symbolical part of the Holy Land brought to and reconstructed in the local milieu.<sup>24</sup> The inclusion of such an important national relic among the most precious of holy objects for all of Christendom was meant to convey the message that the Serbs had now become part of the Holy History as a legitimate, “chosen people.”<sup>25</sup>

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In the long history of the relics of Stefan the First-Crowned – monk Simon, the Žiča period was clearly their magnificent pinnacle, whose conceptual and ritualistic grandeur was never to be replicated again. And yet that is not to say that the relics of the Holy King lost their relevance or sacral meaning. This is attested by their third translation, although the sources offer no direct information about the circumstances and time in which it occurred. However, based on indirect, later testimonies, there are good reasons to infer that the transfer of his body took place during the reign of King Uroš I (r. 1243–1276), when the relics were translated to Sopoćani (Figure 12.3), his burial church.<sup>26</sup> This translation seems to have been a matter of necessity, motivated by either the threat of Cuman attacks in the mid-thirteenth century or the war waged by Uroš I against the Hungarians in 1267/68, when Žiča found itself in a vulnerable area that was difficult to defend.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the reasons that led the Serbian king to translate his father’s relics to his own foundation can be seen in a very different light. Namely, the markedly familial nature of Sopoćani is evidenced by the



*Figure 12.3* Sopoćani, Church of the Holy Trinity, Serbia, seventh decade of the thirteenth century. Photo: Dušan Vujčić.

representative graves of the king, his mother Queen Ana Dandolo, and other partially preserved tombstones which can reasonably be assumed to have belonged to the members of the Nemanjić family.<sup>28</sup> Other reasons of an ideological nature seem to support this interpretation, and they need to be seen in the context of the rise of the holy dynasty concept – the dynasty that had sired saints, an idea expressed in both text and image, with the latter being an important segment of the ruling program under Uroš I.<sup>29</sup> The sanctified relics of the ktetor’s father, the first-crowned king and monk – which must have been shown in the usual way, in an opulent coffin-reliquary in front of the altar – strikingly supported the concept of the dynasty’s holy descent. In this sense, in terms of its character and purpose, the “reliquary program” of Sopoćani would have corresponded to the one implemented at Studenica in the previous generation.

Little is known about the development and particularities of the Holy King’s cult in the Sopoćani period. In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, his relics might have received an opulent shroud – a surviving and remarkable fabric cover bearing the name of Sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402).<sup>30</sup> Albeit unconfirmed by the extant sources, the hypothesis is that the shroud was gifted at the bequest of his wife Olivera (also known as Despina Hatun), the daughter of Prince Lazar, the martyr of Kosovo, and the sister of Despot Stefan (1389–1427), the ruler of Serbia at the time. The perseverance of the cult even in the period of Ottoman rule is evidenced by a piece of information in the Ruvarac Genealogy (1563–1584), which reports that the “intact” relics of the Holy King Stefan the First-Crowned were kept at Sopoćani.<sup>31</sup> Their status, however, was dramatically changed sometime in the last third or the end of the

sixteenth century under unknown circumstances. If the oral tradition recorded in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century is to be believed, fearing Ottoman violence the monks of Sopoćani removed the coffin-reliquary containing Stefan's relics from the church and dug it into the ground.<sup>32</sup> While the latter claim needs to be taken with a healthy dose of skepticism and seen as a *topos* of sorts, it seems almost certain that the king's relics were indeed removed in the face of Turkish repression, as a result of the Austro-Turkish wars of the late sixteenth century, which also led to the destruction of the greatest of all Serbian relics – the remains of St. Sava.<sup>33</sup>

The fading of the Holy King's cult, a result of the tumultuous times, seems to have been short-lived. Its revival needs to be seen in the context of the circumstances of the time – the programmatic activities of the restored Patriarchate of Peć (1557) spearheaded by reputable patriarchs-ethnarchs. The conceptual linchpin of this program, permeated by distinctive historicism with strong national overtones, was found in the state and church traditions of the Nemanjić dynasty, with the revival of medieval cults of saints being one of its important components.<sup>34</sup> It is in this wider context that the first initiatives for the revival of the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned need to be seen, which seem to date from c. 1608/9. Namely, this is the date of a letter written by Patriarch Jovan (1592–1614), which informs us that at this time the “sanctity and wonderworking” of the Holy King manifested itself.<sup>35</sup> This claim is convincingly confirmed by a very valuable piece of material evidence: the opulent coffin-reliquary for Stefan's relics made in the intarsia technique (Figure 12.4). The inner side of its lid carries an inscription which informs us that the coffin was made in 1608 and commissioned by Metropolitan Simeon.<sup>36</sup> This seems to have been Metropolitan Simeon of Vršac, a figure with very strong ties to Sopoćani, a monastery that experienced a great revival and rise around 1600.<sup>37</sup> In view of this, the fact that the sources rarely highlight the role of Sopoćani as a sacral center or the keeper of this relic seems somewhat surprising.



*Figure 12.4* Studenica, Church of the Mother of God, Serbia, coffin-reliquary for Stefan the First-Crowned, 1608. Photo: Dušan Vujičić.



Textual testimonies fail to underline the special status of this monastery even after the crucial event in the development of the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned in the period of Ottoman rule: the manifestation of his relics that took place in the time of the notable Patriarch Pajsej (1614–1647), who gave a strong new momentum to the spiritual, cultural and artistic revival in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Peć.<sup>38</sup> In his efforts to restore old and establish new national cults, Pajsej composed the *Synaxarion Vita* and *Service to St. Simon*, in which Stefan's celebration as a saint received its complete, rounded form for the first time in its long history. Among other things, the *Synaxarion Vita* recounts the tale of the miraculous "discovery" of his coffin-reliquary and the elevation of the saint's body, which both occurred under Patriarch Pajsej. The tale uses traditional recurring motifs: the saint's appearance in a dream, with the order to be raised from the ground; the miraculous discovery of his "intact" relics; and their displaying to be venerated by the faithful.<sup>39</sup> In addition to hagiographical *topoi*, the *Vita* also contains some historical facts, as well as information of doubtful veracity which later became part of the monastic tradition and popular tradition.<sup>40</sup> Pajsej's celebratory compositions elaborate the saint's attributes, the dominant among them being those with a national element – "the first Serbian king," "the shining beacon of the Serbs," "the Serbs' shepherd and teacher"; however, the Sopoćani Monastery is only mentioned in passing, as the monastery associated with the abovementioned stages in the history of his relics. In contrast, both the *Vita* and *Service* treat Studenica as the focal point of the Holy King's cult, describing it as "his own" and "the great church" that safeguards the king's holy relics; it is in the "divine radiance" of Studenica that his relics shine "like the Sun," miraculously adorning the church. Both celebratory compositions underline that the king's tomb "still stands there."<sup>41</sup> Although seemingly confusing in terms of their chronology, these claims are easily explained in light of the fact that Pajsej's celebratory texts were revised and amended later on and certainly after the translation of the king's relics to Studenica in 1696.<sup>42</sup> It was then that the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned based in Studenica completely suppressed the memory of it from its Sopoćani period.

Stefan's relics remained in Sopoćani until 1687, when they were moved to the nearby Monastery of Crna Reka with the cave church of Archangel Michael at the peak of the Austro-Turkish war (Figure 12.5). Their brief sojourn at Crna Reka left no notable traces at this monastery; it was only recorded that during their stay at the monastery a woman named Ljubica gifted them a shroud as a prayer offering for herself and her family.<sup>43</sup> Somewhat later, in 1704, the old cloth shroud made for Sultan Bayezid I was repaired by hieromonk Misail of Crna Reka "for the love and blessing of the holy first-crowned king, Stefan of Sopoćani." This was the last time that Stefan was mentioned in association with the Sopoćani Monastery, where his body had lain for so long.

As the Sopoćani Monastery had suffered damage during the conflicts and was soon abandoned, Stefan's coffin-reliquary was not returned to this monastery and was instead moved from Crna Reka to Studenica in 1696.<sup>44</sup> The return of the Holy King to his original resting place after the centuries-long absence was not only a deeply resonant event, but also substantially altered the status of this monastery. This is eloquently attested by his *Service*, which informs us that the king's relics sanctified the church of Studenica and all of its surroundings.<sup>45</sup> In other words, after several centuries, Studenica had regained its sacral aura and special place in the sacral topography of Serbian lands.



*Figure 12.5* Crna Reka, Monastery of the Archangel Michael, Serbia, sixteenth century.  
Photo: Dušan Vujičić.

Having rejoined his father Simeon Nemanja at the same church after more than 400 years, but now himself a saint, Stefan the First-Crowned became the second protector of Studenica. Throughout the eighteenth century, its monks commissioned copperplate vedute of their monastery featuring the images of St. Simeon, Stefan and Sava, painted them on the same icons, copied their hagiographies and services, and regularly mentioned them in their letters.<sup>46</sup> On the initiative of archimandrite Vasilije, in 1750, Metropolitan Georgije Popović of Timișoara donated to Studenica an ornate reliquary in the form of a triptych icon, stating in the inscription that he was in fact only renewing the gift that King Stefan the First-Crowned had once given to the Studenica Monastery.<sup>47</sup> This “holy lie” served a very specific purpose – to underline and explain the presence of the Holy King in Studenica from the monastery’s very beginnings, along with Simeon Nemanja as its first ktetor, whose holy myrrh was also placed in the same reliquary. In any case, this was a fine example of the current mechanism of “constructing” tradition.

The cult of the Holy King was strengthened in Studenica both spontaneously and purposefully, as part of the national program. His name appeared on votive offerings to the monastery from the middle and second half of the eighteenth century, including

a silver vigil lamp intended to be placed above the coffin containing Stefan's relics.<sup>48</sup> In 1747, Patriarch Arsenije IV commissioned a new shroud for the coffin-reliquary – a cover made of silver-threaded brocade with a golden lace trim, with the intention of personally delivering it to Studenica. However, as the patriarch died the following year, it was not until 1753 that the shroud was sent to Studenica by Bishop Jovan Georgijević, who previously inscribed on it a remarkably interesting inscription in gold lettering.<sup>49</sup>

The patriarch's gift and the inscription on the shroud clearly indicate the way in which the first Serbian king was incorporated into the religious and political program of the Serbian church of the eighteenth century. This program, based on a much older ideological legacy, had already been formulated by Patriarch Arsenije IV in Peć, but was fully implemented only after his relocation to the Metropolitanate of Karlovci in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the Baroque style, the patriarch shaped the symmetry of the choir of Serbian saints and the holy Serbian Empire, embodied in the spiritual leaders of the people at the time.<sup>50</sup> In addition to Stefan Dušan, St. Sava and St. Simeon Nemanja stood at its center as the founders of the Serbian church and independent state, respectively. The idealized picture of the national past, however, inevitably included the ruler who was the first to receive the royal crown – Stefan the First-Crowned. It was not by chance that this program was implemented for the first time in 1773, on a copperplate veduta of the Studenica Monastery (Figure 12.6) based on Patriarch Arsenije's concept.<sup>51</sup> The central place in this veduta was given to the rulers from the House of Nemanjić and a heraldic panel depicting the medieval Serbian kingdom in the spirit of contemporary historicism, whose territories, in the ideal sense, corresponded to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate. This veduta eloquently illustrates the key role of Studenica in the creation of religious and national

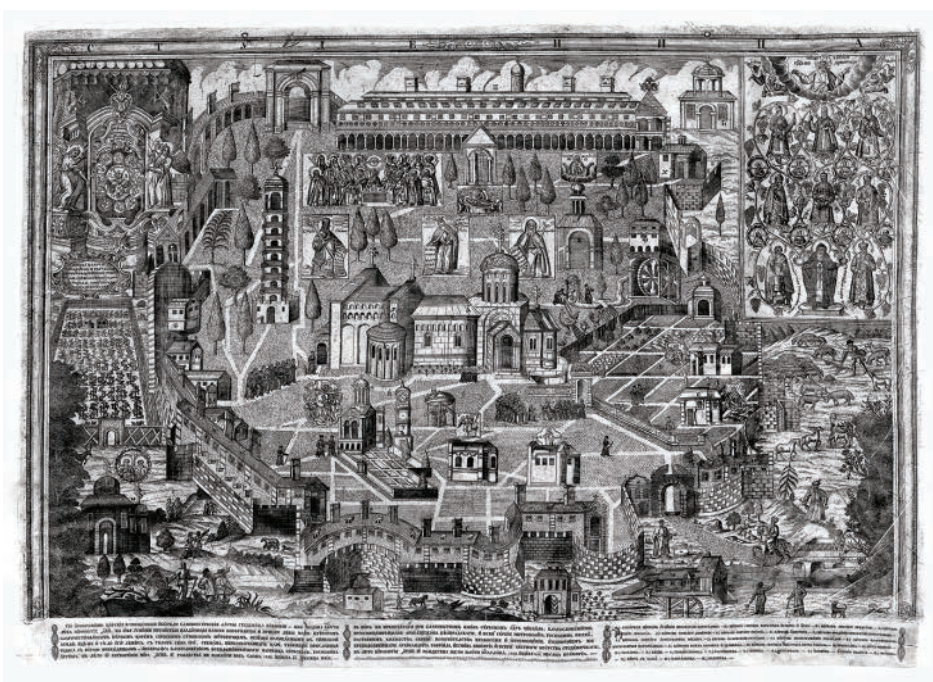


Figure 12.6 Studenica, treasury, Serbia, copperplate veduta of the Studenica Monastery, 1733. Photo: Dušan Vujičić.

topography, one of the important aspects of the program of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci. Among other monasteries – the sacral *topoi* of the Serbian lands, with Hilandar and Dečani being particularly prominent, Studenica stood out as the historical epicenter of the Serbian state and the focal point of the cults of its holy progenitors. The relics of the holy first-crowned king strongly contributed not only to the monastery's sacral aura, but also to its patriotic purpose.<sup>52</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned gained great momentum and the mechanism of its expansion convincingly indicates the main conceptual postulates formulated in the Serbian religious and political program. The emphasizing of its medieval, sacral roots in the service of affirming the current political status found its greatest expression in the *Stemmatographia*, an illustrated heraldic collection from 1741.<sup>53</sup> In addition to the coats of arms of medieval Serbian lands, both real and fictional, the leading place in the procession of the saints was accorded to Simeon Nemanja and Stefan the First-Crowned shown as monks, with the latter given only his secular name and the imperial (!) title (Figure 12.7). It is his monastic image that opens the series of saints shown in the *Srbljak*, a collection of services to Serbian saints printed in Rimnik in 1761, while the Venetian edition of this book (1765) shows “St. Simon, the erstwhile first-crowned king” in the central cartouche on the frontispiece.<sup>54</sup>



Figure 12.7 *Stemmatographia*, St. Simeon and Stefan the First-Crowned (Simon), 1741. Photo: Dušan Vujičić.

Such depictions played a key role in the creation of the Serbian collective identity in all territories they inhabited. The sanctification of territory and the creation of “patriotic *topoi*” was another important aspect of the program of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci.<sup>55</sup> It is in this light that the expansion of the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned in the wide Serb-inhabited areas, from Pest in the north to Mount Athos in the south, should be seen. This process is the most apparent in works of visual art, which in this period became a powerful pictorial and rhetoric tool for the promotion of the Serbian religious and national program.<sup>56</sup>

A new chapter in the development of Stefan’s status as a saint, deeply shaped by the numerous translations of his relics, began in the closing years of the eighteenth century. The breakout of a new Austro-Turkish war forced the monks of Studenica to leave their monastery with the king’s relics (1790). Although this transfer occurred in irregular circumstances, it had almost all important aspects of a traditional medieval translation.<sup>57</sup> The procedure was completely adapted to the ideals of the era, in which tradition played an important role in public rituals.<sup>58</sup> The procession carrying the relics was given a ceremonious reception in the town of Jagodina by 10,000 soldiers, who fired 50 cannons in honor of the Holy King. From there, 500 people accompanied the relics to Smederevo. Their arrival in Belgrade had all characteristics of an *adventus*: the relics were greeted by Metropolitan Dionisije with all members of the clergy and escorted to the cathedral church of the Holy Archangels; after a short liturgy, the coffin with the relics was ceremoniously laid in front of an icon of Christ on the sanctuary screen. As the translation took place on the feast day of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (2 February), the author who recorded the event vividly compares the entrance of Stefan’s relics in the Cathedral Church in Belgrade with Christ being brought into the temple, and likens Metropolitan Dionisije to Simeon the God-receiver.<sup>59</sup> The translation of Stefan’s relics from Belgrade to the Vojlovica Monastery was no less grand: the sanctified body was escorted by the metropolitan “with great pomp” and met on the other bank of the Danube by members of the clergy and the people, while the bells of the churches of Pančevo rang and cannonades thundered to signal their arrival.<sup>60</sup> The relics were returned to Studenica from Vojlovica only after the end of the war, on 2 February 1792, again on the feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. From then on, the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned began to overtake that of St. Simeon, and the “Holy King’s monastery” or simply the “Holy King” became synonyms for Studenica.

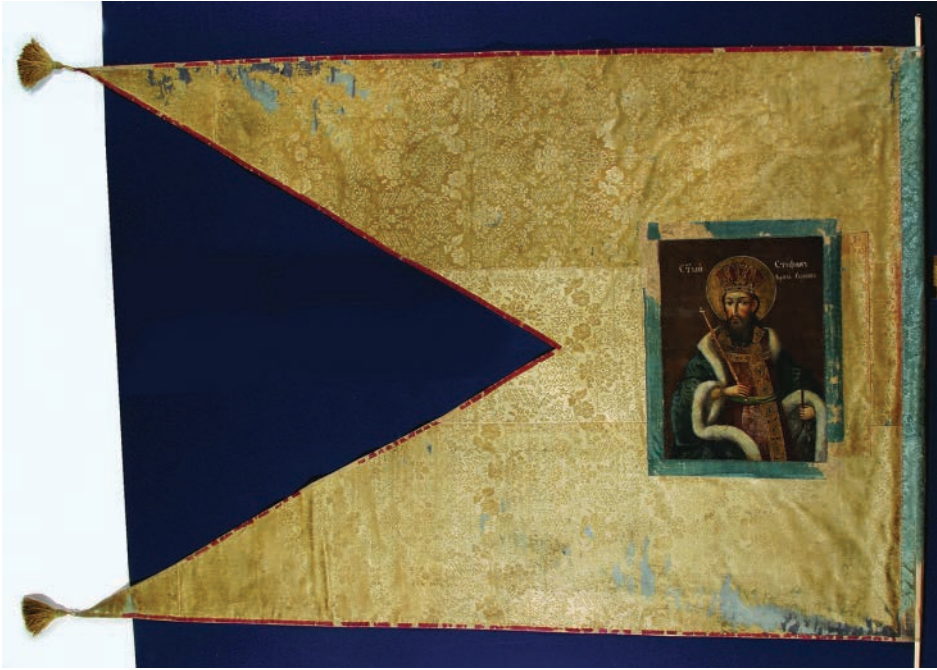
In the tumultuous years of the late eighteenth century and the liberation wars of 1804–1815, the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned outgrew its religious-political context to become the very heart of the national-political program. These new accents were the result of the fundamental views of the era and its national ideologies about the “holy fatherland” and the sacred national space of Serbian lands. The events of 1790 already signaled Stefan’s changed status, while the stages in the new journey of his relics during the First and Second Serbian Uprising – the Vračevšnica Monastery (1806–1813), Belgrade and Zemun (1813), the monasteries Fenek and Beočin (1813–1815), the Kalenić Monastery (1815–1839) – spatially and chronologically corresponded to the crucial events in the history of the Serbs and the fates of their leaders. The physical presence of Stefan’s relics was remarkably important in this sense. For instance, in Vračevšnica, where they had arrived with the leaders of the uprising, the relics were guarded by the army as an object of supreme holiness and a national symbol of sorts.<sup>61</sup> Another illustrative example was the translation of his relics to Kalenić (Figure 12.8). This important event, which greatly contributed to the monastery’s reputation, was



Figure 12.8 Kalenić, Church of the Presentation of the Virgin, Serbia, third decade of the fifteenth century. Photo: Vuk Dautović.

immortalized in a calligraphic inscription carved into the apse of the church. The translation of the relics made Kalenić a highly respected and very frequented national memorial, as evidenced by the fact that Stefan the First-Crowned narrowly escaped receiving a new epithet – “of Kalenić.”<sup>62</sup> The importance of the saint’s *praesentia* was also reflected in the fact that immediately after the breakout of the Second Serbian Uprising in May 1815 Prince Miloš ordered the return of the Holy King’s relics from Fenek (then in Austrian territory) to Serbia to raise the people’s morale.<sup>63</sup>

Another, even more important reason was the fact that the Serbian uprisings were not merely conflicts and battles with the Ottomans with the aim of liberating the country, but also represented the creation of a new, well-organized state modeled after the European monarchies of the time. The ideological program pursued by the leaders of the uprisings – Karađorđe Petrović (1804–1813) and Miloš Obrenović (1815) – sought its roots in medieval Serbia of the Nemanjić era, and while it certainly transmitted eighteenth century religious and political views, it was no longer associated with Emperor Dušan but with the first-crowned King Stefan. Karađorđe personally participated in the translation of the Holy King’s relics from Karanovac to Jagodina in 1790 and took the Studenica Monastery under his care, as did Prince Miloš. The image of the Holy King began to appear on the rebels’ banners as early as 1804. One of these banners has survived: made by the well-known painter Stefan Gavrilović, on one side it features the coat of arms of Serbia with verses from the *Stemmatographia*, and the image of King Stefan on the other (Figure 12.9). The image has all the characteristics of late Baroque royal portraits, and there is nothing except the signifier before his name to suggest his status as a saint. Stefan’s relics were also directly included into the political



*Figure 12.9* Banner of Karadorđe Petrović with the image of Stefan the First-Crowned, 1804. Photo: Dušan Vujičić.

state-building context: on 28 August 1812, Karadorđe convened the National Assembly at the Vračevšnica Monastery, and on the Holy King's coffin, the attendees swore fealty to the Russian emperor and adherence to the Treaty of Bucharest between the Ottoman Empire and Russia.<sup>64</sup> In this context, the endowment of the coffin-reliquary with a silk shroud by Karadorđe's wife Jelena (1815) and a silver cross by the Obrenović Crown (1814)<sup>65</sup> should not be seen only as acts of personal piety.

Despite the many relocations of the relics of Stefan the First-Crowned and their occasional long sojourns elsewhere (such as in Sopoćani), ever since the king's funeral in 1228 they have been inextricably tied to Studenica – a national space and patriotic *topos* of the highest rank. Hence, immediately after the monastery found itself again in Serbian territory and was restored, the monks of Studenica appealed to Prince Miloš to have the king's relics returned to Studenica from Kalenić. The prince not only granted the request, but also expressed his wish to personally participate in the translation of the relics, although his plans were thwarted by political circumstances. This translation, which took place in August 1839, was most extensively documented, and hence, its particularities are now known to us.<sup>66</sup> It followed a very specific scenario probably conceived at the Metropolitanate of Belgrade, and had both an ecclesiastical and a popular character, with the active participation of senior and lower-ranking clergy, the representatives of state and local authorities, and the general public. The state organized and funded the translation. It lasted several days, and the chest containing the coffin with the relics was hand-carried throughout the entire transfer; at night, the relics were kept at monastic and town churches to continue their journey on

the following morning after liturgy. The transfer was organized in the following way: the procession was headed by the banner of the Holy King, with members of the parliament behind it; the clergy followed the coffin, while four priests in liturgical vestments chanted stichera to the Serbian saints; a senior member of the clergy always walked behind the coffin, with the representatives of the state and local authorities, citizens and the masses following behind him. They were joined on their way by army battalions with their own banners, who fired their cannons or rifles in salutation. The coffin was solemnly brought into the Church of the Mother of God at Studenica and laid in front of the iconostasis, and the translation was finally concluded by the Divine Liturgy.

The translation of Stefan's relics was obviously performed according to the model of medieval translation, but it also shared all of the elements of an ephemeral spectacle and the public ceremonies of the new age. Its political essence in the spirit of national historicism was aptly summarized by Metropolitan Petar in his letter to the Ministry of Justice and Education: "This translation shall mark the beginning of the return of old Serbian glory, the memory of which deeply exhilarates the heart of every Serb."<sup>67</sup>

In the nineteenth century, King Stefan the First-Crowned not only became the protector of the Serbian state, but his relics were also given a role in the affirmation of a ruler's legitimacy. This is evidenced by the attitude of Karađorđe Petrović and Miloš Obrenović to the King's relics and attested by that of their successors on the throne. The pilgrimage to Studenica became a solemn duty of every new ruler, with the king's coffin-reliquary being the focus of these visits.

In 1852, Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević paid a three-day visit to the Studenica Monastery with his family. On this occasion, Princess Persida donated a silver vigil lamp to be constantly lit above the coffin-reliquary (Figure 12.10); the following year she endowed the monastery with an ornate new coffin-reliquary for the Holy King's



*Figure 12.10* Studenica, Church of the Mother of God, Serbia, coffin-reliquary with the relics of Stefan the First-Crowned, 1853. Photo: Dušan Vujičić.



relics made in wood, silver and enamel; and in 1854, she added a lavish shroud.<sup>68</sup> Although these offerings were formally given by the princess and their votive inscriptions expressed her prayers for herself as well as on the behalf of her husband and children, they certainly had an official character, as evidenced by the prince's full title in inscriptions and the state coat of arms on the vigil lamp, coffin-reliquary and shroud. They had a marked representative meaning, as the inscriptions on the gifted items were placed frontally to allow easy reading. It is also noteworthy that Prince Aleksandar and Persida (as well as other ruling benefactors) showed very little interest in the relics contained in the coffin-reliquary and instead limited their attention to its outer arrangement. The monk Simon was barely mentioned, and everything was in the service of Stefan's royal status. This was the reason that the inner side of the lid made in 1853 showed the coats of arms of Serbian lands taken from the *Stemmatographia* and two compositions: Nemanja ceding his throne to Stefan the First-Crowned and the coronation of Stefan by St. Sava; in contrast, there is no reference to Stefan's taking the vow or his monastic image.

Except those whose reigns were very short-lived, all Serbian rulers came at least once to pay homage to the Holy King and almost always in fateful moments: Milan Obrenović visited Studenica immediately after he was proclaimed king in 1882 and his son Aleksandar a day after his anointment at Žiča (1889); he paid a second visit to the monastery in 1901 with his wife Draga, when they endowed the tomb of St. Simon and the coffin-reliquary of St. Stefan with painted covers; similarly, King Petar Karađorđević came to Studenica on 24 October 1904, on the Holy King's feast day and merely a few days after his own anointment at Žiča; King Aleksandar Karađorđević paid his last visit to Studenica and expressed his veneration by kissing Stefan's relics in June 1934, a few months before his assassination in Marseilles.<sup>69</sup>

The strong political overtones of the official attitude toward the Holy King are also evidenced by the fact that, mirroring the alternating position on the throne of the two dynasties, during these visits of Serbian sovereigns his relics were placed in or removed from the chest of Persida Karađorđević and the entire arrangement around them dismantled or reinstated. Regardless of these political manipulations, the king's relics were deeply rooted in the awareness of the people and their piety, which manifested itself in various forms ranging from charismatic veneration of the monk-king to numerous legends and superstitions.

The relics shared the fate of the people for the last time during the Great War, in the late autumn of 1915, when they once again set out from Studenica to join the army and the civilians in their retreat to Greece through Montenegro and Albania. Pursuant to a decision of the Montenegrin government, they were kept and laid at the Ostrog Monastery, where they remained until the end of the war.

It was not only due to the objective circumstances that the king's relics set out on a tour of the larger part of the new state inhabited by Serbs (14 April to 31 May 1919): from Nikšić, to Zelenika, Sarajevo, Brod, Zemun, Belgrade, Rudnik and Kraljevo, to the Studenica Monastery.<sup>70</sup> As noted by the press at the time<sup>71</sup> in the difficult and grim postwar period this was a rare source of solace and a ceremony that brought everyone together: the metropolitans of Belgrade and Montenegro Dimitrije Pavlović and Gavriilo Dožić, bishops, clergy, representatives of the state, army, pupils, humanitarian and educational associations and all the people who lived between Ostrog and Studenica.

To conclude this study, we might add that the case of the relics of the first-crowned Serbian king provides a usual as well as an exceptional example in the hagiological practice of the medieval and modern period. This is reflected in all of its features: from veneration and an unusually large number of translations to its incorporation into

the ideological and political contexts of the era. The hierotopic model applied in our research has proved itself remarkably useful in explaining the emergence of the cult of Stefan the First-Crowned and its diverse manifestations in culture, art, ideology and other similar forms. This example aptly confirms Alexei Lidov's hypothesis that rituals associated with the relics of saints played a key role in the creation of sacral spaces and memories from the medieval period to our own times. Namely, the shrines where the relics of Stefan the First-Crowned spent a shorter or longer period of time, as well as the routes of their translations, unmistakably outline the sacral topography of the Serbian lands in a time frame spanning seven centuries.

## Notes

- 1 The programmatic text on this subject is: Alexei Lidov, "Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and in Medieval Russia*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradition 2006), 32–58.
- 2 Danica Popović, "Alexei Lidov, Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture, Moscow 2009," *Balkanica* XLII (2012), 221.
- 3 Alexei Lidov, "Relics as a pivot of Eastern Christian Culture," in *Eastern Christian Relics*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradicija, 2003), 11–15.
- 4 Milka Čanak-Medić, Danica Popović, and Dragan Vojvodić, *Манастир Жича (Žiča Monastery)* (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 2014), 13–19 (Danica Popović).
- 5 On the role of personages in the creation of sacral spaces, see Alexei Lidov, "Leo the Wise and the Miraculous Icons in Hagia Sophia," in *The Heroes of the Orthodox Church. The New Saints, 8th to 16th century*, ed. Eleonora Galaki-Kountoura (Athens: National Hellenic Research, 2004), 393–432.
- 6 Danica Popović, *Српски владарски гроб у средњем веку* (Serbian Royal Tomb in the Middle Ages) (Belgrade: Filozofski fakultet u Beogradu; Institut za istoriju umetnosti, 1992); Ead., *Под окриљем светости. Култ светих владара и реликвија у средњовековној Србији* (Under the Auspices of Sanctity. The Cult of Holy Rulers and Relics in Medieval Serbia) (Belgrade: Balkanološki institut SANU, 2006); Miloš Živković, "Studenica: The Funerary Church of the Dynastic Founder – the Cornerstone of Church and State Independence," in *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art II, Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. Dragan Vojvodić, and Danica Popović (Belgrade: SASA, Institute for Byzantine Studies; Službeni glasnik, 2016), 193–209.
- 7 Miodrag Marković, *Прво путовање светог Саве у Палестину и његов значај за српску средњовековну уметност* (The First Voyage of St. Sava to Palestine and its Importance for Serbian Medieval Art) (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut SANU, 2009), including older views on the subject.
- 8 Thomas Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos, Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 319–339.
- 9 Domentijan, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога Симеона* (Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona), ed. Radmila Marinković (Belgrade: Prosveta; Srpska književna zadruka, 1988), 142; Teodosije, *Жумуја* (Žitija), ed. Dimitrije Bogdanović (Belgrade: Prosveta; Srpska književna zadruka, 1988), 202; on healing using the remnants of the True Cross, see Anatole Frolov, *La relique de la vraie croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte* (Paris: Institut français d'Etudes byzantines, 1961), 174, 195, 251, 334; Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004); Danica Popović, "Реликвије Часног крста у средњовековној Србији (Relikviје Časnog krsta u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji)," in *Konstantin Veliki u vizantijskoj i srpskoj tradiciji*, ed. Ljubomir Maksimović (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2014), 107–108.
- 10 Domentijan, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога Симеона*, 167–168; Teodosije, *Жумуја*, 219–222; on divine fire, see George A. Maloney, *The Mystic of Fire and Light: St. Symeon the New Theologian* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1975); Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon*

- the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Hierotopy of Light and Fire in the Culture of the Byzantine World*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Theoria, 2013).
- 11 Domentijan, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога Симеона*, 168; Teodosije, *Жумуја*, 223.
  - 12 Marko Popović, *Манастир Студеница – археолошка открића* (The Monastery of Studenica: Archaeological Discoveries) (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture; Arheološki institut, 2015), 72.
  - 13 Danica Popović, and Marko Popović, “Мироточиви гроб светог Симеона у Студеници – нови поглед (The myrr-exuding tomb of St Symeon at Studenica: A fresh look),” *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 52 (2015), 237–257.
  - 14 For the chronology of the translation of Stefan’s relics, see Miodrag Marković, *Прво путовање светог Саве*, 14–15.
  - 15 Domentijan, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога Симеона*, 168.
  - 16 Arnold Angenendt, “Corpus incorruptum. Eine Leitidee der mittelalterlichen Reliquienverehrung,” *Saeculum* 42, Heft 3/4 (1991), 320–348; Gail Lenhof, “The Notion of ‘Uncorrupted Relics’ in Early Russian Culture,” in *Slavic Cultures in the Middle Ages*, eds. Boris Gasparov, and Olga Raevsky-Hughes (Oxford: The University of California Press, 1993), 252–275; Fjodor Uspenskij, “Нетленность мощей: опыт сопоставительного анализа греческой, русской и скандинавской традиции,” in *Восточно христианские реликвии*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradicija, 2003), 151–160; Popović, *Под окриљем светости*, 27–40.
  - 17 Teodosije, *Жумуја*, 229–230; on scent as a sign of holiness, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation. Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006); Beatrice Caseau, “*Rituels chrétiens et sensorialité*,” *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies* (Belgrade, 2016), 159–165; for the Serbian reliquary practice, see Danica Popović, “Цветна симболика и култ реликвија у средњовековној Србији (Flower Symbolism and the Cult of Relics in Medieval Serbia),” *Zograf* 32 (2008), 69–79 (including sources and references).
  - 18 Teodosije, *Жумуја*, 229–230.
  - 19 Danica Popović, “Када је краљ Стефан Првовенчани уврштен у светитеље? Прилог проучавању владарске “канонизације” у средњовековној Србији (When was King Stefan the First-Crowned included among the Saints? A contribution to the study of royal “canonization” in Medieval Serbia),” *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 50/2 (2014), *Mélanges Ljubomir Maksimović*, ed. Bojana Krsmanović, Srdjan Pirivatrić, 573–583 (са изворима и литературом); о источнoхришћанској канонизацији, Alice-Mary Talbot, *Faith Healing in Late Byzantium. The Posthumous Miracles of the Patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople by Theoktistos the Stoudite* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Hellenic College Press, 1983), 21–30; Ead., “Canonisation,” *ODB* 1 (1991), 372; Christian Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonisation* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), 59–60.
  - 20 Popović, *Под окриљем светости*, 233–252 (including older literature).
  - 21 Domentijan, *Живот Светога Саве и Живот Светога Симеона*, 168.
  - 22 *Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља и писама Србије, Босне и Дубровника* (*Zbornik srednjovekovnih ćirilčkih povelja i pisama Srbije, Bosne i Dubrovnika*), vol.1, 1186–1321, eds. Vladimir Mošin, Sima Ćirković, and Dušan Sindik (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 2011), 89–95.
  - 23 Holger A. Klein, “Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West,” *DOP* 58 (2004), 283–314; cf. Patrick Geary, “Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Social Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 169–191; Id. *Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1990).
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- 25 Danica Popović, "A Staurotheke of Serbian Provenance in Pienza," *Zograf* 36/2012 (2013), 157–170; *Манастир Жича*, 44–63 (Danica Popović); Jelena Erdeljan, *Chosen Places. Constructing New Jerusalems in Slavia Orthodoxa* (Leiden; and Boston, MA: Brill, 2017).
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## 13 Travelling objects and topographies of salvation

### Agencies and afterlives of two post-Byzantine *proskynētaria*

*Veronica della Dora*

In May 1744, the Kievan pilgrim Vasilij Gregorovich Barskij reaches Mount Athos for the second time, after almost two decades. His aim is to describe and sketch all of its 20 monasteries and to compile a list of relics and notable manuscripts contained in each of them.<sup>1</sup> We can thus only try to imagine his excitement when in the *katholikon* of the monastery of Vatopaidi he is allowed into the *hierō*. A beautifully crafted box is opened right in front of him. It contains “relics of the saints, [a fragment of] the holy cross, and other precious relics donated by emperors and princes.” Many of these, Barskij writes in the resulting account, “I saw with my own eyes and was blessed to kiss with my own lips.”<sup>2</sup> Excitement nonetheless soon gives way to doubt. One relic is missing. The monks tell Barskij that the skull of Saint John Chrysostom was donated to the ruler of Russia many years ago. However, he notes,

The Athonite *proskynētariōn* says that they donated the skull of Andrew of Crete, and not that of St John Chrysostom. I did not believe that, and asked the *skeuofylax*. He said that the *proskynētariōn* is wrong and that Peter the Great also asked about this, and in response he was sent a document similar to the one I was shown. It is dated 1710 and contains many stamps of the Athos monasteries (though not all of them); it states that the skull that was sent to Russia was no other than Saint John Chrysostom’s. I thought it was strange that two stamps were missing, but I said nothing. ... In the [new edition of] the *proskynētariōn* (printed in Venice in 1745) nothing has changed. It is actually more factual than the previous. ... It is hard to see where truth is and where lie is.<sup>3</sup>

This vignette reveals much of Barskij’s pious yet critical attitude, that mixture of humble devotion and inquisitive spirit characteristic of the eighteenth-century Orthodox Enlightener. It also calls our attention on the book Barskij was carrying with him—the *proskynētariōn*. Which sort of book was it? Why did Barskij put so much trust in it?

*Proskynētaria* were travel guides especially designed for Orthodox Christian pilgrims. They included descriptions of the shrines to be encountered en route, sometimes accompanied by lists of the relics therein contained and other relevant information. The first dated *proskynētariōn* was compiled in 1634 and covered the shrines of Jerusalem and Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Other Palestinian *proskynētaria* occasionally also included the monastery of Saint Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai. They usually came in the form of illuminated manuscripts bound as small booklets, and featured a standard text in Greek.<sup>5</sup> The genre was later adapted to famous non-biblical Orthodox monastic centres, such as Mount Athos (1701) and its individual foundations (1772 and 1780), Kykkos Monastery in Cyprus (1751), the Monastery of Megalou Spēlaiou (1765),

and Meteora (1776 and 1786).<sup>6</sup> These “non-biblical” *proskynētaria* generally came in printed form. Unlike their manuscript predecessors, printed *proskynētaria* were usually not produced on site, but in the distant centres of the Greek diaspora, such as Venice and Vienna, which were also renowned printing centres. While they lacked the colourful illustrations of their early Palestinian counterparts, printed *proskynētaria* usually contained lengthier descriptions of the sites, sometimes in, or accompanied by, rhymed verse. The *proskynētaron* used by Barskij falls in this latter category.

*Proskynētaria* developed and flourished at a time of internal stability and increased mobility in the Ottoman empire. These centuries saw a revival of pilgrimage practices, but they also saw the struggle for survival of many Orthodox monastic foundations oppressed, as they were, by the increased taxations imposed by the Porte.<sup>7</sup> *Proskynētaria* developed as a reflection of and a response to both phenomena. Regardless of their origins, geographical focus, and form, these works were popular pilgrim commodities and, as Barskij’s account seems to suggest, they were perceived as useful and reliable sources of information.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Barskij, however, here I am less interested in *proskynētaria* as sources of factual information than as cultural artefacts, that is, not only as “maps” moving pilgrims to and through places, but also as material objects moving across space and time, and in turn, moving places around. In other words, I am interested not only in what *proskynētaria* represented and how they represented it, but also in what they *did*. Thus approached, *proskynētaria* reveal themselves as fascinating windows on ways of seeing and experiencing space and sacred places, as well as agents contributing to the life of those places in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This chapter explores post-Byzantine spatial perceptions through the lens of two very different *proskynētaria* describing, respectively, biblical and non-biblical shrines: Daniēl Iatros’ *Proskynētaron tōn Aghiōn Topōn*<sup>9</sup> and Iōannēs Komnēnos’ *Proskynētaron tou Agiou Orous Athōnos*,<sup>10</sup> which I briefly introduce in the next section of the chapter. While there are many excellent studies on *proskynētaria*, they usually tend to focus on either individual copies, or specific geographical areas.<sup>11</sup> Setting different typologies and places side by side, I argue, helps illuminate the complexity of the context in which these works were produced and circulated, as well as continuities in ways of experiencing and imagining space, which I address in the second section of the chapter. The third section focuses on *proskynētaria*’s function as navigational and devotional devices. The final two sections explore their role in shaping world views and their legacy.

### **Daniēl Iatros and Iōannēs Komnēnos’ *Proskynētaria***

Daniēl’s *proskynētaron* is an illuminated paper manuscript featuring descriptions of the holy sites of Jerusalem and Palestine. It comes in four nearly identical copies compiled over a period of 15 years in the second half of the seventeenth century by a certain Daniēl Iatros, who distinguished himself for the beauty of his illuminations and the clarity of his handwriting (Figure 13.1).<sup>12</sup> The contents of the four copies are nearly identical, but their different state of conservation varies. Here I will refer especially to Docheiariou cod. 129, which was compiled in 1666 and at an unspecified date made its way to Mount Athos, where it is currently preserved.<sup>13</sup> The codex measures 15.5 × 10.8 cm and contains 33 numbered folia and 8 *paraphylla*. As with the other copies, it lacks some of the folia, but it contains various inscriptions which offer fascinating insights into the biography of the object.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 13.1 Description of the Mount of Olives with illustrations of the Cave of the Apostles, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Tomb of the Mother of God. Docheiariou, cod. 129, ff. 16v, and 17r. Photo: Elder Apollò of Docheiariou.

Komnēnos' *proskynētariou* of Mount Athos is the book that was used by Barskij and it is the first *proskynētariou* of the Holy Mountain. As with its Palestinian counterparts, this *proskynētariou* enjoyed lasting success. Originally printed in the monastery of Snagov (Wallachia) in 1701, it was translated into Latin by Benedict Montfaucon (1708), as well as in Russian and in Romanian. In 1745, it was edited by Hierodeacon Ignatios Kemizos and reprinted in Greek in Venice, where it underwent further editions through the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Unlike Daniēl's *proskynētaria*, it does not contain graphic representations of the individual shrines, though the original 1701 and Latin editions feature a view of the western and eastern slopes of Mount Athos with their monasteries—a sort of orientation map, or pictorial “synoptic table” (Figure 13.2). The 1745 edition mentioned by Barskij measures 16 × 10.5 cm, about the same size as the Docheiariou codex, and it contains 134 pages.

Both Daniēl and Komnēnos' *proskynētaria* are written in the *demotikē* spoken by the Greeks of the Ottoman empire. The immediacy and simplicity of the language reinforce the function of these works as popular devotional objects, rather than as texts for the consumption of a restricted intellectual elite. Intriguingly, the authors of both *proskynētaria* were Greek doctors and clerics: Daniēl Iatros was probably a Greek monk from Saint Savvas monastery in Palestine,<sup>16</sup> whereas Iōanēs Komnēnos was the Greek private physician and astrologist of Prince Constantin Brancovan of Moldo-Walachia and later Bishop of Side and Dristra.<sup>17</sup> Both authors—and their readers—were part of a cosmopolitan Greek class that gradually formed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the Ottoman Empire





Figure 13.2 Views of the western and eastern slopes of Mount Athos from Iōannēs Komnēnos' *Proskynētaron tou Athōnos* (1701). © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved [868.d.9.G.7300]

achieved growing internal stability. This class of Greek-Orthodox Ottoman citizens included merchants, Church clergy, officials of the Ottoman bureaucracy in the Balkans and other highly mobile individuals who could afford travel within the Empire and thus contributed to the blossoming of pilgrimage over these centuries.<sup>18</sup> Daniēl and Komnēnos' *proskynētaria* (and *proskynētaria* in general) are both a product and a reflection of this world.

The two *proskynētaria* are obviously different in form and content. Masterfully crafted and bound in an elegant leather cover, Daniēl's *proskynētaria* are expensive personalized luxury items, whereas the various editions of Komnēnos' *proskynētaria* are cheaper articles for mass consumption. The former describe biblical places, the latter focus on a non-biblical place. The former are manuscript, the latter are printed; the former are painted in colour, the latter are in prose and rhyme. The two *proskynētaria*, however, are also similar, and consideration of these similarities can offer fresh insights into a pan-Orthodox world which outweighed the locale, and shed light on

ways of experiencing and imagining that world. Yet, can we talk about a distinctive post-Byzantine way of experiencing and representing space? Can we talk about a typically Orthodox mental map, or geographical imagination?

### ***Proskynētaria* as a way of seeing**

The word *proskynētation* comes from the verb *proskynein*, literally “to bow down” (before a relic or an icon). It can also refer to the stand of a particularly venerated processional icon.<sup>19</sup> While in the Latin West pilgrimage is usually defined by the journey (*peregrinus* was the wanderer *per agra*, “through the fields”), in the Orthodox East, it is defined by the very act of venerating icons and relics at a shrine. For the Orthodox *proskynētēs*, what lies in between one shrine and the other does not generally matter. It does not matter how the *proskynētēs* moves across space; what matters is the act of veneration at the shrine—hence Barskij’s insistence on having “kissed the relics with his own lips.”

The word *proskynētation* thus encapsulates the nature of the journey and its spatialities. For example, while in Matthew Paris’ illustrated itinerary of his pilgrimage from Hereford to Rome and Jerusalem (1250) (Figure 13.3), the road is the most prominent feature and “visual thread” joining the various shrines, in illustrated Greek Orthodox *proskynētaria*, such as Daniël’s, we only see the individual shrines, that is, the foci of the *proskynēma*.<sup>20</sup> There is no road, there is no landscape. Or rather, landscape is reduced to isolated holy landmarks: a monastery, a church, the Dead Sea, the cave of the apostles, the garden of Gethsemane, the tomb of the Mother of God, the tomb of Prophet Isaiah, Joab’s well, the pool of Siloam, and so on (Figures 13.1 and 13.8). Likewise, while earlier and contemporary western maps of Palestine, such as Abraham Ortelius’ *Typus chorographicus* (Figure 13.4), were mostly antiquarian in character and portrayed it as a region captured from above (many of these maps are aptly titled “chorographies”), the *proskynētation* reproduces a topographic view from the ground level.<sup>21</sup> It does not portray a Terra Sancta, but *τοὺς Ἁγίους Τόπους*; not the Holy Land, but the Holy *Places* linked to the life of Christ and the Old Testament. It creates a mental map that emphasizes locales over boundaries; memory places over territoriality.

Early Greek *proskynētaria* of Palestine are products of a local tradition distinct from western pilgrimage literature. Unlike their western counterparts, they were not compiled by the pilgrims themselves, but by local clergy. They therefore lack accounts of the journey and instructions on how to reach places, and focus instead on representations of the shrines.<sup>22</sup> These *proskynētaria* all share a similar narrative pattern and style. The text usually opens with an invitation to its “blessed Christian” audience to “listen” to the voice of the narrator. This is followed by a paragraph on the history and significance of Jerusalem, which is, in turn, followed by descriptions of its various shrines, starting with the Holy Sepulchre and the miracle of the Holy Fire. The narrative then expands to the shrines outside of the walls of Jerusalem and ends up encompassing remote villages, monasteries and monuments scattered across Palestine. The last feature to be described is usually the port of Ioppa (Jaffa), from where pilgrims depart. Descriptions of major sites are introduced by titles and sometimes elaborate initial letters and illustrations within the text. Names of secondary sites in the text are often highlighted in red ink, in order to facilitate navigation.

Daniël’s *proskynētation* is a typical example. It includes 50 miniatures of the holy sites of Jerusalem and of Palestine.<sup>23</sup> These range from shrines and small topographical features (the tomb of Isaiah, the fount of Siloam, the cave of the Apostles, the Garden of Gethsemane, “the stone where Christ sat”) to large geographical objects, such



Figure 13.3 Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*. Itinerary from Italy, Rome, and Apulia, 1250 c. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, ms. 26, fol. 3. Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

as Mount of Olives, the mountain of Temptation, Mount Tabor, the Jordan, and the Dead Sea. Sizes, however, depend not on actual dimensions, but, as in Byzantine icons, on their perceived spiritual importance, and therefore the importance to commit them to memory. Unsurprisingly, the Lavra of Saint Savvas, where the *proskynētaron* was produced, occupies an entire page and is its largest feature in the book (Figure 13.5).

Komnēnos' *proskynētaron*, by contrast, does not contain illustrations of the sites, but is similarly structured as a sequence of shrines, in this case, Athos' 20 Byzantine monasteries, as observed by the Greek doctor during his visit in 1698. As with the shrines in the Palestinian *proskynētaria*, the descriptions of the monasteries start from the oldest and most important—the Lavra of Saint Athanasius (founded in 963)—and are signposted by titles (Figure 13.6). Likewise, the text of the 1745 edition opens by presenting readers with the spiritual benefits of the pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain, this time in a rhymed preface by the priest-monk Christophoros from Iōannina, Prohēgoumenos of the monastery of Ivērōn:

... Διαβάστετον, χορτάστετον, ὅλοι προθυμηθῆτε,  
Ἐκεῖ νὰ προσκυνήσετε, καὶ ἁγίους νὰ ἰδῆτε,



Figure 13.4 Abraham Ortelius, *Typus chorographicus, celebrium locorum in Regno Iudae et Israhel*, 1665. Courtesy of [www.sanderusmaps.com](http://www.sanderusmaps.com).



Figure 13.5 The Monastery of Saint Savvas. Docheiariou, cod. 129, f. 28r. Photo: Elder Apollō of Docheiariou.

Τόπους ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀσκητᾶς, καὶ νὰ ἀγιασθῆτε,  
Μὲ πίστην καὶ εὐλάβειαν, κὶ ὅλοι σας νὰ σωθῆτε.<sup>24</sup>

Christophoros' verses are followed by a lengthy introductory poem by Ignatios. Surveying all the monasteries, *skētes*, and hermitic cells in a rapid sequence, the poem traces a "road map" for the prospective pilgrim, a sort of verbal equivalent of Komnēnos' drawing (Figure 13.2):

Νὰ προσκυνήσης ἅπαντα...  
Ἀπὸ τὴν Λαύραν σὰν βγῆς, νὰ πᾶς στὸν Καρακάλον

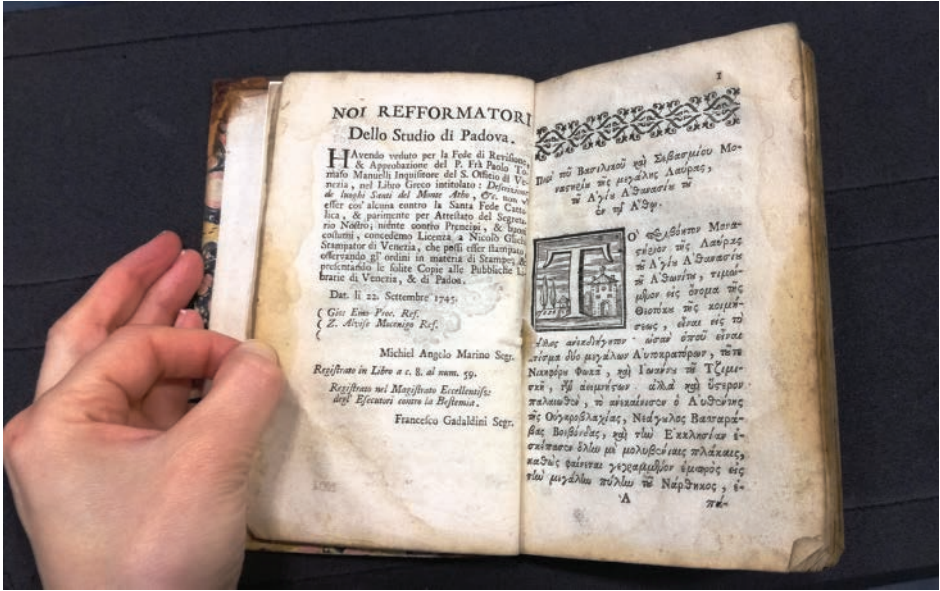


Figure 13.6 Venetian licence in the 1745 edition of Iōannēs Komnēnos’ *Proskynētation tou Athōnos* and first page of the description of the Great Lavra of Saint Athanasius of Mount Athos. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved [868.d.9.G.7300].

Καὶ ἕως βράδῳ ἔαν ποθεῖς, νὰ πᾶς στὸν Φιλοθέον.  
 Καὶ ἐπ’ ἐκεῖ σὰν κατεβεῖς, νὰ πᾶς εἰς τὴν Ἰβήρων,  
 Νὰ προσκυνήσεις κι ἐκεῖ, εἴτα νὰ πᾶς τριγύρω.  
 Κυρὰν τὴν Πορταίτισσαν, νὰ τὴν εὐχαριστήσεις,  
 Μὲ πόθον κι εὐλάβειαν, καὶ νὰ τὴν προσκυνήσεις.<sup>25</sup>

The poem’s short rhymed verses suggest rapid transitions from one shrine to the next. The pilgrim is invited to venerate the icons and relics in each monastery and then quickly press on to the next one, without really paying attention to the pathway, or to the landscape in between. This is a sort of “collection of the maximum number of blessings” in the shortest time possible—a true spiritual marathon. As in Daniēl’s *proskynētation*, here the reader is taken on a topographic journey.

As readers move through Komnēnos’ descriptions of the individual monasteries contained in the following pages, however, this verbal “roadmap” is filled in with detail and colour. For each monastery, Komnēnos provides a short account of the site’s topography, followed by historical information, a list of relics, and often vivid accounts of miracles, so that each monastery becomes both a spatial unit and narrative container.

For example, we are told that Lavra, a monastery of “inexpressible beauty,” is located on a most pleasant spot facing the Aegean. Behind the monastery is the majestic summit of Athos, a “tallest mountain” topped by a tiny chapel visited by the Fathers once a year on the occasion of the feast of the Transfiguration.<sup>26</sup> The reader is then provided with a description of Lavra’s architectural complex and its notable features, including the well (*phialē*) from which the Fathers take the holy water at

the beginning of each month, the cross-shaped refectory and its marble tables, and, above all, the bright and spacious *katholikon* with its “huge and shiny marbles and splendid porphyry.”<sup>27</sup> Inside the church, we are then introduced to the miraculous icon of the Mother of God who gifted a golden coin to the famous *psaltēs* John Koukouzelēs, and we are presented with the rod Saint Athanasius used to chase demons.<sup>28</sup>

Given the nature and focus of the *proskynēma*, it is not surprising that both Daniēl and Komnēnos devote special attention to church interiors, icons, and relics. Daniēl, for example, provides a detailed description of the inner topography of the Holy Sepulchre, including the number of lamps hanging above it and measurements between different key features.<sup>29</sup> Komnēnos pays similar attention to the interiors of Athonite churches: he counts the number of columns, notes different types of marbles, frescoes, and chandeliers, and compiles often long lists of relics.<sup>30</sup> The reader is thus walked through all the *proskynēmata* in a repeated act of veneration.

In both Daniēl and Komnēnos’ *proskynētaria*, space is articulated through a sequential movement through places, a movement that is re-enacted by the reader through the embodied act of leafing through the pages. This sequential perception of space “from ground level” has roots as ancient as Homer: Ulysses’ hoppings from one island to the next structure the plot of the *Odyssey*, with the insular spaces fulfilling the function of narrative units.<sup>31</sup> Sequentiality also characterizes Roman *itineraria* (lists of cities with distances in miles), Byzantine *periploi*, and western medieval *portolani* (lists of ports with distances and other relevant information for sailors).<sup>32</sup> The same pattern is followed by Renaissance *isolarii*, or island books. These were specialized atlases featuring a map of an island on each page, accompanied by historical notes, observations on its topography, legends, local customs, and other information.<sup>33</sup> As in Homer’s *Odyssey*, islands fulfilled the function of narrative (and in this case also visual) containers. In all these cases, space was not an abstract geometrical dimension surveyed from above, but it was experienced and represented as a succession of places, of meaningful self-contained material features and locales.

*Proskynētaria* belong to this pre-modern topographic tradition, whereby the world is experienced and “mapped” sequentially from ground level. They challenge the synoptic view from above with the slow rhythmical movements of the pilgrim walking on the land. They challenge detached cartographic simultaneity with embodied narratives traced through space and time. In this sense, regardless of their format and peculiarities, *proskynētaria* can be defined as dynamic itineraries, or “horizontal” maps. Only, instead of cities, staging posts, ports, or islands, they record shrines—Orthodox shrines, to be sure. Yet, how were they used and what sort of world image did they ultimately construct?

### Performing *proskynētaria*

While *itineraria*, *periploi*, and *portolani* were generally meant for navigational purposes and island books were used for armchair travel, *proskynētaria* embedded both functions. To start with, *proskynētaria* directed and guided pilgrims to places, as the verses in the introductory poem in Komnēnos’ *proskynētaron* make explicit:

Ὅποιος θέλει βουληθῆ, νὰ πᾶ νὰ προσκυνήσῃ  
 Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος νὰ ἰδῆ καὶ νὰ τὸ τριγυρίσῃ  
 Ἄς διαβάσῃ τὸ παρὸν, ἔπειτα νὰ κινήσῃ.<sup>34</sup>

*Proskynētaria*'s navigational function is reflected on their small format, which facilitated transportation, as well as on their generally poor state of preservation. *Proskynētaria* told pilgrims what to look for and venerate. For example, Komnēnos repeatedly calls the reader's attention on important relics through formulas such as "there you want to see and venerate,"<sup>35</sup> whereas Daniēl advises the pilgrim to "piously read the [relevant] *troparia*" in each site.<sup>36</sup> Owners of the Docheiariou copy seem to have followed the advice and inscribed its *paraphylla* with prayers and excerpts from the gospel, probably to be read on the spot (Figure 13.7).<sup>37</sup> Jotted down as the simple pilgrim would have heard them, the words on the first *paraphyllon* have an almost talismanic character. Most of them invite repetition; they sanctify both the pilgrim's journey and the object on which they are inscribed:

- + Των ευτυχούντων πάντες άνθρωποι φίλοι, των δέ δυστυχούντων ουδέ αυτός ο γεννήτωρ.
- + Άγιος ο Θεός, άγιος ισχυρός, άγιος αθάνατος ελέησον ημάς, αμήν.
- + Δη ευχόν τον αγίων πατέρων ημών κύριε ησου χρήστή ελεήσον ημάς αμήν
- + Χριστός ανέστη εκ νεκρών θανάτον θάνατον πατήσας και της εν της μήμασιν ζοήν χαρήσαμενος. Αλήλουηα.<sup>38</sup>

Komnēnos' *proskynētaron* fulfilled a similar navigational function: as the doctor states in his introduction to the 1701 edition, his goal was not to provide a historical account or detailed description of the monasteries and their beauties, but just a list of relics, holy icons, and other notable features contained in each monastery.<sup>39</sup> Besides built shrines and their features, the *proskynētaron*, however, also encompassed "living shrines." In the verses opening the 1745 edition, Hieromonk Christophoros calls Athos "ὄρος

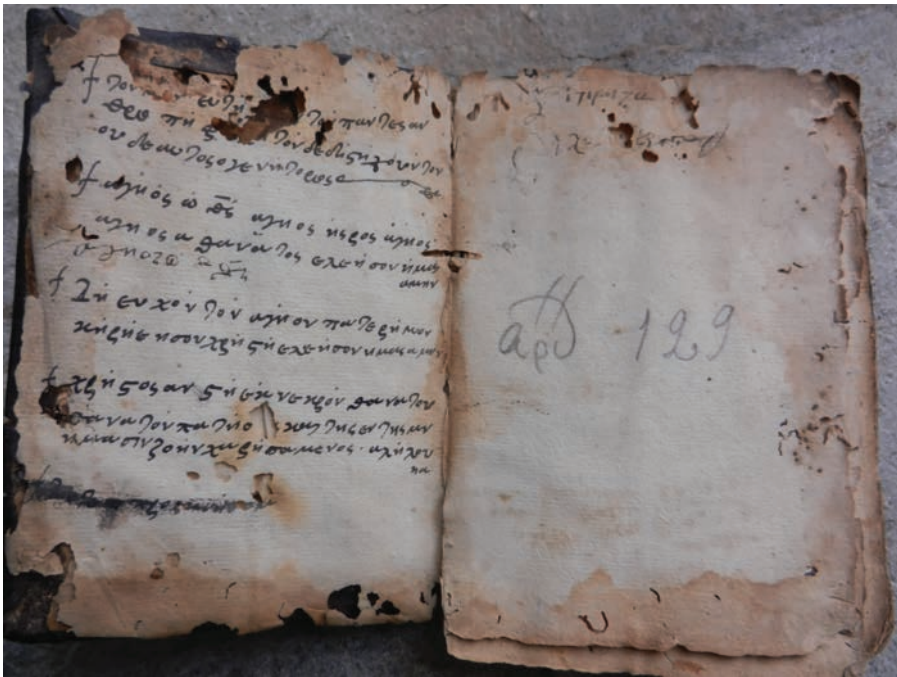


Figure 13.7 Annotations in Docheiariou, cod. 129. Photo: Elder Apollō of Docheiariou.

ἡσυχίας” (“the mountain of quietness”) and warmly exhorts the reader who loves quietness to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain to see “τόπους ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀσκητάς” (“both places and ascetics”).<sup>40</sup> In the following poem, the reader and prospective pilgrim is called to move along a double axis; he is instructed to sail around the peninsula and to ascend the peak, stopping in all the monasteries, *skētes*, and hermitic cells to venerate miraculous icons and relics and to visit their venerable dwellers, the monks.<sup>41</sup> It is through this horizontal and vertical movement, physical and spiritual all at once, that the pilgrim is to attain inner quietness and eventually the salvation of his soul.

*Proskynētaria*, however, did not exhaust their function with the pilgrim’s physical journey; they could also function as powerful mnemonic devices. Daniēl, for example, invites not only prospective pilgrims, but “all pious Christians, men and women, young and old,” to “listen to [his] account of the Holy Places trampled by our Lord Jesus Christ and His Most Immaculate Mother, the most holy Theotokos, and the holy apostles and God-inspired prophets.”<sup>42</sup> He associates the various shrines and topographical features to relevant biblical citations (the only parts of the text written in ancient Greek, rather than in *dēmotikē*). The bright colours of the topographic features represented in the illuminations would have further helped memorization, as would their distinctive, if not unusual, shapes (Figures 13.1 and 13.8). Flattened, stylized, isolated from their context and captured from different perspectives, these odd, non-naturalistic shapes are in a sense akin to Byzantine icons’ topographic features: like “stumbling blocks,” they have the power to arrest vision and, by virtue of their singularities, imprint themselves in the viewer’s memory.<sup>43</sup>

First of all, however, memorization would have been enabled by the *proskynētariōn*’s serial narrative. As the Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas noted, “memory requires a grasp of the successiveness of events, but it also requires a grasp of the spatial nesting of events and objects in relation to other events and objects.”<sup>44</sup> Readers and listeners would



Figure 13.8 Illustrations and descriptions of the Tomb of the Strangers, the Well of Joab, the Tomb of Prophet Isaiah, the Pool of Siloam. Docheiariou, cod. 129, ff. 15v, and 16r. Photo: Elder Apollō of Docheiariou.



have been literally taken through *loci memoriae*, each of which triggered biblical memory. This mnemonic function can be traced as far back as to Egeria's travels to the Holy Land in the fourth century. The Spanish nun provided vivid accounts of the places she saw for no other purpose than helping her sisters back home to visualize and better memorize Scripture. Only, instead of bright colours, she used colourful textual descriptions.<sup>45</sup>

Komnēnos similarly associates specific topographic features in the Athonite monasteries to miraculous events and other things he deems “λόγου καὶ μνήμης ἄξια” (worth of being mentioned and remembered).<sup>46</sup> As with the topographic features described by Daniēl, Komnēnos' memory places range in scale from stones and wells to entire buildings. These *loci* help the reader re-activate the past in the present; this time no longer a coherent biblical past, but an eclectic one, in which medieval monastic foundational tales coexist with Galla Placidia's visit to Vatopedi (a chronological impossibility) and the present tense of the ascetics as “living shrines.” While Daniēl's *proskynētaron* and other Palestinian illuminated manuscript *proskynētaria* employ colour images as *loci memoriae*, Komnēnos makes use of different techniques. His *proskynētaron* does not contain graphic illustrations of the shrines. Memory is, therefore, not stimulated so much by sight (that is, by vivid shapes and colours), as through sequentiality, vivid description, and rhyme.<sup>47</sup>

In both Daniēl and Komnēnos' *proskynētaria*, memory is further triggered by the evocation of materiality, of hierotopic encounters between people and the land. Sacred events of the past are physically inscribed in the ground and carved out of the rock, whether in the form of “the nails tangled in the soil before the holy door” of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the hole where the Cross was implanted, and the crevice in the stone caused by the earthquake that followed the Crucifixion,<sup>48</sup> or in the marks on Athanasius the Athonite's marble footstool produced by the saint's many genuflections.<sup>49</sup>

Materiality, however, is not confined to the places described in the *proskynētaria*. It becomes part of the pilgrim's hierotopic experience also by way of the physical *proskynētaron* itself. At the end of the text, Daniēl invites readers to buy his *proskynētaron* and treasure it as an *eulogia* from Jerusalem:

Ὅσοι τὸ κτᾶθε, ἀδερφοί, καὶ ἀγοράσετε τὸ  
Μεγάλον πλοῦτον ἔχετε, πάντα φυλάγετέ το.  
Ἔτι δὲ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σας ἐλάβετε εὐλογία  
Ἀπὸ τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν.<sup>50</sup>

Back home, inscribed with the traces of the pilgrim's journey, the book would take on a new life. It would become a souvenir, or a sort of sacred relic—a relic of place akin to the *ampullae* used by early pilgrims, or Byzantine boxes filled with stones and earth from the holy land,<sup>51</sup> or the more elaborate nineteenth-century fish heads from the Jordan decorated with scenes of Christ's Baptism, and the Sinai seashells painted with images of Saint Catherine.<sup>52</sup> Masterful execution and leather bindings made early illuminated *proskynētaria*, such as Daniēl's, luxury commodities, but also precious blessings worth preserving (Figure 13.9).

As insistently material objects and souvenirs, not only did *proskynētaria* represent holy places, but they moved them across space and time. In this sense, they operated as portable repositories of religious memory. A look at their margins reveals much of the biographies and trajectories of these objects. As already noted, Docheiariou cod. 129, for example, is inscribed with prayers and excerpts from the Gospel, which were added almost 20 years after its production. Other copies of Daniēl's *proskynētaron* include the names of their nineteenth-century users, a dedication to a bishop, and even



Figure 13.9 Binding of Docheiariou, cod. 129. Photo: Elder Apollò of Docheiariou.

a *katara* (anathema) to anyone who might have dared to steal the *proskynētariion* from its owner.<sup>53</sup> Ownership and patronage are sealed with the names of later proprietors: at the end of the Grēgoriou codex, we learn that in 1829 the *proskynētariion* belonged to a certain Vasileios and Kōnstantinos Pantoleontas, whereas the copy preserved in the Byzantine Museum of Athens came from a donation by Saint Nektarios of Pentapolis in 1904—in this case, the *proskynētariion* was doubly sanctified as a relic.<sup>54</sup>

While the (cheaper) printed medium might have contributed to dilute the sense of ownership and amuletic value attached to these objects, para-texts in non-biblical *proskynētaria* likewise speak of the cultural context in which they were embedded. For example, Komnēnos' 1745 edition is stamped with Venetian approval (Figure 13.6)—“the book has been examined and it contains nothing against the Catholic Church.” The license bears witness to delicate interdenominational equilibria between diasporic and hosting communities. It reveals yet another facet of the cosmopolitan world of which *proskynētaria* were part, a world of mobility and exchange, as well as tensions and suspicions.

### ***Proskynētaria* as mental maps**

As with any map, *proskynētaria* are inherently selective and ethnocentric. They entail specific choices, inclusions, and exclusions, and in doing so, they have the power to shape specific world views. For example, on Palestinian *proskynētaria*,

such as Daniël's, while the mosques on the Temple Mount are topped by crescents and portrayed in a realistic manner, they are identified by anachronistic Christian names. For instance, the Dome of the Rock is named "The Temple" and al-Aqsha mosque is called "The Holy of the Holies" (Figure 13.10). As Rubin notes, this duality produces a tension: one can read "the desire to celebrate Christian ideology and emphasize Jerusalem's Christian traditions" and yet at the same time also express "the reality of having to live under Islamic rule and the frustration of knowing that the Temple Mount and its mosques were the centre of the city's Islamic religious life."<sup>55</sup>

Likewise, in the description of the Holy Sepulchre, Daniël stresses how the Orthodox own the *katholikon* of the church (that is, its largest and most important part), whereas heretics (including Armenians, Jacobites, and Indians) own chapels only. He also proudly explains how the Orthodox have more lamps hanging over the Holy Sepulchre than any other Christian denomination.<sup>56</sup> By including only Orthodox shrines and exalting Greek Orthodox features, Palestinian *proskynētaria* promoted the importance of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem as the guardian of these sites throughout the Christian world. As Rubin and other scholars noted, these *proskynētaria* did not aim at realism, but rather, at constructing a truly Orthodox sacred geography. They produced a mental map centred on Jerusalem, for, according to Daniël, Jerusalem is "the root and the capital" of the holy places:

This holy city is found in both the Old and New Testaments, and every nation and race from the East to the West and throughout the entire world hurries to venerate it with much love and faith, not just the Orthodox, but also heretics and ungodly from all over the world.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 13.10 The Holy of the Holies in Docheiariou, cod. 129, ff. 11v, and 12r. Photo: Elder Apollòs of Docheiariou.

Jerusalem, argues Daniēl, “is located at the centre of the earth, as Prophet David says: *For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth*” (Ps. 74:12). The Holy City, which is in turn centred on the Holy Sepulchre, is for the Greek *iatros*, the centre of time and space in the most material sense: in the Orthodox section of the church, he notes, there is a hole in the marble, also known as the “*ὀμφαλὸς τῆς γῆς*” (“the earth’s navel”).<sup>58</sup>

As with Daniēl’s and other Palestinian *proskynētaria*, Komnēnos’ *proskynētaron* created a specific and deeply ethnocentric world-view; this time, a pan-Orthodox view from Moldo-Wallachia. Nearly each chapter exalts the Wallachian rulers as the “second founders” of the monasteries, thanks to their generous donations and renovation of the buildings. For example, the monastery of Dionysiou, we are told, “was refurbished by Peter Voivode of Hugro-Wallachia, who frescoed the church around 1580.” Likewise, we are informed that his daughter Roxandra built the hospital and the refectory “which she frescoed amazingly, both inside and outside.”<sup>59</sup> More significantly, in the introduction to the 1701 edition, Brancovan, Komnēnos’ patron, is called “the great protector and helper of the Holy Mountain” and extensively praised for his charitable work to the Athonite monasteries.<sup>60</sup>

The Athos Komnēnos presents us with is thus one under Wallachian patronage. Yet, it is also part of a broader post-Byzantine sacred network centred on Jerusalem. The *proskynētaron* format transformed Athos, a non-biblical holy place, into a node of this wider network, through which pilgrims, relics, artefacts, and donations circulated. The nodes of this sacred network were connected through relics from the Holy Land, such as fragments of the Holy Cross, the icon of Saint George which “moved from Palestine to [the monastery of] Zōgraphou,” or the stone from Golgotha “bearing traces of Christ’s blood” treasured at Docheiariou.<sup>61</sup> Other relics enabled powerful material and spiritual bonds between Athos and the Danubian principalities. For example, the monastery of Dionysiou is said to possess the entire relic of Saint Nēphon, Patriarch of Constantinople, “except for his head and right hand, which are preserved in the monastery of Artzesi in Hungro-Wallachia.”<sup>62</sup>

A further level of ethnocentrism was added in the 1745 edition, as its sponsor, Christophoros of Ivēron, decided to replace the original description of his monastery with his own expanded description. Here, among other things, the reader is reminded of the generous hospitality of the monastery and is invited to contribute to its financial well-being. For example, the author reminds the reader that while the other monasteries of Mount Athos celebrate one major feast (*panēgyri*) only, Ivēron celebrates three. And yet, Christophoros proudly writes, in spite of the huge number of visitors, no one is sent back home empty-handed; extra-tables are added outside of the *trapeza* and everyone is fed.<sup>63</sup>

As with Daniēl’s, Komnēnos’ *proskynētaron* nonetheless concealed tensions. A “must have” for the prospective pilgrim to Athos, the book was originally compiled for the purpose of taking Brancovan on an imaginative journey through Athos’ monasteries and cells. The spiritual wealth and quietness Komnēnos found on the peninsula and sought to convey to his patron and to his pious readers can be read as an antidote to the difficult political circumstances and the insecure climate impinging on the principalities at the turn of seventeenth century. On the one hand, boyars’ pressure on Wallachian princes had dramatically increased; on the other, Ottomans and Phanariots were intensifying their interference and demands. The last ruling prince of Wallachia, Brancovan ended his life watching the execution of his entire family, before being beheaded in Istanbul in 1714.<sup>64</sup> His pilgrimage to Athos remained a virtual experience enabled solely through Komnēnos’ eyes and pen.

**Afterlives**

As guides, pilgrimage proxies, and “relics” of holy places, *proskynētaria* played a part in the spiritual life of Orthodox faithful. Their authors conceived them as aids to salvation not only for their users and their relatives and friends, but also for themselves. For example, Daniël invites his readers to pray for the remission of his own sins:

Ὅσοι τὸ ἀναγινώσκετε μᾶλλον καὶ τὸ φηγάστε  
 Δέομαι δὲ τὸν Κύριον τῆς βασιλείας νά ᾿σθε.  
 Αἰτήτε καὶ περὶ ἐμοῦ λύσιν ἁμαρτημάτων,  
 Ὅπως νά λάβω ἄφεσιν ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν πταισμάτων,  
 Καὶ διατοῦτο τὸ λοιπόν, ἕνα πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος,  
 Δοξάζω τρισυπόστατον αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος.<sup>65</sup>

Komnēnos concludes his account with a similar prayer:

... ὑμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες Πατέρες καὶ Ἀδερφοί, ἔρρωσθε, καὶ σώσεσθε, καὶ σύγγνωτέ μοι τῆς βλαχυλογίας. Καὶ εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ.<sup>66</sup>

*Proskynētaria*, however, also extended their salvific function to the holy places they described. While Palestinian *proskynētaria* were used as implements in the incessant efforts for the restoration of pilgrimages and in establishing the status of Jerusalem as a major Patriarchate in the Orthodox world, *proskynētaria* of Mount Athos, and later of Meteora, were produced to attract pilgrims (and income) at a time of deep financial crisis. In the eighteenth century, heavy Ottoman taxations reduced many of their monasteries to the edge of bankruptcy. Pilgrimage and external donations were thus key to their survival. In order to raise funds for their impoverished foundations, the monks routinely undertook long alms-begging missions. Many of them travelled as far as to Wallachia and Russia, taking miraculous icons and relics on procession and offering spiritual support to local populations.<sup>67</sup>

During his visits to Athos, Barskij recorded how in most of the monasteries large numbers of monks were engaged in these alms-seeking expeditions abroad. On his second visit to Xenophōntos, his heart broke as he found the monastery sunk in debt and inhabited by only three monks:

I tried to comfort them in their sorrow as much as I could; I told them to be patient under the Turkish yoke and not to abandon this amazing monastery until God will provide. ... I was consumed by sadness seeing this beautiful monastery receive no help from anywhere. The only comfort was the thought that, through Divine Providence, some compassionate Christians might have mercy on them.<sup>68</sup>

Here one can see the compassionate gaze of the Orthodox pilgrim and his empathy for his Greek brethren. Elsewhere in his account, Barskij claims to be describing the beauties of those impoverished monasteries in order to persuade readers to send them alms.<sup>69</sup> Following Komnēnos' *proskynētariion*, in his account, Barskij takes the reader on a circuit of Athos' 20 monasteries. However, unlike Komnēnos, he does not limit himself to mere descriptions and lists of relics and icons. Rather, he uses Komnēnos' descriptions as a point of departure for personalized and much more detailed accounts accompanied by elaborated bird's-eye views of the monasteries which he sketched on the spot.<sup>70</sup>

Komnēnos' *proskynētariion* was appropriated by the monks of Athos themselves. The 1745 edition, as we have seen, was financed by Christophoros of Ivēron (the author of the

rhymed preface), while the view contained in the 1701 edition (Figure 13.2) was used as the basis for elaborate sacred engravings, in which the two slopes were rotated, placed in front of each other and filled with drama. These representations functioned as complex maps of salvation taking the viewer from a stormy monster- and pirate-infested sea to celestial heights by way of the Holy Mountain.<sup>71</sup> Initially commissioned in Venice and subsequently printed on site, the engravings were issued to pilgrims as *eulogies* (or blessings), but they were also used by the monks during their alms-begging missions as advertising “brochures” for potential benefactors. The first one we know of was published around 1707 by the Venetian Alessandro dalla Via and it included the introductory poem opening Komnēnos’ *proskynētaron*, with translations in Latin and Slavonic (Figure 13.11).<sup>72</sup> As with their cognate *proskynētaria*, the printed medium enabled cheap reproduction, whereas the paper medium allowed them to be easily carried and circulated.

The transformation of *proskynētaria* into general views was not unique to Mount Athos. The same phenomenon (though on a smaller scale) took place in Meteora.<sup>73</sup> More notably, the development of Palestinian *proskynētaria* was likewise paralleled by the production of topographic icons of the Holy Sites, which were also called *proskynētaria* (Figure 13.12). Sometimes copied from bird’s-eye views of Jerusalem contained in manuscript *proskynētaria*, these representations were visual summaries of the booklets, encompassing the Holy City, as well as often geographically distant places, like Nazareth and Bethlehem, and the monasteries in the Judean desert (e.g., Saint Gerasimos and Saint Savvas), which were given special graphic prominence.<sup>74</sup>

As with the Athos engravings, these images combined different points of view and rested on the psychological perspective of Byzantine and post-Byzantine icons, whereby the sizes of features correspond to their importance, rather than to their position in space. While the booklets provided a sequential view from ground level, these representations provided a simultaneous view from above. Inscribed with the names of

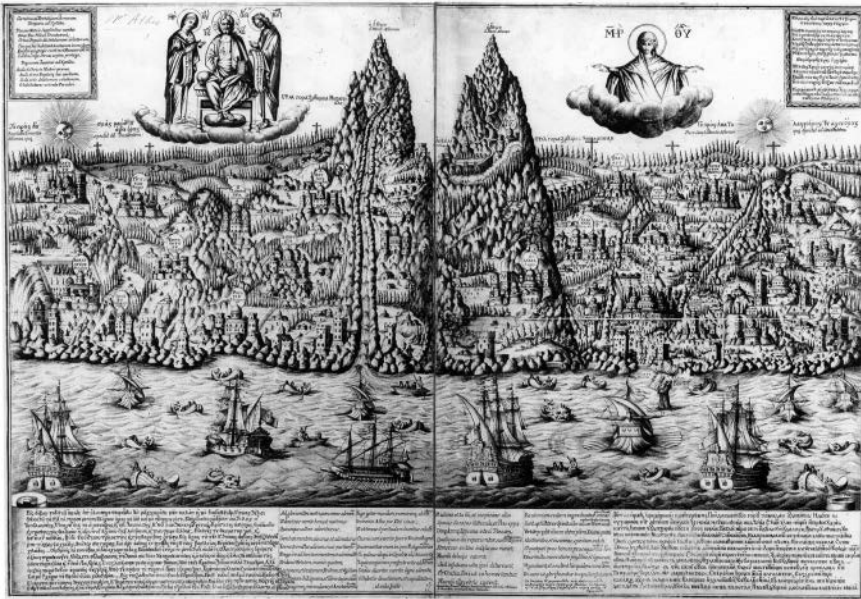


Figure 13.11 Alessandro dalla Via, *General View of Mount Athos*, Venice, 1707. Graphic Arts Collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

their purchasers, rolled up, and transported home, these canvasses contributed to the restless flow of devotional objects and souvenirs moving around and beyond the Empire through Orthodox networks. As Rubin noted, many of these images included ruins and shrines no longer under the control of the Patriarchate. In this way, they reinforced and furthered the celebratory narrative and Orthodox world view conjured up by their manuscript counterparts. More characteristically, some of them blended topographical features with representations of biblical scenes, scenes of martyrdom, and icons of patron saints, forming complex collages of temporalities and multilayered hierotopies (Figure 13.12).

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In their different incarnations, *proskynētaria* flourished not only at a time of stabilization of the Ottoman Empire, but also at a time of financial uncertainty for Greek Orthodox foundations. They were expressions of a typically post-Byzantine approach to space, and yet at the same time, they were also objects imbricated in larger networks stretching as far as to western Europe, Wallachia, and Russia. As such, *proskynētaria* enshrined pious intimacies and tensions. Faithful companions to the pilgrim, objects of contemplation, aids to salvation and fund-raising, or simply blessings from holy places, they helped pilgrims move to and through those places, but they also moved sacred places around. In so doing, they shaped geographical imaginations and enabled non-pilgrims to access distant sites and relics they would never get to “see with their eyes, nor kiss with their lips.”



*Figure 13.12* Bird's-eye view of Jerusalem and surroundings, with scenes from the Bible. Docheiariou, 18th century. Photo: Elder Apollò of Docheiariou.

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I would like to thank the late Father Apollò, Elder Amphilochios, Father Chariton, and especially Father Theoktistos of Docheiariou for all their assistance and generous help. A preliminary version of this paper was presented in the round table “Maneuvering the Holy: Spirits, Icons, Indulgences and Mental Mappings in Fifteenth-Eighteenth Century Orthodoxies” at the *Byzantine Studies Congress* in Belgrade (August 2016). I am grateful to the organizers Charles Barber and Elena Boeck and to the audience for their valuable feedback and insights.

## Notes

- 1 Vasilij Grigorovich Barskij (1701–1747) visited Mount Athos during 1725–1726 and 1744–1745. He travelled on foot through the main Orthodox centres and shrines of southern Europe and the Ottoman Empire during his entire adult life. In the course of his journeys, he learnt Greek and painstakingly recorded his observations, first as a humble student and pilgrim, and later as an erudite wandering monk seeking to “enlighten” his home country and newly reformed Church with knowledge of “the ancient and by implication pure traditions of Orthodoxy as they survived in the Holy Land, in the Greek lands and on the Holy Mountain” (Alexander Grishin, “Bars’kyj and the Orthodox Community,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 226). His observations resulted in a manuscript account of his travels in Slavonic. Accompanied by approximately 150 drawings, the autograph manuscript includes 503 folia and it is preserved at the Akademiia Nauk Archive, Kiev v, No. 1062. The most accurate published edition is *Stranstvovaniia Vasil’ia Grigorovicha-Barskago posviatym mestamvostoka s 1723 po 1747*, ed. Nikolai Barsukov, 4 vol. (St Petersburg: Tip. V. Kirshbauma, 1885–1887). The only substantive part of Barskij’s travels that has been translated into English to date is his journeys to Cyprus, see *A Pilgrim’s Account of Cyprus: Bars’kyj’s Travels in Cyprus*, ed. Alexander Grishin (Altamont, NY: Greece and Cyprus Research Centre, 1996). Other parts of his accounts have been translated into other languages, but there is no complete translation or critical edition of the entire manuscript. The most significant effort was made by architect Pavlos Mylōnas and his successors, which resulted in a Greek translation and critical edition of Barskij’s journeys to Mount Athos, see *Βασίλη Γκρηγορόβιτζ Μπάρσκι: τα ταξίδια του στο Άγιον Όρος, 1725-26 και 1744-45*, ed. Pavlos Mylōnas (Thessaloniki: Agioreitikē Estia, 2009). On Barskij’s two visits to Athos and the sketches of the monasteries, see Veronica della Dora, “Light and Sight: Vasilij Grigorovich Barskij, Mount Athos, and the Geographies of Eighteenth-century Orthodox Enlightenment,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 53 (2016), 86–103.
- 2 Barskij, *Τα ταξίδια του στο Άγιον Όρος*, 394.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 395. Barskij is likely to have accessed the second edition of the *proskynētarion* in 1746 during his stay in Constantinople, where he edited the accounts of his second journey to Athos.
- 4 *Προσκυνητάριον τῶν Ἁγίων Τόπων, συντεταγμένο καὶ εἰκονογραφημένο ἀπὸ τὸν Τερομόναχο Ἀκάκιο τὸν Κρήτα (Munich State Library, cod. gr. 346). See Sōitērēs Kadas, Οἱ Ἁγιοὶ Τόποι: εἰκονογραφημένα προσκυνητάρια, 17-18ου αἰ.* (Athens: Kapon, 1998).
- 5 Though there are also versions in Slavonic and Italian, today, according to a recent survey conducted by Rehav Rubin, over thirty copies of Palestinian manuscript *proskynētaria* survive in various monasteries, libraries, and museums in Greece and other parts of the world. For further details, see Rehav Rubin, “Proskynetarion: One Term for Two Kinds of Jerusalemite Pilgrimage Souvenirs,” *Eastern Christian Art* 10 (2014–2016), 102–103. Sixteen of these manuscripts were published by Kadas in his monograph *Οἱ Ἁγιοὶ Τόποι*.
- 6 Geōrgios Tolias, “Ἀθωνικὴ ἱερὴ χαρτογραφία,” in *Όρος Ἄθω γῆς θαλάσσης περίμετρον χαρτῶν μεταμορφώσεις*, ed. Evangelos Livieratos (Thessaloniki: Ethnikē Chartothēkē, 2002), 151; “Ἐντυπα Προσκυνητάρια Ἁγίου Όρους (18ος αἰώνας): Ἰωάννου Κομνηνοῦ, Προσκυνητάριον τοῦ Ἁγίου Όρους τοῦ Ἄθω, Βενετία 1745. Μακαρίου Τρίγωνη Λαυριώτου, Προσκυνητάριον τῆς Μονῆς Μεγίστης Λαύρας, Βενετία 1772. Προηγουμένου Σάββα Λαυριώτου, Προσκυνητάριον τῆς Μονῆς Μεγίστης Λαύρας, Βενετία 1780,” *Ἀθωνικά ἀνάλεκτα* (Thessaloniki: Agioreitikē



- Estia, 2014), vol. 7. “Ιερομονάχου Γαβριήλ Αγιαμονήτη ανέκδοτο προσκυνητάριον τῶν μονῶν τῶν Μετεώρων (1786),” ed. Dēmētrios Sōphianos, *Trikalina* 6 (1986), 7–25; Spyridōn Lampros, “Δύο ανέκδοτα πατριαρχικά σιγίλλια περὶ τῆς ἐν Μετεώροις μονῆς τοῦ Σωτήρου Χριστοῦ καὶ συμπληρώματα εἰς τὰ περὶ Μετεώρων,” *Νέος Ἑλληνομῆμων* 4 (1907), 95–205. In addition, printed *proskynētaria* continued to cover the Holy Land and Sinai. The monastery of Saint Catherine also produced its own ones, which included texts of its liturgical services: *Βιβλίον περιέχον τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῆς ἁγίας Αἰκατερίνης, τό τε προσκυνητάριον τοῦ ἁγίου Ὁρους Σινᾶ μετὰ τῶν πέριξ καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ αὐτό, τὴν τε τάξιν τῆς ἀκολουθίας τοῦ μοναστηρίου, καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ μέχρι τοῦδε ἀρχιεπισκοπήσαντας, καὶ ἐγκώμιόν τι εἰς τὸ Σινᾶ Ὅρος* (Ἐν τῇ Μητροπόλει τοῦ Τερροβόστου, 1710) and *Χρυσάνθου πατριάρχου Ἱεροσολύμων ἀντίρρησης εἰς τὰ ὅσα κακῶς, ψευδῶς, καὶ ἀναρμόστως λέγονται εἰς τὸ Προσκυνητάριον τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους Σινᾶ* [edited by Nikephoros Marthales, called Glykys, Abbot of Mount Sinai] (Venice, 1732).
- 7 See Maria Theocharēs, “Church Embroidery,” in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, ed. Manolēs Chatzidakēs (Thessaloniki: Ministry of Culture, 1997), 441–446; Sōtērēs Kadas, *To Ἅγιον Ὅρος: τὰ μοναστήρια καὶ οἱ θησαυροὶ τους* (Athens: Ekdotikē Athēnōn, 1998[1980]), 15; Dory Papastratou, *Paper Icons: Greek Orthodox Religious Engravings 1655–1899* (Athens: Papatratou S.A. Publications, 1981), vol. 1.
  - 8 The realistic rendering of some of the representations in early Palestinian *proskynētaria* bears testimony to eye-witness knowledge of the places and has been noted by contemporary scholars. According to Rubin, for example, “this is best illustrated through the images of the façade of the Holy Sepulchre, drawn as an architectonic cross-section seen from the South, and those of the Laura of Mar Sava, which is rendered as a large complex of buildings surrounded by a wall with two prominent towers” (“Proskynetarion,” 104). On the relationship between the Athos *proskynētarion* and Barkij’s accounts, see Elenē Stergiopoulou, “Ἰωάννης Κομνηνός καὶ Βασίλειος Μπάρσκη,” in *Σλάβοι καὶ Ἑλληνικός κόσμος: Πρακτικά Α’ Ἐπιστημονικῆς Ἡμερίδας Τμήματος Σλαβικών Σπουδῶν Ἐθνικοῦ καὶ Καποδιστριακοῦ* (Athens: Pelekanos Books, 2014), 183–199.
  - 9 *Προσκυνητάριον σὺν Θεῷ Ἁγίῳ τῆς Ἁγίας Πόλεως Ἱερουσαλήμ.*
  - 10 *Προσκυνητάριον τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους τοῦ Ἄθωτος. Συγγραφὴν μὲν καὶ τυπωθὲν, ἐπὶ τῆς γαληνοτάτης ἡγεμονίας τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου, ἐκλαμπροτάτου καὶ ὑψηλωτάτου Αὐθέντου καὶ ἡγεμόνος πάσης Οὐγγροβλαχίας, Κυρίου Κυρίου Ἰωάννου Κωνσταντίνου Βασσαράβα Βοεβόνδα. Ἀφιερωθὲν δέ, τῷ πανιερωτάτῳ Μητροπολίτῃ Οὐγγροβλαχίας Κυρίῳ Κυρίῳ Θεοδοσίῳ. Σπουδῆ καὶ δαπάνῃ τοῦ ἐξοχωτάτου Ἰατροῦ Κυρίου Ἰωάννου Κομνηνοῦ. Ἵνα δίδωται χάρισμα τοῖς εὐσεβέσι διὰ ψυχικὴν αὐτοῦ σωτηρία. Τύποις Ἀνθίμου Ἱερομονάχου τοῦ ἐξ Ἰβηρίας. Ἐν τῇ μονῇ Συναγώβου. Ἀμα’.* (“*Proskynētarion of the Holy Mountain of Athos, written and printed under the most serene rule of the most pious, illumined, and highest autocrat and ruler of all Hungro-Wallachia Sir John Constantine Bassaraba Voievoda; dedicated to his eminence Sir Theodosios, Metropolitan of Hungro-Wallachia, with the zeal and expenditure of the most eminent doctor sir John Komnēnos, in order to give grace to the pious [Orthodox Christians] for the salvation of their souls. Printed in the monastery of Snagov by hieromonk Anthimos of Iberia, 1701*”).
  - 11 To date, manuscripts *proskynētaria* seem to have received far more attention than their printed counterparts. Worth of special mention are Kadas’ informative books *Οἱ Ἅγιοι Τόποι and Προσκυνητάρια τῶν Ἁγίων Τόπων: Δέκα Ἑλληνικά Χειρόγραφα 16ου-18ου αι.* (Thessaloniki: Parartēētēs, 1986) and Rehav Rubin’s excellent articles on Palestinian *proskynētaria*. See, for example, Rubin, “Proskynetarion;” “Greek-Orthodox Maps of Jerusalem from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *e-Perimetron* 8 (2013), 106–132. Komnēnos’ *proskynētarion* is briefly discussed by Toliās in the context of sacred engravings of Mount Athos (Toliās, “Ἀθωνικὴ περὶ χαρτογραφία”) and by Stergiopoulou in relationship to Barskij’s accounts (Stergiopoulou, “Ἰωάννης Κομνηνός καὶ Βασίλειος Μπάρσκη”).
  - 12 The other three copies are: Grēgoriou, cod. 159; National Library of Rome, cod. 15; Byzantine Museum of Athens, cod. 121. See Sōtērēs Kadas, “Ὁ καλλιγράφος καὶ μικρογράφος Δανιὴλ καὶ τὸ ἔργο του (β’ μισό 17ου αι.),” *Βυζαντινά* 13 (1985), 1281–1302.
  - 13 Before arriving at Docheiariou, the manuscript was stored in the library of the Lavra of Saint Savva in Palestine (Kadas, “Ὁ καλλιγράφος καὶ μικρογράφος Δανιὴλ,” 1291). The manuscript has been published in Sōtērēs Kadas, *Εἰκονογραφημένα Προσκυνητάρια τῶν Ἁγίων Τόπων: τέσσερα ἑλληνικά χειρόγραφα (17ου-18ου αι.)* (Thessaloniki: Aristoteleio Panepistēmio Thessalonikēs, 1985).
  - 14 In this sense, the four copies complement each other.

- 15 Father Ioustinos of Simonopetra identified eleven editions, which are listed in his own reprint of the 1701 edition *Ιωάννου του Κομνηνού Προσκυνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους του Άθωνος*, *Αγιορείτικα τετράδια 2* (Mount Athos: Ekdoseis Panselēnos, 1984), 16–17. The 1745 edition presents a number of changes, including the replacement of the original description of the monastery of Ivēron with a new description by Kemizos, several stylistic corrections, the omission of Komnēnos' original dedication, introduction and epilogue, and the addition of a long rhymed introductory poem and prologue by Hieromonk Christophoros. This edition served as the basis for all the subsequent editions (the last of which appeared in 1864). For further details, see Stergiopoulou, “Ιωάννης Κομνηνός και Βασίλειος Μπάρσκη”.
- 16 Unfortunately, not much is known about Daniēl. His identity is suggested by the following verses in the Grēgoriou codex: “... Καὶ διὰ τὴν γινώσκουσαν πόθεν ἐτελειώθη/ Ἐτοῦτο δὲ τὸ ποίημα κ' εἰς πάντας ἐπέδότη./ Εἰς λαύραν δὲ τὴν θαυμαστὴν καὶ τὴν ἀξιομέν./ Τοῦ ἀγίου Σάββα τοῦ σεπτοῦ τὴν κεχαριτωμένην” (see Kadas, “Ὁ καλλιγράφος,” 1290).
- 17 Komnēnos (1658–1719) studied in the Patriarchal Academy in Constantinople, worked as a private tutor in Iasi at the court of George Douka and Constantine Cantemir. He then moved back to Constantinople and subsequently to Padua, where he studied medicine. During his studies in Padua, he became friend with the local English embassy official, as a result of which he took part in an official trip to England in early 1687. In December 1687, he succeeded in entering the Greek Palaiokapas college, and became a member of the Greek Community of Venice. In 1691, he received his diploma as a “doctor-philosopher” and left Italy. He travelled to Russia and in 1694 returned to Wallachia and Moldova, where he worked in the rulers' courts. Tonsured monk with the name of Hierotheos in 1702 (i.e., just after the publication of the Athos *proskynētarion*), he was then enthroned bishop in 1705. He was the author of a large map of Wallachia and a map of the two hemispheres published in Padua by Chrysanthos Notaras in 1700, both dedicated to Constantine Brancovan. See Toliás, “Ἀθωνικὴ ἱερὴ χαρτογραφία,” 155, n. 31 and 32; Donald Nicol, “The Doctor-Philosopher John Comnen of Bucharest and His Biography of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 9 (1971), 511–526. Dēmētrios Pantos, *Ιωάννης-Ιερόθεος Κομνηνός μητροπολίτης Δρύστρας (1657–1719): βίος - εκκλησιαστικὴ δράση - συγγραφικὸ ἔργο* (Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2007).
- 18 Geōrgios Toliás, “Greek Maps in Print, 1665–1820: General Features,” *e-Perimetron* 5 (2010), 1–48.
- 19 “Proskynētarion,” in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- 20 Daniel Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage in the Itinerary Maps of Matthew Paris,” *The Art Bulletin* 81 (1999), 598–622.
- 21 Rubin, “Greek Orthodox Maps,” 131. See also Catherine Delano-Smith and Alessandro Scafi, “Sacred Geography,” in *Sacred Places on Maps*, ed. Zsolt Török (Pannonhalma: Pannonhalmi Főapátság, 2005), 122–140.
- 22 Toliás links Greek *proskynētaria* to an Islamic topographic tradition (*Ἀθωνικὴ ἱερὴ χαρτογραφία*, 150–151). See *The History of Cartography*, eds. John Brian Harley and David Woodward (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), vol. 2:1.
- 23 The Grēgoriou copy is the most complete; the Rome codex includes 48 illuminations, whereas only 42 survive in the Docheiariou and Athens copies (see Kadas, “Ὁ καλλιγράφος,” 1287).
- 24 “Read it, satiate yourself with it, all of you who desire to venerate there, and see holy places as well as ascetics, and sanctify yourselves, with faith and piousness, and may all of you be saved” (“Χριστόφορος Ἱερομόναχος ὁ ἐξ Ἰωαννίνων καὶ τῆς Ἱερᾶς Βασιλικῆς καὶ Πατριαρχικῆς τῶν Ἰβήρων μονῆς Προηγούμενος τοῖς ἐντευξομένοις, ἐν Κυρίῳ χαίρειν,” n.p.).
- 25 Go and venerate everything.../As you exit Lavra, go to Karakalon/And by the evening, if you wish, go to Philotheon/And from there, as you walk down, go to Iveron./Venerate there as well, and then go around/Thank our Lady the Portaitissa./And venerate [her miraculous icon]/with desire and piousness’ (“Περίοδος τοῦ ἀγιωνύμου Ὄρους τοῦ Ἀθωνος συντεθεῖσα διὰ στίχων πολιτικῶν, παρὰ τοῦ Πανιερωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Νικαίας, Κυρίου Πορφυρίου, Προηγούμενου ἐτι ὄντος τῆς Βασιλικῆς καὶ Πατριαρχικῆς μονῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Προδρόμου, τῆς ἐν τῇ μαύρῃ θαλάσῃ κειμένης, πλησίον τῆς Σαζοπόλεως,” n.p.).
- 26 Komnēnos, *Προσκυνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 2.

- 27 *Ibid.*, 3–4.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 29 Grēgoriou, cod. 159, ff. 4r-v (Sōtērēs Kadas, “Εικονογραφημένο προσκνητάριο των Αγίων Τόπων, κωδ. 159 της Μονής Γρηγορίου,” *Κληρονομία* 9 (1977), 396). The practice of measuring holy sites was well established and dates back to early pilgrims. See Zur Shalev, “Christian Pilgrimage and Ritual Measurement in Jerusalem,” *Micrologus* 19 (2011), 131–150.
- 30 See, for example, the description of Iveron’s churches (Komnēnos, *Προσκνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 46–49).
- 31 See Veronica della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 16–18.
- 32 A notable example of graphic *itinerarium* is the Peutinger Table (Codex Vindobonensis 324), a medieval copy of the only known surviving map of the road network in the fourth-century Roman Empire. The map consists of a 675 × 34 cm parchment roll and features an extensive network of routes as a series of roughly parallel lines along which destinations have been marked in order of travel. It is likely to have had a commemorative function and to have been possibly inspired by a large map displayed on the walls of the Porticus Vipsania (or “Porches of the empire”) commissioned by Agrippa to celebrate his son-in-law Octavian’s victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium and to display the extension of the empire *ad termini orbis terrarum* to the public. See Oswald Ashton Wentworth Dilke, “Maps in the Service of the State: Roman Cartography to the End of the Augustan Era,” in *The History of Cartography*, eds. John Brian Harley and David Woodward (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1987), vol. 1, 201–211. In the Middle Ages, *periploi* and *portolani* developed into portolan charts, which maintained the same sequential character, with port names arranged perpendicularly along the coastline. The earliest surviving example, the Carta Pisana, dates back to 1275. See P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1992) and Jonathan Lanman, *On the Origin of Portolan Charts* (Chicago, IL: Herman Dunlap Smith Centre for the History of Cartography, Newberry Library, 1987). The word used in the introductory poem in Komnēnos’ *proskynētariou* is “*periodos*,” which indicates a circuit of the peninsula (even though Komnēnos’ descriptions follow a different, roughly hierarchical, rather than topographic, order). The word was used in ancient and Byzantine geographical works, starting with Anaximander of Miletus’ *Περίοδος γῆς* (6th c. BCE), which contained a description of the first ancient Greek map.
- 33 On *isolarii* as a cartographic genre, see for example, George Tolias, “Isolarii, Fifteenth to Seventeenth Century,” in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), vol. 3:1, 263–284 and Frank Lestringant, “Îles,” in *Géographie du monde au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*, ed. Monique Pelletier (Paris: CTHS, 1989), 165–167.
- 34 “He who wishes to visit Mount Athos,/To see it and tour it around,/Let him read this, and then set off” (“Περίοδος τοῦ ἁγιωνύμου Ὄρους τοῦ Ἄθωτος,” n.p.).
- 35 See, for example, Komnēnos, *Προσκνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 20, 38.
- 36 “Ταῦτα τὰ προσκνήματα διερχόμενος, ... ὃ φιλόχριστε, λέγε με εὐλάβειαν τὸ τροπάριον τοῦ ἁγίου” (Grēgoriou, cod. 159, f. 26b; Kadas, “Εικονογραφημένο προσκνητάριον,” 413).
- 37 The gospel passages are from John 18:1–7 and 7–13. The custom of reading relevant passages on the spot can be traced back to early pilgrims. Egeria’s account contains various instances of this practice. See *Egeria’s Travels*, trans. John Wilkinson (Oxford: Aris and Phillips, 2006).
- 38 “All are friends of the one who is successful, but no one is the father of the one who is unfortunate” [this is an ancient saying, probably inspired by Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*]; “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us”; “Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us”; “Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and to those in the tombs bestowing life.” The inaccurate spelling is from the original inscription.
- 39 Ioustinos of Simonopetra, *Ιωάννου του Κομνηνού Προσκνητάριον*, 25–26.
- 40 “Χριστόφορος Ιερομόναχος,” n.p.
- 41 Komnēnos, *Προσκνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 9–12.
- 42 Grēgoriou, cod. 159, f. 1r (Kadas, “Εικονογραφημένο προσκνητάριον,” 391).
- 43 V. Rev. Maximos Constatas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2014), 18–21.

- 44 Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010[1999]).
- 45 “I know it has been rather a long business writing down all these places one after the other and it makes far too much to remember. But it may help you, loving sisters, better picture what happened in these places when you read the Books of holy Moses” (*Egeria’s Travels*, trans. Wilkinson, 113).
- 46 Κομνηνός, *Προσκυνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 38.
- 47 Sound is magnified in the 1745 edition. The opening poem insists on the role of the pilgrim himself as a repository and transmitter of memory to the broader world: “Νὰ ἔχεις πάντα κατὰ νοοῦ ὅπου καὶ ἂν καθίσης./Τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους τὰ καλά, νὰ μὴν τὰ σιωπήσης” (“Wherever you go always keep all the good things of the Holy Mountain in your mind, don’t keep them silent” (“Περίοδος τοῦ ἀγιωνύμου Ὄρους τοῦ Ἄθωνος,” n.p.).
- 48 Docheiariou, cod. 129, ff. 7r,v.
- 49 Κομνηνός, *Προσκυνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 5–6.
- 50 “Those of you who read and buy it, brothers, have a great wealth, always treasure it. Furthermore, at home take the blessing from Jerusalem, the Holy City” (Docheiariou, cod. 129, ff. 32v.).
- 51 A stunning example is the Sancta Sanctorum, a sixth-century wooden box preserved in the Vatican decorated with scenes from the life of Christ. The box contains fragments of stone from each of the sites, thus presenting faithful with literal “fragments of Holy Land.” As Mitchell Merback comments, the cover of the box helped its viewer “visualize the events in situ, when he or she was actually present at the holy sites, or even re-create the memory of the sites visited once departed” (Mitchell Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* [London: Reaktion, 2001], 51).
- 52 On late antique *ampullae*, see Gary Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Publication Collection, 1982); Cynthia Hahn, “Loca Sancta Souvenirs: Sealing the Pilgrim’s Experience,” in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 85–96; Maggie Ducan-Flowers, “A Pilgrim’s *Ampulla* from the Shrine of St. John the Evangelist at Ephesus,” in *Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 125–139. Post-Byzantine souvenirs from the Holy Land are discussed in Mat Immerzeel, “Proskynētaría from Jerusalem: Souvenirs of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land,” in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, eds. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai and Hanna Vorholt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 463–470.
- 53 “Τὸ παρὸν προσκυνητάριον ὑπάρχει ἐμοῦ τοῦ Βασιλείου καὶ ὅποιος τῶν χριστιανῶν τὸ ἀποξενώνει νὰ ἔχει τὴν κατάρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Παναγίας καὶ πάντων τῶν Ἁγίων, ἀμήν”, Grēgoriou, cod. 159, f. 27r (Kadas, “Εἰκονογραφημένο προσκυνητάριον,” 380).
- 54 Kadas, “Ὁ καλλιγράφος καὶ μικρογράφος Δανιήλ,” 1291. In other cases, however, printed *proskynētaría* were treated with less reverence. For example, the front cover of the copy of a Sinai *proskynētarion* preserved at the British Library is covered with mathematical computations (*Περιγραφή Ἱερὰ διηγουμένη συντόμως καὶ περιλιτικός, τὰ ἐπισημότερα τοῦ Ἁγίου καὶ Θεοβαδίστου Ὄρους Σινᾶ, μεγαλεῖα ... Τυπωθήσα τῆ προτοπῆ καὶ δαπάνη τοῦ Πανιερωτάτου, καὶ Θεοπροβλήτου Μητροπολίτου Ἁγίου Μπελγυραδίου Κυ Κυ Σωφρονίου Σιναΐτου, τοῦ ἐκ τῆς περιφήμου πόλεως καὶ νήσου Χίου*. Venice, 1768).
- 55 Rehav Rubin, “Iconography as Cartography: Two Cartographic Icons of the Holy City and its Environs,” in *Eastern Mediterranean Cartography*, eds. George Toliaς and Dēmētrēs Loupēs (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2004), 361.
- 56 The Orthodox have 16 lamps, as opposed to the 13 of the Franks, the 4 of the Copts, and the 3 of the Armenians and the Syrians, Grēgoriou, cod. 159, f. 4r (Kadas, “Εἰκονογραφημένο προσκυνητάριον,” 396).
- 57 *Ibid.*, f. 1r (Kadas, “Εἰκονογραφημένο προσκυνητάριον,” 394).
- 58 *Ibid.*, ff. 2r, 5v (Kadas, “Εἰκονογραφημένο προσκυνητάριον,” 395, 397).
- 59 Κομνηνός, *Προσκυνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 63.
- 60 Ioustinos of Simonopetra, *Ἰωάννου του Κομνηνοῦ Προσκυνητάριον*, 26.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 84 and 91.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 64.

- 63 *Ibid.*, 59–60.
- 64 Peter Sugar, *South Eastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354–1804* (Seattle, WA and London: University of Washington Press, 1977), vol. 4, 130–133.
- 65 Docheiariou, cod. 129, f. 33v.
- 66 Komnēnos, *Προσκυνητάριον του Αγίου Όρους*, 109–110. A similar prayer concludes the introduction to the 1701 edition. See Ioustinos of Simonopetra, *Ιωάννου του Κομνηνού Προσκυνητάριον*, 30.
- 67 Theocharēs, “Church Embroidery”; Sōtērēs Kadas, *Το Άγιον Όρος: τα μοναστήρια και οι θησαυροί τους* (Athens: Ekdotikē Athēnōn, 1998[1980]), 15. Sometimes, the *proskynētariion* itself took on this function. Reduced to poem, rather than analytical description, later *proskynētaria* of other main monastic centres, such as Meteora, explicitly address the faithful, asking for donations. For example, in 1786, Abbot Gavriēl of Nea Monē writes: “Σύρε λοιπὸν καὶ μὴν ἀμελήσης./ Ὅλα τὰ μοναστήρια νὰ τὰ προσκυνήσης./ Ὅταν εἰς τὸν Ἅγιον Νικόλαον φθάσης./ Ἀπὸ τὴν Ἁγίαν Μονὴν κοντὰ μέλλεις ἀπεράσης./ Κάμε κι αὐτὴν νὰ τὴν ἐλεήσης./ Πρόσεχε καλῶς μὴν τὴν ἀποσκυβαλίσης./ Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ πτωχότερον ἀπὸ τὰ μοναστήρια ὅλα./ Νὰ κυβερνήσης καὶ αὐτὸ διὰ τὴν ψυχὴν σου/ Καὶ ἔξεις τὸν μισὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα./ Διότι λέγει, ἐφ’ ὅσον ἐποιήσετε τῶν ἀδερφῶν μου τοῦ ἐλαχίστου,/ Ἐμένα τὸ ἐκάμετε τοῦ κριτοῦ καὶ κτίστου” (“Then move on and do not omit to visit all the monasteries. When you get to Saint Nicholas, you will pass by Aghia Monē. Go to this one as well to leave your alms to it, be very careful not to ignore it, [for] this is the poorest of all the monasteries, provide for this one too for [the salvation of] your soul, and you shall be rewarded for eternity. Because He says: what you do for the least of my brothers, you do it for me, the judge and creator”) (“Ἱερομονάχου Γαβριὴλ Ἀγιαμονήτη ἀνέκδοτο προσκυνητάριον,” 21).
- 68 Mrparski, *Τα ταξίδια στο Άγιον Όρος*, 483–484.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 403.
- 70 The account of his first visit is shorter and anecdotal and does not include illustrations; the second is much more extensive and elaborate. Historical and topographical notes are expanded and complemented by personal observations on the monastic routine and liturgical practices, theological disquisitions with the monks, lengthy accounts of miracles, and other edifying tales. The reader is literally walked by hand through the monastic buildings and their surroundings. Captured in his sketches from a bird’s-eye perspective, the monasteries appear as self-contained microcosms—as islands on the land, or islands suspended between the land and the sea. Of the twenty original drawings, seventeen survive to us (see Grishin, “Bars’kyj and the Orthodox Community”). These sketches are the culmination of Barskij’s production, which had started during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he is likely to have first got acquainted with *proskynētaria*. In a way, his illustrated accounts can be envisaged as a sort of synthesis and development of Daniēl and Komnēnos’ *proskynētaria*. See della Dora, “Light and Sight”.
- 71 This and similar engravings are discussed in Tolia, “Αθωνική ιερή χαρτογραφία”; Waldemar Deluga, “Mont Athos dans les gravures balcaniques des XVIIème et XIX siècles,” *Balkan Studies* 38 (1997), 239–251; Veronica della Dora, *Imagining Mount Athos: Visions of a Holy Mountain from Homer to World War II* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011). On their iconographic relationship with an older Sinaite tradition, see Veronica della Dora, “Turning Holy Mountains into Ladders to Heaven: Overlapping Topographies and Poetics of Space in Post-Byzantine Sacred Engravings of Sinai and Mount Athos,” in *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St. Catherine’s Monastery in the Sinai*, eds. Sharon Gerstel and Robert Nelson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 505–535.
- 72 These general views of Mount Athos were later complemented by topographic engravings of the individual monasteries framed by representations of the saints and scenes of the miracles associated with them. While the general views were visual summaries of *proskynētaria*, these images offered synoptic views of their individual chapters. Many examples are found in Papastratou, *Paper Icons*.
- 73 Veronica della Dora, “Mapping Pathways to Heaven: A Topographical Engraving of Meteora (1782),” *Imago Mundi* 65 (2013), 215–231.
- 74 See Rubin, “Proskynetarion,” “Greek Orthodox Maps” and “Iconography as Cartography.”

## 14 The sacred space of the state and its direction

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The aim of this article is more to raise questions of interest to us than to answer them. In general, such is the role of specific case studies through which scholars try to touch upon a large, global problem. The individual case is certainly part of that problem but does not exhaust it – it may only help us to understand what exactly we are looking for and what are some (or one) of the paths for attaining the object of our search: attaining, but not encompassing.

I think it is unnecessary to explain why I decided to dedicate this particular research to Alexei Lidov, who is undoubtedly one of the pioneers in the study of sacred space. Of course, I have my personal reasons among others: they stem from our nearly 20 years of personal acquaintance and, I would say, friendship, passing through Athens, Sofia, Tbilisi, Belgrade, and maintained through our meetings not only in space but in texts, in the exchange, discussion, transformation, and generation, of ideas, whether related to art, law, or power.

The following pages deal with the state, its space, and the orientation of this space within the world. The idea of the spatial orientation<sup>1</sup> of the state is in itself strange and requires an explanation, especially as the reference is not to any political orientation, not to an orientation in terms of the political goals of society or the ruler. Of this kind of orientation, much has been written. Here, we are referring to a purely spatial direction, which implies moving or at least gazing, in some direction. Without claiming to give a definition, we may say that the state is a form of organization of society that has achieved a degree of development that requires the exercise of political power in order to maintain unity and balance in society; this power is usually argued for and legitimated in religious or quasi-religious terms. At the base of the state is the people, understood as a kinship-tribal-ethnic, religious, social, national, or some other, unity, and power is in the hands either of the divine embodiment of this “people” or in the hands of him whom God – the true ruler – has chosen, indicated, or anointed to rule His heritage. In this sense, the state is sacred, whatever we mean by that term. It is sacred due to its purpose – to care for people. It is sacred in the way it was established, constituted, and in its way of functioning. It is sacred in the eyes of the contemporaries of every state. In Antiquity, this was linked to reverence for some divinity, and the state proved to be the “locality of the cult,” a space of hierophany. In my other writings, I have suggested a view of the state as a temple, a House of God, or monastery, and have indicated the creation of structures corresponding to the celestial hierarchies. In the contemporary age or the recent past, we observe a “secular sanctification” of the state through deism or various, at times totalitarian, ideologies.

The concrete case we will discuss here is derived from the text of Khan Krum's inscription from Khambarli; this is one of the most remarkable texts from the time of the First Empire, especially as regards pagan Bulgaria. The inscription consists of 30 lines and is in a poor condition. The first seven lines have been lost, and the restorations made of them are uncertain; hence, I will begin with the clearer part of the text.

Here is its translation according to Vesselin Beševliev's edition<sup>2</sup>:

...I made /my brother and/ that the strategos Leo be subordinate to him. / From Beroae and /.....Doultroinoi first is Toukos the itzirgou boila for / the right side and / Vardanes and Ioannes the strategoi subordinate to him. And for / the left side / of my sarakt [for] Anchialo / Debelt, Sozopolis, Ranoulae, that Iratais the boila kavkhan be head and Kordiles and / Gregoras subordinate strategoi.

The inscription has been classified by Vesselin Beševliev as a ruler's military command, yet I would define it rather as a constituting normative act. In it, we find exceptionally rich sources of information related to the institutions and organization of power in pagan Bulgaria. Here, we will not dwell on some significant problems related to the fact that this is the earliest extant mention made of a *boila kavkhan* and an *itzirgou boila*<sup>3</sup>; here too is probably the earliest mention of the strategoi-voevods in Bulgaria, and it remains for us to consider the term *kephalè*. Nor will we dwell on the prosopographic data contained in the text (about the ruler's brother, the two dignitaries, and their subordinate strategoi),<sup>4</sup> whereas the geographical data will interest us only insofar as it helps define the direction of orientation.

However, we should not overlook the term "*sarakt*," of which scholars have given contradictory interpretations. As the term is Turkic and thus outside my range of competence, I will not delve into details but will present the interpretations proposed by other scholars. One group of authors<sup>5</sup> considers the word refers to some form of "army," whereas others discern the meaning of a "state."<sup>6</sup> Following an analysis of the word, Stephen Mladenov saw in it an idea about "flatland," "spaciousness," and "country" from where arrives the "space of the state" or simply "state" as the word is related also to the "confines," "border," and "border pillar." The arguments made for both propositions are linguistic, and I cannot take a stand on the matter. But applied to the text in question, the two views are not mutually contradictory or exclusive. I believe we may assume the text refers to a military campaign, although the only direct testimony (excluding, of course, the specific military – political situation after the death of Emperor Nicephorus I, as the interpretations of the text see it) in this respect would be the word "*sarakt*," provided we understand it as signifying "army." On the other hand, the text obviously refers to the organizing of some territories. Regarding the right side, there is mention of Beroae and the obscure "Doultroinoi," and the itzirgou boila Toukos is in chief position there, whereas in the left side, headed by the boila kavkhan Iratais, we find Anchialo, Debelt, Sozopolis, and the unclear "Ranoulae." Regarding the center, headed by the ruler's brother, no geographical indications are given. Thus, we may say that the left side covers geographical sites located eastward, and the right side covers sites located in a westerly direction.<sup>7</sup>

It is of interest to note the presence of the strategoi<sup>8</sup>: in the middle part, the strategos is Leo, in the right, Vardanes and Ioannes, and in the left, Kordiles and Gregoras. They are presented as assistants subordinated to the three head dignitaries. All the strategoi seem to be from Byzantium, as their names are either Christian-Greek or

Iranian (which suggests a probable Armenian origin). But more important for our discussion is the figure of a strategos as such. In this specific context, scholars are inclined to see strategoi as Byzantine military commanders at the service of the Bulgars, and this is at least partially true. Let us not forget however that due to the particularities of the administrative system of *themata*, the strategos was not only a military commander but also a governor of the province (*thema*) in which he commanded the army. Such too is the *voevoda* in the countries of central, eastern, and southeastern Europe during the Middle Ages and the Modern Period; this being a position based on that of the Roman strategoi, and the name of which is a calque of the Greek term “*strategos*” precisely in Bulgaria.<sup>9</sup> I believe we have reasons to see in the text of the Khambarli inscription the earliest testimony to the beginnings of the reception of this institution in Bulgaria based on the Roman one and probably under the influence of Byzantines in the service of the Bulgars.

Importantly for our discussion, the inscription refers to the territorial organization of the state, though perhaps not of the whole state. Indeed, the mentioned geographical reference points are all south of the mountain Haemus and do not include sites from the state’s basic territory, which was situated between the mountain and the Danube. The fact requires explanation, which is not the task of the present article. The reason might lie in an insufficiency of the description given in the text, or the text’s focus on the military campaign, or something else. Thus, we come to our basic problem, regarding the orientation of the state, implied by the presence of the left and right sides. If we consider the cities as points of orientation, the direction we are looking for is southward. Assuming that the text refers to the organization of the army only during a military campaign against the Byzantine Empire, there is no problem here: the Bulgarian state is located to the north of Haemus and the direction of attack (and of defense) is southward, so naturally the right-wing is to the west, and the left, to the east. This explanation is logical enough, but does not take into account the territories; moreover, it seems to assume a contemporary view for a distant past with a different culture. There is a temptation to adopt such a “logical” (especially from a present-day viewpoint) explanation, especially as the natural direction of attack of the Bulgars for the purpose of plunder and various gains is from north to south, toward the Byzantine Empire. This direction can also be viewed as traditional for the people of the steppe during the centuries in which their eyes were turned toward the rich territories of China.

But should we look for this kind of explanation? The directions of the world have a sacred, not utilitarian, meaning. They are related to the sacred structure of the universe, in other words, to the respective religions of the various peoples, and also to the cult and rituals linked to that structure as visible manifestations of the faith. Paying reverence to divinity is not simply a solicitation by a prayer of divine favor or protection from anger or calamities. The cult recreates the unity of the world as focused on the sacred, which we may define as some kind of divine presence realized through hierophany or Divine Providence. The structuring of space requires a reference point, and the sacred orientation provides such a point. Social organisms and their related spatial characteristics are undoubtedly sacred, especially for premodern societies. We may include under this category the dwelling with its internal organization (especially the heart), the temple, the city, the native land, the “fatherland.” For the tribe, its land was the whole world, and this certainly passed into the state as heir to “our land.” In other writings, on several occasions, I have tried to ground the sacred character of the



state, which is displayed in various ways but is always sacred in terms of both space and historical mission. I believe in the case of the Khambarli inscription we have this kind of phenomenon, and I find the task of discovering its message is relevant for discerning this phenomenon.

In order to attain the message, we must make a brief overview of the meaning of the world's directions according to the various ways in which they are defined. Foremost, we should ask how the fourfold division of the world originated. In modern terms, these are the cardinal directions east, west, south, and north. Of course, the first basis for such a division that comes to mind is related to the celestial bodies. At least two of the cardinal directions coincide etymologically in many languages with the rise and setting of the Sun. When considering more carefully and analyzing the possibilities of using an orientation related to the Sun, to other stars, and planets, we notice these are not very certain and unproblematic reference points. So, the answer should rather be sought in the parts of the human body, and specifically in the parts of the individual who is seeking to determine directions and organize the cosmos, the world.<sup>10</sup> Only then do the ideas of "forward," "backward," "to the left," "to the right" become the four directions of the world. These directions, however, are relative when defined based on the human body, as they depend on the direction in which the person is turned. Arthur L. Frothingham already proposed and argued the thesis concerning the absolute value-based determination of the directions, and especially of "the right," defined by the constancy of the sacred direction.<sup>11</sup> Boris A. Uspenskiy devoted special attention to the religious and value characteristic of the right and left; according to him, they are not relative, as the right is absolutely dominant.<sup>12</sup> However, while agreeing with the basic arguments of the authors, insofar as they refer to the right hand of God and the axiological dominance of the right in terms of absolute value, I would nevertheless say that this view applies to a specific culture. In other cultures, such is not the case. Moreover, when the geographical directions are defined based on "right" and "left," the two are not always taken as related to each other. Insofar as the directions of the world (east and west) could be defined as left and right, it is clear that the direction of the face, of the gaze, is of importance, and this direction is determined based on ritual and religion.<sup>13</sup> In these cultures, this direction is that of prayer, of communion with the divine. The direction is determined entirely based on religious principles, which, however, especially in primitive societies, are often related to various natural phenomena. The Sun, for example, with the light and warmth that it gives, is certainly perceived by all cultures as something good. The same can be said for other natural objects such as water (the river), fire, the mountain, etc., although some of these may at times turn into destructive elements.

Thus, a permanent trend emerges according to which the sacred direction of prayer is east or south. We find these directions used in the activities of religious cults and quasi-religious courtly rituals in different, mutually unrelated cultures. Researchers have traced concrete manifestations of, and concrete reasons for, the choice, and these are quite varied (the direction of the sanctuary, the direction of Jerusalem, the direction of Mecca, etc.), but they originate very often, if not always, from some manifestation of a solar cult.

The inscription we are discussing is a Bulgar monument of the pagan age, and its study should be pursued within its own context, the culture of the Eurasian steppe. This culture combines multiple influences, of which the strongest is certainly the native as well as that of China. There was also an influence stemming from the Iranian or

Indo-Iranian Aryan peoples, with whom the steppe nations met in Central Asia. In the context of coexistence in this certainly vast area, we may point to cultural exchange with the Finno-Ugric peoples as well. Let us see what the data on the listed cultural communities tell us, taking into account the two basic elements: *first*, the basic sacred direction, and *second*, the importance of the division into left and right part!

The Turkic tradition proper is quite complex, insofar as in addition to its own roots, and it has been strongly influenced by China. The traditional sacred direction of the steppe peoples was eastward, and this is convincingly proven by the Kul Tigin inscription (eighth century) from the valley of the river Orkhon in Mongolia, where we find a clear description – moreover, one based on values – of the world ruled over by the khagan: “*Forward, (in the direction of) the sunrise, rightward in (the land of) noon, backward (in the lands) towards sunset, leftward – in the midnight lands, everywhere the peoples (living) in these lands are subject to me.*”<sup>14</sup> The face is turned eastward toward the sunrise, and this is obviously the sacred direction, which leads and defines. The other directions, in addition to being defined according to religious-value-related-astronomical features such as sunset, noon, or midnight, are also defined based on the sides of the human body facing eastward: the right side, the backside, and the left side. I would point attention to the value-based difference between the right and left. The inscription contains no explicit indication, but it seems certain to me that the higher value is set on the right side not because of any intrinsic quality of “the right” but because of the sacred character of “noon” compared with “midnight.” Here we may adduce the many arguments related to the opposition between the light and dark, day and night, known and unknown, life and death, etc. In a sense, this text is reminiscent of the Khambarli inscription, although the direction is different. Obviously, in traditional Turkic culture, formed in its own environment in the steppe, the eyes looked eastward, toward the sunrise.<sup>15</sup> As for the opposition of right vs. left, in this context, the former was obviously predominant for the Turkic peoples.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, however, we find other examples where the eyes are turned to the south.

According to some researchers, the direction of the face toward the noon Sun is such an ancient element that it is no less important than the orientation, i.e., the direction of the eyes, toward the sunrise.<sup>17</sup> The cultural development of the different Altaic peoples was not identical and at times the various communities had different orientation points. In any case, the prevalent stance among scholars is that the southward sacred direction among steppe peoples appeared under Chinese influence; hence, it appears to be typical for a later age, and especially among certain peoples, such as those of the Tungusic group, and above all among the Mongols, for whom the southward direction is certainly dominant.<sup>18</sup>

As the direction of the *sarakt* in the Khambarli inscription is southward, it is worth looking for possible influences that may have determined this. Let us begin with the Finno-Ugric peoples, with whom the Turkic peoples of the steppe were in contact at the dawn of their history. I will make a preliminary remark that this contact is not very reliable, inasmuch as the Ural peoples were neighbors that primarily came *under* influence rather than *exert* influence. The sacred direction of the Finno-Ugric peoples was largely influenced by the geographic features of their areas of habitation. The harsh conditions of the north determined their preference for the south. Among other nations, we may observe some hesitation due to side influences or temporal and regional particularities, but for the Ural peoples, the sacred direction was invariably the southward.<sup>19</sup> Also of interest is the geographical division into right and left,

which follows the archaic, and very typical, the predominance of “right” respectively of “good,” “sacred,” and “masculine,” as opposed to “left,” “bad,” “feminine,” etc.<sup>20</sup>

It seems Iran is of greater interest for our discussion; great world civilizations were formed there and certainly exerted influence on their neighbors. Several different traditions are interwoven there! Indo-European cultures were usually turned toward the east, and elements of this can be discovered among the Iranians as well, although the contrary opinion has also been stated that the east was not important for them and was never their dominant sacred direction.<sup>21</sup> The elements in question refer to lexical traces, to some more ancient texts, to the orientation at the entrance of temples, etc.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the basic sacred direction in Iranian culture is the south, which is certainly linked to the Zoroastrian cult of light, fire, the Sun, warmth, and corresponds to the upper part of the vertical division typical for the earlier period.<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that this prevalence of the southerly direction in Iranian religion and culture is somewhat contrary to the reverence for the north in India, but not quite. In fact, among the Iranian nations, there is a strongly marked, alternative reverence for the north, which – as in the case of India – is related to the notion of the Holy Mountain, of the *Axis mundi*, and the Polar Star. It is characteristic of the Manichaeans and the different dualistic and gnostic sects, which had a strong presence in Iranian culture.<sup>24</sup> We should note that the subsequent dissemination of dualistic heresies in Europe had an undoubted influence in favor of the north as a sacred direction, which is not always easily recognizable as a religious deviation.<sup>25</sup>

Although the cultures and religions of the Iranian plateau provide very interesting material for our discussion, I would say that, for many and various reasons, I do not see Iranian culture as underlying the southward orientation described in the Khambarli inscription. The zone of contact between Iran and the steppe, a zone located in Central Asia, and the reverence for the daevas in this region, do not provide very strong reasons for seeing the dominant sanctification of the south. Thus, taking into account the writings of other authors, we should look to China in our search for influence. The Celestial Empire and the whole far east were looking southward, and China had a doubtless, and enormous, influence on the steppe, of whose culture the Bulgars’ culture was a part.<sup>26</sup>

Since the earliest times, for thousands of years, the Chinese devoted the greatest attention to spatial positioning in ritual practices. Rituals organize the world in a certain way, and that was the way in which they saw the world. It was said that the kingdom of Shang (IIInd millennium BC) was divided into five parts, corresponding to the center (the capital city Shang itself) and the four directions of the world.<sup>27</sup> In this case, the emphasis certainly falls on the center. In early religious representations, the God of the center (where mankind resides) becomes the supreme divinity; and according to some scholars, the strong solar orientation of Chinese beliefs led to the definition of only three directions (sunrise/east, noon/south, and sunset/west), to which the north was added only later.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the southern direction gradually became dominant, and a man turned toward the Sun at noon has on his left side the east/sunrise, which was linked to the Sun and the male principle; and on his right side, the west/sunset, linked to the Moon and the female principle.<sup>29</sup> Chinese culture devised trigram schemas as a very clear geometrical visual expression of this structuralistic vision that unites south, east, left, festive, male as opposed to north, west, right, funereal, feminine. We can see this opposition and become aware of it through an extremely pure logical and visual construction.<sup>30</sup> I am referring to the “sanctification” of the southern direction of the

face during prayer, given that the left side is obviously dominant (in religious and value terms) over the right side.<sup>31</sup> The initial reason for this division was the solar cult, but this orientation gradually seeped into practically all elements of Chinese culture. The southward direction is sacred, because there the Sun is at its highest, and a man facing southward has the east/sunrise on his left side. Chinese culture (similar in this to many other cultures) turns its back to the north, and partially to the west, as it certainly associates these directions with death, darkness, and cold. Hence is derived the qualification of the leftward direction as lucky, which is not very typical for various cultures, but which further developed into the rejection of the right hand as the hand of weapons, and the rejection of domination through force, which is deemed unacceptable.<sup>32</sup>

We already noted the well-researched fact that Chinese culture exerted enormous influence on the steppe for more than 1,000 years, from ancient times until Genghis Khan, and even after that. The Bulgars certainly originated from the vast expanses of Eurasia and carried the traditions of the steppe nations, so that it is worth comparing our inscription with the indicated beliefs and value orientations. It becomes immediately salient that there is a division into the center, left part, and right part. Of course, in this case, the dominant position is that of the center, as shown by the fact that the khan's brother is placed in command there. The higher rank of the person indicates the more worthy position in the space he occupies. In this particular situation, "center" is not opposed to "left" or "right" but to the periphery. Such too is the structuring of space we may expect.

Let us examine the "left" and "right" side! At the right is the city of Beroae, well-known and corresponding to Stara Zagora today, as well as the unfamiliar Doultroinoi, a name that is an uncertain reconstruction by the editor of the inscription. At the left, there are Anchialo, Debelt, and the unfamiliar Ranoulae, again, an uncertain reconstruction by the editor. Leaving aside the last mentioned, we find two cities on the Black Sea coast, which gives us a geographical picture of the *sarakt*. Thus, we can determine that the left side corresponds to the eastward direction, and the right side, to the westward. In order for these to be the "left" and "right" sides, the person must be facing southward. The data we traced so far should not tempt us to make a super-interpretation, insofar as looking in the direction of the southern, noon Sun is common to many cultures, as is likewise the special axiological importance of the center. However, can we find here some special hierarchical ranking of the left and right sides? On this point, the text itself gives no indications that might be deemed unquestionable. I would like to go deeper into the contents of the inscription in order to look for such indications, remaining fully aware that my conclusions would not be unquestionable.

Before proposing any solution to the problem, I would like to note that neither the geographical data – territories or cities – nor the named Christian strategoi, nor any mentioned strategic positions, nor the fact that the right side is listed in the text before the left side, enable us to see any predominance in value of one of the directions. Let us consider the persons who have been placed in command of the "left" and "right" sides! These are the boila kavkhan Iratais for the left part and the itzircou boila Toukos for the right part. I believe the different positions of one or the other might suggest some answer. Both are well-known dignities from the time of the First Empire, but they are poorly documented and remain enigmatic even with respect to their particular duties in the governance of the state. Vassil Gjuzev has devoted several studies to them, collected in a separate book published about a dozen years ago.<sup>33</sup> After a thorough overview of the sources and etymology of the designations of these dignities,

the author concludes that both refer to institutions in the tribal organization of the Bulgars – institutions that continued to exist in the emerging and the formed Bulgar state. There is no doubt about their origin in the traditions of the steppe peoples. Regarding the *boila kavkhan*, the asserted view is that this was a high-ranking representative of the government whose dignity was unique in the state, was held for life and inheritable, and was second in rank immediately below the ruler. Initially, this position was connected with the relations between the clans in the tribe or the wider tribal structure.<sup>34</sup> The assumption has also been made that, among the Bulgars, similar this to the Khazars, there was a double ruler's institution (a sacred ruler and an acting ruler, the latter being of a lower position than the former, but wielding the actual power), where the *boila kavkhan* might have been the real ruler of the country.<sup>35</sup> The *itzirgou boila* was third in rank in the state (below the khan and the *boila kavkhan*); this position involved military command and especially the governance of an internal region.<sup>36</sup> The question as to the correlation between these two institutions is of great relevance for our discussion. The answer is generally not problematic: all authors have indicated *boila kavkhan* as the higher rank. We may note that in certain cases, the two dignitaries are presented in the same context and with a higher position given to the *kavkhan*: the cases in question are the campaigns of 837 and 924 r.<sup>37</sup>

The Khambarli inscription gives no direct indication of the predominance of one dignitary over the other, but the text does not aim to present such information. V. Gjuzelev offers his interpretation of the text. According to him,<sup>38</sup> it refers to the division of the state territory between the two high-ranking dignitaries and the ruler's brother. Though this does not become quite clear in his discussion, it seems the historian views this division of the territory only in the context of, and in connection with, a specific military campaign; in other words, he sees the military and territorial division as an interconnected and integral whole. He deduces this from the traditions of the Bulgar tribal organization and the structure of the horde of the supreme leader, a structure that, seemingly, is understood to be a military arrangement consisting, naturally, of a right flank and a left flank.<sup>39</sup> In the concluding part of his study, however, Gjuzelev presents a different, though not contrary, thesis regarding the division into left and right parts.<sup>40</sup> Reasserting that the division of the territory (either the newly conquered or the whole) is on a military – administrative basis, the author claims (it is unclear on what grounds) that for two separate reasons (defined by the author as “the governance” and “the nomadization”) the internal region of the tribal union, or the emerging state, among the Turkic peoples, was customarily divided into the left and right part, occupied respectively by the tribe of the khagan/khan and by the “*father-in-law's tribes*,” which would mean the tribes of origin of the ruler's wife. Thus, the *boila kavkhan* proves to be the head of the father-in-law's tribes. As such, according to the Khambarli inscription, he ruled the left (eastern), or less important, part of the *sarakt*. The right part, evidently more important, was occupied, according to Gjuzelev, by the tribes of the khan himself and was under the command of the *itzirgou boila* Toukos. Several questions arise, which I cannot answer in the context of the author's thesis: (1) what was the role of the khan's brother, who in this case occupied the central part, and why was he, or the khan himself, not the one leading the khan's tribes, instead of the *itzirgou boila*? And in this situation, what about the central part? (2) Assuming, as the author claims that the position of the *boila kavkhan* is unique, for life and hereditary, how is it that he is the constant, for life, and hereditary leader of the “father-in-law's tribes”? I assume that the “leader” of these tribes does not signify the “father-in-law.”

But this would imply that the khans always married women from a single tribe or group of tribes, of which the boila kavkhan was the hereditary leader – this is something about which we have no information. (3) If the itzircou boila was the governor (toparchos) of the inner region, why does he lead the right part? In general, for what reason (if we do not count the supposed dominance of the “right” part) does Gjuzelev connect precisely the western regions with the ruler and the eastern with “father-in-law’s tribes”? I situate these questions, additionally, in the context of the claim that the Khambarli inscription refers to a temporary, not permanent, situation in the territorial division of the state.

It seems to me that the assumptions I have pointed out in V. Gjuzelev’s book are the result of a logical conclusion based on inexistent information, so I will permit myself not to accept them without reservation. The division into the eastern and western parts was characteristic of the early (and not only early) Turkic political formations, and the eastern part, with its leader, undoubtedly stood higher in rank.<sup>41</sup> In our case, “eastern” is the “left” part. This observation, combined with the application of the Chinese coordinate system of structuring the world, would enable us to understand the text of the Khambarli inscription. It is evident that the face/gaze of the person defining the direction is turned southward. This is also the sacred direction in Chinese culture, turned toward the noon Sun. This culture, as many others for that matter, reveres the center as well, the central place, which might correspond to the part assigned to the khan’s brother in the Khambarli inscription. Chinese culture ascribes the dominant, lucky position leftward, not rightward. And this principle is confirmed in the Khambarli inscription, though not directly. We might find some indication in this respect in the fact that the “left side” is put under the leadership of the boila kavkhan, who according to all researchers is of a higher rank than the itzircou boila, who is assigned to the right side. Thus, we have an almost complete, though not known in most of its details, overlap with the value-spatial coordinate system of the culture that had exerted a continuous and strong influence on the steppe, the land of origin of the Bulgars.

In his program study on the sacred directions, B. L. Gordon writes that the choice of the preferred direction of the gaze and the face was always determined by doctrinal (we may also call them “religious”), and not utilitarian, reasons and arguments.<sup>42</sup> I believe this is so in our case as well. The southward direction of the eyes is not predetermined by some practical consideration, as a specific direction of military action in a specific war or military campaign, nor by the traditional direction of attack, for the purpose of plunder, from the north to the richer south, whether the latter be Byzantium or China. The southward orientation (if I may use this internally contradictory phrase, as “orientation” means “turning to the east”) stems from religious views formed in China and obviously, at least partially, accepted by the steppe; this orientation has its origin in the high noon Sun. The same is true as concerns the division into the left and right side, determined by the southward direction of the face, and as concerns, the higher position of the left side, determined by the rising Sun.

At the beginning of this article, I specified that my aim was to raise certain questions more than to answer them. At the end of the article, we see that this is indeed the result. The Khambarli inscription, one of the most important objects – in institutional, legal, and political terms – of the Bulgar epigraphic legacy, testifies to the first rudiments of territorial division of the Bulgarian state in the course of formation. Many details of the structure of the state remain mysterious for us due to the lack of sufficient

data. In any case, it becomes clear that the state had directions and parts that were mutually connected and were defined entirely based on the values of the society and its faith, and not on a purely practical basis. This conclusion seems to be a sufficient achievement, provided I have succeeded in demonstrating it. Here, I will not attempt to assert or put in doubt various theories, such as that of the Aryan-Iranian origin of the Bulgars or the view that they were continuers of a local tradition. We have no data on this, and I will not invent them or refute the inexistent. The larger question is whether culture is built upon a certain practice or has some spiritual foundations, but this question is situated in a sphere outside my specific research interests in this article.

What I would dare claim, in connection with the methodology of the study of sacred space, or hierotopia, is that, in the case of a large tribal formation, the state, or prestate, has significant spatial parameters. It is a sacred organism that unites into an integral whole the protective divinity, the nation, the ruler, and the land within a sanctified space that is “oriented” according to the absolute, and religious, criteria and can thereby encompass and give meaning to its component parts. The state is sacred in its establishment, and its spatial parameters must correspond to its sacredness. I think that this is the message we can read in our inscription, while the more specific and less certain conclusions we may leave to future research.

## Notes

- 1 The idea of the sacred space is developed by Mircea Eliade in his already classical book about the sacred and the profane (Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane* [Paris: Gallimard], 1987). For our research, his idea of the break of the homogeneity of the space by a hierophany that produced actually the sacred space (Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane*, 25–62, 100–101) has a special importance. The state for sure is sacred and breaks the space (in spatial and in historical sense of the term). Exactly this breaking that makes possible every *orientation* is the topic that we shall touch.
- 2 The first edition of these group of inscriptions is prepared by Karel Škorpil and Peter Nikov (“Надписи от Първото българско царство в източната част на Балканския полуостров,” част III “Надписът от с. Хамбарлий, (Къзълагашка околия),” *Byzantinoslavica*, t. III/2 [1931], 333–382). The inscription that forms the topic of the present article is published in the framework of the cited study by Peter Nikov (“Два старобългарски надписа за византийско-българските отношения,” 354–360). Later, it is included by Vesselin. Beševliev in his corpus of Protobulgarian inscriptions (V. Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи*, София, 1992, с. 186–187, n<sup>o</sup> 47).
- 3 Васил Гюзелев, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на българското ханство-царство*, Пловдив ФБИН, 2007, с. 51, 125; Татяна Славова, *Владетел и администрация в ранносредновековна България. Филологически аспекти*, София ПАМ Пъблишинг Къмпани ООД, 2010, с. 10–15, 21–29.
- 4 Much has been written on this matter; attempts have been made (successfully or not) to identify the persons in question as Romans in Bulgar service, as prisoners or refugees from the time of Khan Krum’s military campaign against the Byzantine Empire, and at least some of them, as martyrs for the faith in the time of the persecutions committed by the Bulgars. – see Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи*, 187–191, 193.
- 5 Karl Heinrich Menges, “Altaic Elements in the Proto-Bulgarian Inscriptions,” *Byzantion* 21/1 (1951), 117–118; Сергей Ефимович Малов, *Памятники древнетюркской письменности. Тексты и исследования* (Москва, 1951), с. 385; Губайдулла Айдаров, *Язык Орхонских памятников древнетюркской письменности VIII века* (Алма-Ата, 1971), 359; Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи*, 189–190.
- 6 Stephan Mladenov was the first to express this view, which was subsequently adopted by Petar Nikov (Петър Ников, “Два старобългарски надписа за византийско-българските отношения,” *Byzantinoslavica* III/2 (1932), с. 372–373, бел. 80. See also Omeljan Pritsak, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste und die Sprache der Protobulgaren* (Wiesbaden, 1955), S. 71;

- Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, vol. II: *Sprachrester der Türkvölker in den byzantinischen Quellen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), S. 268.
- 7 Some of the geographic sites are known, and many studies have been devoted to their identification. Here, I refer to what the text's publisher has written on the subject: Ников, "Два старобългарски надписа за византийско-българските отношения," 368, 371–373; Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи*, с. 188–190.
  - 8 Славова, *Владетел и администрация*, с. 164–167.
  - 9 Ivan Biliarsky, *Word and Power in Mediaeval Bulgaria* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2011), 46, 360–365.
  - 10 B. L. Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," *History of Religions* 10/3 (1971), 211–212.
  - 11 Arthur L. Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled: I," *American Journal of Archaeology* 21/1 (1917), 56–58.
  - 12 Борис А. Успенский, *Крестное знамение и сакральное пространство. Почему православные крестятся справа налево, а католики – слева направо?* (Москва, 2004), 9–14.
  - 13 Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled: I," 55–60; Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," 212–215; Александр В. Подосинов, *Ex Oriente lux! Ориентация по странам света в архаических культурах Евразии* (Москва, 1999), 455–458.
  - 14 Сергей Е. Малов, *Памятники древнетюркской письменности. Тексты и исследования* (Москва-Ленинград, 1951), 34<sub>2</sub> (The Short Inscription). See a similar text in the Long Inscription on page 36<sub>2</sub>.
  - 15 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, 417 сл.
  - 16 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, 427–429.
  - 17 А. Н. Кононов, "Способы и термины определения стран света у тюркских народов," *Туркологический сборник*, 1974, Москва, 1978, с. 78.
  - 18 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 420–423.
  - 19 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 399 сл. и особено 402 и 414.
  - 20 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 404 сл.
  - 21 Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled," 76.
  - 22 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 130–134.
  - 23 Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled: I," 73–76; Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," 213; Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 125–128.
  - 24 Arthur L. Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled: IV," *American Journal of Archaeology* 21/4 (1917), 423–425; Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," 218–220; Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 128–130, 216 сл.
  - 25 Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," 225–227.
  - 26 Gordon, "Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map," 218–219.
  - 27 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 45–46.
  - 28 Игорь С. Лисевич, "Моделирование мира в китайской мифологии и учение от пяти первоэлементов," in *Теоретическая проблемы восточных литератур* (Москва, 1969), с. 264.
  - 29 Борис Л. Рифтин, *От мифа к роману. Эволюция изображения персонажа в китайской литературе* (Москва: Главная редакция восточной литературы издательства «Наука», 1979), с. 59–61; Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 48.
  - 30 Подосинов, *Ex oriente lux!*, с. 58–60.
  - 31 Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled: I," 63, 64–69.
  - 32 Frothingham, "Ancient Orientation Unveiled: I," 65–66.
  - 33 Васил. Гюзелев, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на българското ханство-царство* (Пловдив: Фондация „Българско историческо наследство“, 2007), 243 с.
  - 34 *Ibid.*, с. 111–121.
  - 35 This is the opinion of T. Slavova in her research on the Bulgar institutions, where she cites an unpublished dictionary of Antoinette. Granberg (Славова: *Владетел и администрация*, с. 14–15). See also: Веселин Бешевлиев, *Първобългари. История* (София: Издателство на Отечествения фронт, 1984), с. 76; Веселин Бешевлиев, *Първобългарите. История, бит и култура* (Пловдив: ФБИН, 2008), с. 215, 283–292; Vesselin Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte* (Amstredam: Hakkert, 1980), S. 383–391. This thesis, which has been supported by other authors as well, is fully refuted by I. Bozhilov in a well-argued way (Иван Божилов, *История на Средновековна България*, т. I, *Варварска България* (София: ФБИН, 2017), с. 385–387.



- 36 Гюзелев, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на българското ханство-царство*, с. 183–188; Славова, *Владетел и администрация*, с. 26–29.
- 37 Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи*, No 14, с. 140 сл.; Гюзелев, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на българското ханство-царство*, с. 69–75, 116–117. Elsewhere in his study, Gjuzelev points out that, in the Khambarli inscription, the boil kavkhan and the itzirgou boila were equal in rank (*op. cit.*, 56–57). Of course, the inscription gives no information regarding subordination – they command two different parts of the *sarakt*. Nor is there direct indication of any difference in hierarchic position between the two, although this does not mean there was none. On the contrary, there was, and other texts have confirmed this. Славова, *Владетел и администрация*, с. 28–29.
- 38 Гюзелев, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на българското ханство-царство*, с. 51–57, 112–114; *История на България в три тома*, т. I, *История на средновековна България* (София: Анубис, 1999), с. 133–134.
- 39 Гюзелев, *Кавханите и ичиргу боилите на българското ханство-царство*, с. 54–55, вж. и бел. 15.
- 40 *Ibid.*, с. 112–114.
- 41 Edward Harper Parker, *A Thousand Years of the Tartars* (New York: Kelly&Walsh, 1926), 12–13; Jan Jacob Maria de Groot, *Die Hunnen der vorchristlichen Zeit*, I (Berlin: Verein-igg. wiss. Verleger, 1921), S. 55–60; Vilhelm Thomsen, *Inscriptions de l'Orkhon* (Helsinki: Imprimerie de la société de la littérature finnoise, 1896), 146; Бешевлиев, *Първобългарски надписи*, с. 192–193.
- 42 Gordon, “Sacred Directions, Orientation, and the Top of the Map,” 227.

## 15 Back to the top of the Mountain. A Syrian protological theme in the late antique and medieval representations of the world to come

*Zinaïda Yurovskaya*

*And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East; and there he put the man that he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – so the Book of Genesis describes the creation of Paradise (Gen 2:8–9). After these few verses, all we know about the site of this magnificent garden is that it is situated somewhere in the East<sup>1</sup>; it is a garden pleasing to God, as he comes here to walk *in the cool of the day* (Gen 3:8). According to another tradition, however, represented for example in the prophesy of Ezekiel, Paradise is not only a garden planted at the dawn of creation to shelter the first man but also God’s dwelling situated on the top of the highest mountain: it is *the holy mountain of God* (Ez. 28:13–15).<sup>2</sup> A similar idea is stressed in the book of Psalms, where the mountain of God’s holiness is associated with Mount Zion (Ps 48:1–2),<sup>3</sup> though here we do not find a direct parallel between the Garden of Eden and the place of God’s dwelling. Indeed, although the theme of the Holy Mountain of God is undoubtedly very significant in many books of the Old Testament – see, for example, the importance of Mount Zion in the prophecy of Isaiah, or the role of Mount Sinai as a place of theophany in the Pentateuch – the idea that the Garden of Eden, Adam’s first household and the abode of God, is situated on the top of a Holy mountain is not commonly encountered in these books. This theme was truly elaborated only in the literature of the Second Temple period and some later Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphal texts.*

Most of the acknowledged Second Temple period texts representing Paradise as a mountain have been studied well enough in the last decades.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, we will recall here a few essential aspects of the representation of Paradise in those texts, in order to better understand the development of this theme in the later Christian sources.

Two major sources depicting Paradise on the top of the mountain are *1 Enoch* and the *Book of Jubilees*. In *1 Enoch*, the vision of Paradise appears in one of its oldest parts, the *Book of Watchers*.<sup>5</sup> The representation of Paradise is extremely complicated in this composite work; some researchers propose to see even more than one Paradise described by the author (s) of this vision.<sup>6</sup> While it is not the task of this article to unravel such a tangle, we can state however that this book portrays a representation of the abode of God in a garden on the mountain top<sup>7</sup>:

And (there was) a seventh mountain in the middle of these (mountains), and in their height they were all like the seat of a throne, and fragrant trees surrounded it.

In the next fragment the meaning of this mountain is revealed to Enoch by archangel Michael<sup>8</sup>:

This high mountain which you saw, whose summit is like the throne of the Lord, is the throne where the Holy One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when he comes down to visit the earth for good. And this beautiful fragrant tree – and no (creature of) flesh has authority to touch it until the great judgment when he will take vengeance on all and will bring (everything) to a consummation for ever – this will be given to the righteous and humble. From its fruit life will be given to the chosen.

Therefore, the throne on the top of the mountain, surrounded by fragrant trees, is the eschatological throne of God, and the magnificent tree, growing close to it, is the Tree of Life. This tree, however, will be transplanted in some eschatological time to the North,<sup>9</sup> “by the house of the Lord, the Eternal King.”

The Tree of Knowledge, or the Tree of Wisdom, as *I Enoch* designates it, is growing in a different place – in the Garden of Righteousness. This is the tree that Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit from and that was the cause of their expulsion from the Garden of Righteousness.<sup>10</sup> Eibert Tigchelaar proposes to see in these two different places the heirs of two different but coexisting traditions<sup>11</sup>; and, according to Tigchelaar, this variation of places does not really signify the simultaneous coexistence of two Edens. Whatever reason had provoked the authors of *I Enoch* to separate the Tree of Life and the Tree of Wisdom, it is important for us to note that the image of the paradisiacal garden on the top of the mountain was not unfamiliar to its authors; that assertion is also supported by another text of more or less the same period, *The Book of Jubilees*.

According to the *Book of Jubilees*, Eden “is the holiest in the entire earth,”<sup>12</sup> “holy of holies and the residence of the Lord”<sup>13</sup>; it is one of four holy places on earth – and all these holy places are mountains<sup>14</sup>:

For there are four places on the earth that belong to the Lord: the Garden of Eden, the mountain of the east, this mountain on which you are today – Mount Sinai – and Mount of Zion (which) will be sanctified in the new creation for the sanctification of the earth. For this reason the earth will be sanctified from all its sins and from its uncleanness into the history of eternity.

Yet, the Garden of Eden in the *Book of Jubilees* is not only a mountain but also a sanctuary, a place of sacrifice: before Adam left the Garden, he<sup>15</sup>

burned incense as a pleasing fragrance (...) in the early morning when the sun rose at the time when he covered his shame (with clothing out of skins).

This ministry was taken over by Enoch, who was later carried by angels to the Garden of Eden on the top of the mountain<sup>16</sup>:

He was taken from human society, and we led him into the Garden of Eden for (his) greatness and honor. Now he is there writing down the judgment and condemnation of the world and all the wickedness of mankind (...) He burned the evening incense of the sanctuary which is acceptable before the Lord on the mountain of incense.<sup>17</sup>

Both Adam and Enoch thus have a ministerial duty in the Temple, which is the Garden of Eden at the top of the mountain.<sup>18</sup> As James Scott remarks,<sup>19</sup> Adam and Enoch, offering incense in the Garden of Eden, “are doing so in the primeval sanctuary, which is analogous and a precursor of the eschatological Temple on Mount Zion.” Indeed, the *Book of Jubilees*’ author (s) situate the eschatological Temple on the top of Mount Zion<sup>20</sup>; but, is it relevant to sustain that the Temple/Garden of Eden is a precursor of the eschatological Temple and not the same ideal Temple, the abode of God? Following the text of the *Book of Jubilees*,<sup>21</sup> it is difficult, in fact, to make a clear distinction between the Temple from the time of creation, i.e., the Garden of Eden, and the eschatological Temple; it seems even less plausible to assert that the eschatological Temple on Mount Zion “surpasses the Eden of the past,<sup>22</sup>” as Martha Himmelfarb proposes. There is a strong temptation, as Annette Reed correctly notices,<sup>23</sup> to apply here the later division between earthly and heavenly paradises, but there is no real evidence of such distinction in *I Enoch* or the *Book of Jubilees*. More conspicuous, at least in the *Book of Jubilees*, is the tendency to link protology and eschatology, when *Endzeit gleicht Urzeit*.<sup>24</sup> This assimilation of the beginning and the end does not suppose a different Eden, different Temple, or a different Adam, but, as Beate Ego rightly notices,<sup>25</sup> it represents the return of the same but cultured Adam, aware of his priesthood, to his primordial abode, which is the Temple and the dwelling of God. A similar vision of Adam appears in some Qumran texts<sup>26</sup>: here Adam, i.e., the man, has to return to his primordial glorious state, and the only place for this restored man is the garden of Paradise, the place where he was initially put by God, the place of God’s abode. The image of this eschatological Paradise largely depends here on the comprehension of the nature of the first man: glorious Adam, Adam-priest, has to return to the Garden-Temple created for him.<sup>27</sup>

This positive, joyous vision of Adam and Paradise was not prevailing in the later patristic literature, but it had a long and interesting development in the Syrian Christian tradition. A lot has already been written about the influence of Judaism, and the Jewish culture in general, on the formation of Syrian Christianity<sup>28</sup>; the depiction of Paradise in the Syrian Christian poetry, exegesis, and apocryphal literature is another witness to this intercultural exchange. Indeed, the representation of Paradise and Adam that we find in profoundly theological poetry and exegetic treatises of Ephrem the Syrian, for example, is very close to what we see in the *Book of Jubilees* or, for example, in the Qumran tradition.<sup>29</sup>

The Paradise of Ephrem the Syrian is indeed a very high mountain; the summit of the mountain is reserved for God’s Presence.<sup>30</sup> This mountain is also a magnificent garden, the beauty of which is a product of nature, continues Ephrem, so it is definitely a sensual and material place.<sup>31</sup> According to Ephrem, only souls reunited with their bodies can enter into Paradise (the bodies of the righteous are very subtle, however, much finer than our present bodies<sup>32</sup>); the souls of the righteous have to wait for their bodies in a sort of *faubourg du Paradis*, as it was called by Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina,<sup>33</sup> which is also a delightful place, full of blooming trees and wonderful fragrances, where souls have a reduced existence, close to sleep,<sup>34</sup> or the life of an embryo in the mother’s womb.<sup>35</sup> After the resurrection of the flesh, these souls, reunited with their bodies, will enter primordial Paradise, the Paradise created for Adam,<sup>36</sup> which is the place of eschatological beatitude.

This Paradise is also the Temple, of which the inner Tabernacle was hidden from Adam and Eve by the Tree of Knowledge, as if the Tree was the veil for the sanctuary<sup>37</sup>; to enter the inner Tabernacle, Adam had to keep the commandment<sup>38</sup>:

God did not permit Adam to enter that innermost Tabernacle; this was withheld, so that first he might prove pleasing in his service of that outer Tabernacle; like a priest with fragrant incense, Adam's keeping of the commandment was to be his censer; then he might enter before the Hidden One into that hidden Tabernacle.

As Sebastian Brock correctly notices, in his introduction to the *Hymns on Paradise*,<sup>39</sup> for Ephrem, Adam and Eve did not have full grace before the fall but only their disobedience prevented them to gain the full glory and to enter the inner Tabernacle; however, Adam's heart was pure, superior to the flower buds of Paradise, and his glory was splendid, as he was the image of Paradise's Planter.<sup>40</sup>

A very similar vision of Paradise and the role of Adam in it appears in another Syrian source, the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*. This apocryphal text, whose date is unsure (between the third and the sixth centuries), was for a long time attributed to Ephrem himself.<sup>41</sup> Paradise here, as in *1 Enoch*, is situated on the top of the highest mountain, so when Adam and Eve were expelled from it, they went down<sup>42</sup>

from that holy mountain [of Eden] to the slopes which were below it.

The concept of Adam's glory is simpler and less theologically profound than in ephremian works, but Adam is still shown as a superior being, venerated by entire creation, including the angels<sup>43</sup>:

God formed Adam with His holy hands, in His own Image and Likeness, and when the angels saw Adam's glorious appearance they were greatly moved by the beauty thereof. For they saw the image of his face burning with glorious splendor like the orb of the sun, and the light of his eyes was like the light of the sun, and the image of his body was like unto the sparkling of crystal.

The primordial Paradise of *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* is at the same time the Temple, where Adam was the priest; it is also the place of eschatological beatitude, as far as it is the Church itself<sup>44</sup>:

Eden is the Holy Church, and the Paradise which was in it is the land of rest, and the inheritance of life, which God hath prepared for all the holy children of men. And because Adam was priest, and king, and prophet, God brought him into Paradise that he might minister in Eden.

Allegorical understanding of the Church-Paradise is not unfamiliar to Ephrem's works either: the participation in the Holy Communion, according to this nisibene hymnographer and theologian, represents the idea of the mystical opening of Paradise in the present time, i.e., the time preceding the general Resurrection.<sup>45</sup> It is important to remember though that in the ephremian thought as well as in the thought of many other Syrian authors,<sup>46</sup> this Paradise is the Paradise of Creation, the Paradise of Adam and Eve. Thus, according to the Syrian *Book of Steps* (text likely from the living community of Syrian asceticism and dated from the last quarter of the fourth century<sup>47</sup>), the "Perfect ones" are living in the realized eschaton of the original Eden while Adam had not yet sinned.<sup>48</sup>

The interrelation and cohesion of these two notions: perfection of Adam and identity of primordial and eschatological Paradise seem to be very important for early Syrian Christian cosmology and anthropology. Primordial Paradise was created for Adam, a complete and glorious being; it is the place that also deserves to be the place of his eschatological beatitude. If the primordial Paradise is thought to be a mountain, the eschatological Paradise has to be the same mountain, as it is the same Paradise. A confirmation of this thesis can be seen in Syrian Christian art of that time. Indeed, both these themes: Adam in glory and eschatological Paradise as a mountain are present here: on a fifth-century floor mosaic with a paradisiac scene from the Church of Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam, an eagle, symbolizing, in all probability, Christ<sup>49</sup> is seated on the mountain, representing Paradise, as four rivers are descending from its slopes (Figure 15.1).<sup>50</sup>

Few mosaics representing Adam in glory are also dated from the fifth century.<sup>51</sup> On the floor mosaic from the North Church at Huarte, Adam, seated on the throne at the top of the composition and dressed as a priest, is giving names to the animals – a moment, as we have seen in ephreman hymns and in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, which fully reveals the power of the divine gift of reason received by Adam and his holiness (Figure 15.2).<sup>52</sup> An unusual aspect of this mosaic, perhaps not decisive but worth noticing, is the structure of the image itself. The composition is schematically close to the representation of Orpheus charming the animals<sup>53</sup>; but if in the orphic scene, animals are usually laying, standing calmly around Orpheus, or approaching on horizontal lines toward him,<sup>54</sup> here all animals are depicted ascending to Adam as if they were ascending a mountain. The only parallel to the mosaic from Huarte is the sixth-century floor



Figure 15.1 Paradise. A fragment of a floor mosaic from the Church of the Holy Martyrs, Tayibat al-Imam, Syria, 5th century. Photo by Jane Chick/Manor al-Athar, in Judith S. McKenzie et al., *Manar al-Athar Photo-Archive*, Oxford 2013–, available at <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>.

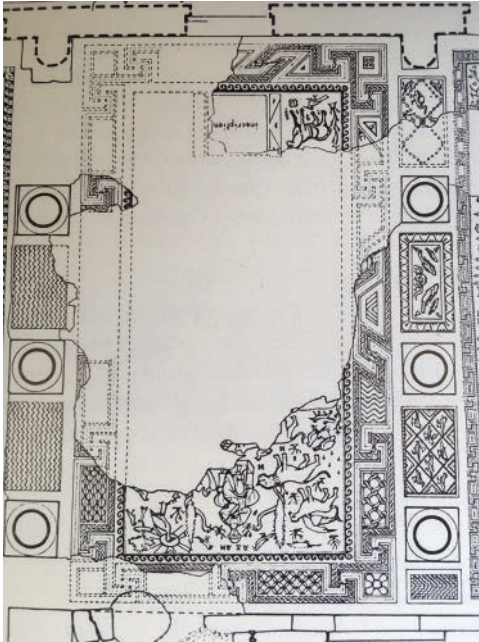


Figure 15.2 Adam naming the animals. The floor mosaic from the North Church, Huarte, Syria, 5th century. Trace drawing by Pierre and Maria Teresa Canivet from Canivet, P., Canivet, M.T., *Huarte: sanctuaire chrétien d'Apemène (IVe - VIe s.)*, volume 122 de la Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, Paris: P. Guethner, 1987, t. 1, 138.

mosaic from the Church of St. George at Houad on the Orontes (Syria) where all animals are ascending in the same manner to the eagle, symbolizing Christ.<sup>55</sup>

The presence in early Christian art in Syria of these two themes: glorious Adam and eschatological Paradise on the mountain seems to be well-attested therefore. Would it still be legitimate to extend this association of glorious Adam with his return to the paradisiac mountain that we find in Syrian tradition of the third – fifth centuries, to the later images of Paradise? We certainly have to take into consideration that around the end of the fourth century the idea of the identification of primordial Paradise with the place of eschatological beatitude, the realm of heaven, was generally refuted by Christian authors in the East as well as in the West.<sup>56</sup> This dissociation allowed acceptance of the opening of Paradise, mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 23:43), and at the same time negation of the opening of the heavenly Paradise. In such a manner, one could abstain from the idea of a complete transformation of the World after the Death and Resurrection of Christ. John Chrysostom, for example, in his Sermons on the *Book of Genesis*, visibly depreciates the Paradise of origins, separating it completely from the kingdom of heaven, the place of eschatological beatitude<sup>57</sup>:

For it is not in Paradise that God promises to install us, but in the heaven itself (...) If he promises to us the kingdom of heaven but has installed the thief in Paradise, he did not yet reward him for good deeds.

In the fifth century, Syrian poet and theologian Narsai of Edessa also underlines the difference between the primordial Paradise and the place of the eschatological beatitude. According to Narsai, Eden is but the waiting room for the righteous (as well as for the thief from Lk 23:42–43), where they will stay until the final resurrection.<sup>58</sup> In one of his homilies on the creation, he exclaims<sup>59</sup>:

In respect to its (creation) end, my spirit forced me to tell what I have seen: it is more sublime than the time of its beginning. Its end is sublime, because it consists also of the restauration; in respect to the restauration, I say that it is more sublime than the beginning.

The life which Adam could have led had he not broken the commandment – continues Narsai – is not the same life the righteous will lead in the kingdom on high. Though Adam is a marvelous creature,<sup>60</sup>

God called the first Adam, by metaphor, by the name of the image. And the image was realized in Christ, the second Adam; here this word came to an end *Let us make man in our image*.

What a striking contrast with Ephrem's vision of Adam: following Adam's wish to be like God (that is why he ate the fruit from the forbidden tree), God brought his Son into the world to finally unify divine and human nature and deify Adam.<sup>61</sup> Although there is only one century between Narsai and Ephrem (furthermore, Narsai was Ephrem's big admirer) their anthropology and cosmology, essentially as a result of a general effort of the Eastern Church to unite different streams, are already remarkably diverse.

That said, we have to acknowledge that despite the utter refutation of the concept of *apokatastasis* and the radical change in regard to Paradise and Adam in the Christian doctrine, the idea of the return to primordial abode after the final resurrection did not disappear completely from the later Christian literature. Romanos the Melodist, for example, a sixth-century Greek Christian poet of Syrian origin, describes the eschatological beatitude as the return to primordial Paradise<sup>62</sup>:

The immaculate beauty of the fast is the purity, mother of temperance: it springs the source of philosophy and procures the crown; it assures us the Paradise, it brings those who fast to the house of their Father, from which Adam was expelled.

Did Romanos, being Syrian, follow the tradition of the full restauration that we observe in the Syrian theological thought of the third to fourth centuries, or it is a formal recall of an established expression? It is difficult to say, but even much later, for example, in the thirteenth-century revision of *4 Enoch*, we find this idea of the return to primordial Paradise<sup>63</sup>:

And I ascended to the East, to the Paradise of Eden, where the repose for the righteous is prepared.



It is also noticeable that during the entire medieval period, the position of the Eastern fathers with respect to the identification of Paradise and the Kingdom of heaven was not always so strict as it was in the works of John Chrysostom or Epiphanius of Salamis,<sup>64</sup> for example. In one of the most important dogmatic works of the Eastern Church, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, John of Damascus represents Paradise as a place that possesses a double nature<sup>65</sup>:

Some, indeed, have pictured Paradise as a realm of sense, and others as a realm of mind. But it seems to me, that, just as man is a creature in whom we find both: sense and mind blended together, in like manner also man's most holy temple combines the properties of sense and mind, and has this twofold expression: for as we said, the life in the body is spent in the most divine and lovely region, while the life in the soul is passed in a place far more sublime and of more surpassing beauty, where God makes His home, and where He wraps man about as with a glorious garment, and robes him in his grace, and delights and sustains him like an angel with the sweetest of all fruits, the contemplation of Himself.

Paradise of the last days does not seem to be different from primordial Paradise, at least John never specifies it in his works. Though some Eastern fathers continue to represent Paradise and the Kingdom of heaven as two different places,<sup>66</sup> the idea of a return to the primordial abode was always present in Eastern theology and literature.

Would it be possible to perceive this primeval idea of Paradise in the visual theology, i.e., iconography? Does an image of Paradise-mountain survive in the later Christian art? A closer look at the Byzantine and early medieval Western art evidences that the theme of primordial Paradise on the mountain as the place of eschatological beatitude did not completely disappear here either, at least in the modus of citation of the early Christian images.

An image of primordial Paradise on the mountain is not unusual in early medieval art. Ninth – eleventh century Psalters with marginal illustrations, following some lost preiconoclastic, most probably Syrian models,<sup>67</sup> are an interesting example of such an image. A miniature from the eleventh century Bristol Psalter,<sup>68</sup> illustrating Ps 8:6–8 (*You have made him (man) to rule over the works of your hands; put all things under his feet; All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea*) is the closest to the composition that we find on the Syrian mosaics, representing Adam in glory. However, Adam here is not seated on the throne in priest's clothes, but standing in a light shepherd's tunic on top of the mountain, whereas different animals are depicted on the lower margin of the page, looking up at the first man (Figure 15.3). The idea of Adam-priest disappears, but the mountain is still there.

Another very interesting variation of this composition comes from a ninth-century Carolingian manuscript – it appears in the miniature illustrating the same Ps 8:6–10 from Stuttgart Psalter.<sup>69</sup> Here, Adam, naming the animals, was replaced by Christ: he is seated on top of a mountain, surrounded by animals, birds, and sea creatures.<sup>70</sup> The composition was probably influenced by the image of Christ the Good Shepherd, but nonetheless, replacing Adam by Christ, the authors of that visual *glossa*, gave to the mountain of Paradise an eschatological turn, moving it from the primordial times into the timeless and eternal present. To understand this image Ernest De Wald proposes to appeal to the commentaries of Augustin and Cassiodorus on Psalm 8:4, where the words “man” and “son of man” were interpreted as “Christ.”<sup>71</sup> This exegetic tradition could of course be determinative for the formation of the image; even still, this substitution of



Figure 15.3 Adam naming the animals. Miniature from the Bristol Psalter, London, British Library, Add. 40731, fol. 16r. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.



Figure 15.4 Theophanis Bathas-Strelitzas, Adam naming the animals. Fresco from the St. Nicolas Anapafsas monastery in Meteora, 1527. The image in the public domain.

Adam by Christ undoubtedly refers to Paul's antithetical parallel: Christ, the New Adam (1 Cor 15:45). We will return to this miniature on the following pages; this composition, however, did not have any development in posterior Christian art.<sup>72</sup> On the contrary, the image of Adam seated on the paradisiac mountain and giving a name to the animals, survived for a long time; we find it even in the sixteenth century, on the fresco from the St. Nicolas Anapafsas monastery in Meteora (Figure 15.4) for example.

If on the miniatures from Byzantine and Carolingian Psalters we can perceive only a remote reflection of the Syrian tradition, a few miniatures, representing Adam and Eve on the mountain of Paradise from two Byzantine twelfth-century manuscripts, containing Homilies of Iakovos, a monk of Kokkinobaphos,<sup>73</sup> seem to be directly based on the text (and illustrations?) of the Syrian *Book of the Cave of Treasures*. In these two almost identical manuscripts (the primacy is still discussed<sup>74</sup>), the text of the Lamentation of Adam from the second Sermon<sup>75</sup> is accompanied by two full-page miniatures, facing each other and conceived, as correctly notices Kallirroe Linardou, as a whole.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 15.5 Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Miniature illustrating the second Homily of Iakovos Kokkinobaphos, Paris, Bibilothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 1208, fol. 49v. © Bibilothèque nationale de France.

The first one represents the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, Sacrifices of Cain and Abel, and The Killing of Abel (Figure 15.5); the second miniature is an image of deserted Paradise, protected by a cherub (Figure 15.6)<sup>77</sup>; both images follow quite closely the text of the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*. On the first miniature, entitled “Lament of the First Parents on the Expulsion from Paradise,” Adam and Eve are seated on top of the paradisiac mountain, still naked, but covering themselves



Figure 15.6 Paradise deserted. Miniature illustrating the second Homily of Iakovos Kokkinobaphos, Paris, Bibilothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 1208, fol. 50r. © Bibilothèque nationale de France.

with leaves; below, they are represented again in the small house that looks like a cave, described in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*<sup>78</sup>:

And when Adam and Eve had gone forth from Paradise, the door of Paradise was shut, and a cherub bearing a two-edged sword stood by it. And Adam and Eve went down (...) over the mountains of Paradise, and they found a cave in the top of the mountain, and they entered and hid themselves therein.

The cherub, guarding an empty mountainous Paradise, is depicted on the following page. These two compositions could, undoubtedly, follow the illustrations of the earlier manuscript containing the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*; unfortunately, we don't have any illustrated manuscript of this Syrian Apocrypha and at the moment can only speculate about the origins of this iconographic scheme. The story of Cain and Abel on the Kokkinobaphos miniatures is, however, another indication to the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, as far as it also takes place in the mountains, as it describes the Syrian Apocrypha<sup>79</sup>:

And it came to pass that when Adam, the first priest, and Cain and Abel, his sons, were going up to the top of the mountain, Satan entered into Cain [and persuaded him] to kill Abel his brother (...); and because his offering was rejected and was not accepted before God, whilst the offering of Abel was accepted, Cain's jealousy of his brother Abel was increased. And when they came down to the plain, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and he killed him with a blow from a stone of flint.

Following this, or a very similar text, the author of the Kokkinobaphos' sermons' illustrations, contrary to the biblical narration, settled all the story in the mountainous landscape. This particular detail could also be a link between Kokkinobaphos miniatures and presumed illustrations of the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*.

The image of a hilly, mountainous primordial Paradise and its suburbs, which must be a reflection of the above discussed Syrian preiconoclastic tradition, is not in fact a rare feature in Byzantine art – we find it on numerous miniatures illustrating eleventh – twelfth century Octateuchs, for example.<sup>80</sup> This type of representation of primordial Paradise seems to be well absorbed by Byzantine artists. But what about eschatological Paradise? Is there a place for mountains in the Kingdom of heaven?

We have to return here to the ninth-century Psalters, haeres of the earlier preiconoclastic tradition.<sup>81</sup> Quite close to Byzantine representations of primordial Paradise is the image of Heavenly Jerusalem from the ninth-century Utrecht Psalter, often



Figure 15.7 Heavenly Jerusalem. Miniature illustrating Ps 145:2 from the Utrecht Psalter. Utrecht University Library, Ms 32, fol. 81v. © Utrecht University Library.

following the same preiconoclastic prototypes as Byzantine Psalters with marginal illustrations. Here, there is an image of hills and mountains enclosed by high walls, representing the New Jerusalem (Figure 15.7)<sup>82</sup>; in that manner, the paradisiac landscape is inserted inside the walls of the Holy City. However, this unusual image did not have an important posterity; a more popular iconographic scheme, appearing in the same Psalter, offers an image of one mountain inside the New Jerusalem's walls with Christ or a Temple on its summit, as for example on the illustration to the Ps. 47 (48): 2–3.<sup>83</sup> This mountain certainly represents eschatological Zion, mentioned in the Revelation of John (Rev. 14:1), but its origin can definitely be traced to the preiconoclastic tradition of the representation of eschatological Paradise, as far as this mountain, related to the Second Temple Literature theme of the only Paradise and God's mountain-dwelling, reappears in diverse compositions linked by their theological core.

Very different in style, but similar in concept image exists in the Stuttgart Psalter: on the miniature illustrating the same Ps. 47 (48):2–3, Christ is sitting on the mountain at the entrance to the New Jerusalem.<sup>84</sup> The miniature illustrating Ps 8:6–10 from the same Psalter, as it was noticed earlier, also pictures Christ sitting on top of a mountain, instead of Adam, and naming animals.<sup>85</sup> A noteworthy parallel is an illustration to Psalm 89 (90) from the Theodore Psalter, where Christ is seated on the throne at the mountain top, which has to be Mount Sinai, as far as Moses is represented at its base.<sup>86</sup> Here, we can recall the Syrian floor mosaic from the Church of Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam (Figure 15.1) where there is an image of Christ, represented as an eagle, seated at the summit of the eschatological paradisiac mountain.

Other possible witnesses of the existence of such composition are the late antique images of the Lamb on the top of eschatological Zion. This is, of course, an illustration to a verse from the *Book of Revelation* (*Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Zion*, Rev. 14:1), but four paradisiac rivers are flowing down along its slopes,<sup>87</sup> referring to the paradisiac mountain so that it might be a replication of its earlier images. In much the same way, on some fourth-fifth representations of *traditio legis*, Christ is standing on the mountain with four rivers – as in the destroyed apse mosaic from San Pietro,<sup>88</sup> or the mosaic from the mausoleum of Santa Costanza in Rome (where Christ, in quite an unusual way, is represented not standing on the mountain but hovering above it). These mosaics are also proving that in the fourth to the early fifth century in the Latin Christian thought and iconography, there was not yet a clear distinction between Paradise and New Jerusalem.<sup>89</sup> An early ninth-century apse mosaic from the triclinium of Pope Leo III in the Lateran palace that represents Christ standing among the apostles on the same paradisiac mountain with four rivers seems to be a citation of these earlier images (Figure 15.8).

An interesting parallel to the image of Mount Zion inside the New Jerusalem walls from the ninth-century Carolingian miniatures is an early fifth century roman mosaic from Santa Pudenziana where, behind enthroned Christ and surrounding him apostles, there is an image of New Jerusalem.<sup>90</sup> Inside the Holy City's walls, there is a mountain, but on its top, there is neither a Temple nor Christ in glory, like in the Utrecht Psalter, but a triumphal Cross. Here, the eschatological mountain is represented by Golgotha. Taking into account contemporary patristic texts, it is absolutely not surprising, as far as in the early Christian world, Golgotha was often taking over the function of the center of the universe, appropriate to the Old Testament's eschatological



Figure 15.8 Christ with the apostles. The mosaic from the triclinium of Pope Leo III, Lateran palace, Rome, 9th century. <http://romeartlover.tripod.com/Vasi46.html>. Image used with permission.

mountain. It became the cosmic mountain, the *umbilicus mundi* with the Tree of Life, *lignum vitae* on its top<sup>91</sup>:

He [Christ] stretched out His hands on the cross that he might encompass the ends of the world; for this Golgotha is the very center of the earth. It is not my word, but it is the prophet who had said *You has wrought salvation from the middle of the earth* (Is. 49:6).

In the comments on Isaiah attributed to Ephrem the Syrian<sup>92</sup> (*It will happen in the final days that the mountain of Yahweh's house will rise higher than the mountains and tower above the height*, Is. 2:2), the author writes about the real sacrifice that was offered on the top of this mountain, i.e., the sacrifice on the Cross. The sacrifice offered by Adam on the top of the paradisiac mountain became the prototype of the sacrifice on the top of Golgotha.

The eschatological vision of the primordial Paradise-mountain was also related to the Mariological theme. Sergei Minov had already noticed the existence of a typological connection between Mary and Paradise in Syrian theological literature and hymnography<sup>93</sup>; the association of Paradise with the Virgin continued in Byzantine literature as well. In the fifth century, Proclus of Constantinople calls Mary “the spiritual Paradise of the second Adam.”<sup>94</sup> In the *Akathistos Hymn* that Leena Peltomaa dates as mid-fifth century,<sup>95</sup> the Virgin is associated with a living temple<sup>96</sup> that was also an allegorical image of Paradise in Syrian poetry.<sup>97</sup> The parallel Maria – Zion is founded in multiple Byzantine texts,<sup>98</sup> and the now destroyed fragment of the Constantinopolitan eleventh century *Physiologus*, the Virgin was compared to another holy mountain – Mount Sinai.<sup>99</sup> In that manner, Mary was associated not only directly

with Paradise, but also with its different aspects found in the Syrian tradition, such as the Temple and the mountain. This typological parallel was richly developed in the marginal miniatures of ninth – fourteenth-century Byzantine Psalters. Thus, as a commentary to the Ps. 67(68):16 (*Why be envious, haughty mountains, of the mountain God has chosen for his dwelling? There God will dwell for ever*) appears the image of a tall mountain, strait as a column, with a medallion depicting the Virgin and the Child on top (Figure 15.9). This image develops a very complicated commentary that represents the Virgin as Paradise, the place of God's dwelling, as far as the artist makes an allusion to Daniel's dream.<sup>100</sup>



Figure 15.9 Daniel's dream. A miniature illustrating Ps. 67(68):16 from Theodore Psalter, London, British Library, Add. 19352, fol. 84r. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.



Another miniature, commentating Ps. 77(78):68–69 (*[The Lord] chose the tribe of Judah, his well-loved mountain of Zion; he built his sanctuary like high hills*), represents the Virgin as the Temple at the top of Mount Zion.<sup>101</sup> This multilayer visual commentary contains thus the theme of Virgin-Church-Paradise expressed in the Syrian and Byzantine patristic literature.

All these eschatological and theophanic images, though very different by style, provenance, and detail, show that in the late antique and medieval art the new world to come could be represented not only by the precious heavenly city of New Jerusalem but also by the eschatological mountain. There was, of course, a well-established tradition of the Holy Mount that could influence this iconographic choice, but all these images have some details referring to the primordial Paradise, such as the Tree of Life or four paradisiac rivers. This relegates the spectator not only to the theme of the Holy Mount but also to the mountain of primordial/eschatological Paradise of the Second Temple literature and Syrian hymnography. It would be a long stretch to conclude that the late antique and medieval authors of these images wanted to underline the identity of these two places or praise the beauty of primordial Adamic condition. That would definitely be an anachronism. We can state positively however that these artists were following some Palestinian or Syrian examples containing this idea (like the floor mosaic from the Church of Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam). With time, though, a lot of the details of primordial Paradise in pictures of the heavenly kingdom found a new allegorical explanation. In this way Paulinus of Nola, in his commentary of the apse mosaic of Nola's basilica, explains four paradisiac rivers, running down from the slopes of Mount Zion: they are, Paulinus explains to us, four evangelists, bringing the life-giving waters of God's Word.<sup>102</sup>

## Annex

The theme of the Paradise on the mountain found a very peculiar development in the Russian art of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century in the iconographic scheme of the icon "All creation rejoices in you..." based on the homonymous hymn of John of Damascus.<sup>103</sup> Here, the Mother of God, surrounded by angels and a multitude of the righteous, is seated on the throne with the Christ-child on her lap; a Holy City that is represented by innumerable temples is behind her. The image illustrates in a very literal way the text of the hymn praising Mary as "spiritual Paradise" and "sanctified temple," but the Holy City and the throne of the Virgin are situated on the top of the mountain (Figure 15.10). This mountain is certainly a sign of the Heavenly Jerusalem and a nod to Jerusalem terrestrial, but none less the visual scheme of the Paradise on the mountain was chosen. Another notable example of the elaboration of this theme appears on the sixteenth-century icon placed in the upper part of the altar door of Solvychevodsk's Cathedral of the Annunciation (Figure 15.11). Representing Heavenly Jerusalem and referring to the 2Cor. 12:2–4, containing Apostle Paul's paradisiac vision, the artist depicted a hilly, mountainous landscape inside the walls of the Holy City that astonishingly reminds us of the vision of the New Jerusalem from the Utrecht Psalter (Figure 15.7).<sup>104</sup> With no doubt, the mountains on these Russian icons are belated witnesses of the early Christian tradition placing Paradise at the top of the highest mountain.

It is possible indeed to find many more perceptible traces of this ancient tradition in the later Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art. Thus, the miniature from the fourteenth century Kiev Psalter, closely connected to the ninth – eleventh century Psalters with



Figure 15.10 “All Creation rejoices in thee...,” from the Cathedral of the Assumption, Dmitrov, beginning of the 16th century. The image in the public domain.

marginal illustrations, represents Zion as a group of mountains with a tree on one of them (Figure 15.12).<sup>105</sup> Being a comment to the Ps. 124(125):1, (*Whoever trusts in Yahweh is like Mount Zion: unshakable, it stands forever. Jerusalem! The mountains encircle her: so, Yahweh encircles his people, henceforth and forever*), this miniature reminds the vision of Paradise from *I Enoch*, cited before<sup>106</sup>:

This high mountain which you saw, whose summit is like the throne of the Lord, is the throne where the Holy One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when he comes down to visit the earth for good. And this beautiful fragrant tree – and no (creature of) flesh has authority to touch it until the great judgment when he will take vengeance on all and will bring (everything) to a consummation for ever – this will be given to the righteous and humble. From its fruit life will be given to chosen.

Would it be a coincidence?



Figure 15.11 Heavenly Jerusalem. An icon from the upper part of the altar door from the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Solvychegodsk, 1570. ©Сольвычегодский Художественный Музей.

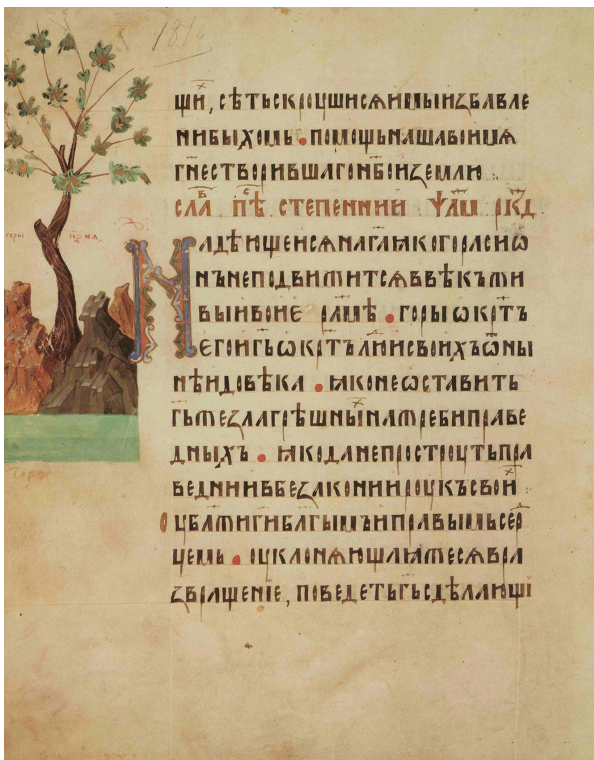


Figure 15.12 Zion mountains. A miniature illustrating Ps. 124(125):1, Kiev Psalter, Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, cod. OLDP, F6, fol. 181v. © Российская Национальная Библиотека.

## Notes

- 1 The initial location of Paradise in the East is not so sure, though, as the Hebrew word *miqqedem* could be also understood in the chronological sense, “in the beginning,” see Sebastian Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns on Paradise* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Pr., 1990), 50.
- 2 For the analysis of this verse and an expanded bibliography, see Edward Noort, “Gan-Eden in the Context of the Mythology of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Paradise Interpreted. Representation of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden, Boston, MA and Köln: Brill, 1999), 22–29. According to Annette Reed, “Enoch, Eden, and the Beginnings of Jewish Cosmography,” in *The Cosmography of Paradise: The Other World from Ancient Mesopotamia to Medieval Europe*, ed. Alessandro Scafi (London: Warburg Institute, 2016), 85. Ezekiel’s description of Eden on a top of the mountain could be a reference to the northern ‘mountain of God’ in Isaiah 14.” See also Ex 15:17: *You will bring them (the people of God) in and plant them on the mountain which is your heritage, the place which you, Yahweh, have made your dwelling, the sanctuary, Yahweh, prepared by your own hands.*
- 3 See Noort, “Gan-Eden,” 27–28.
- 4 Reed, “Enoch,” 67–94; James M. Scott, *On Earth and Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 56–57; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “Eden and Paradise: The Garden Motif in Some Early Jewish Texts,” in *Paradise interpreted. Representation of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden, Boston, MA and Köln: Brill, 1999), 39–62; Jörg Frey, “Zum Weltbild im Jubiläenbuch,” in *Studies on the Book of Jubilees*, ed. Matthias Albani (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 273–276; James C. VanderKam, “Enoch Traditions in Jubilees and Other Second-century Sources,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 1 (1978), 229–251; Pierre Grelot, “La Géographie mythique d’Hénoch et ses sources Orientales,” *Revue biblique* 65 (1958), 33–69.
- 5 Josef T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch. Aramaic fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 5–7.
- 6 For the history of the question see Kelley Coblenz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of I Enoch 17-19: “No One Has Seen What I Have Seen”* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 59–66; 109–125 and Reed, “Enoch,” 82–90.
- 7 *I Enoch* 24.4, Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), vol. 2, 113. See also vision of seven mountains at *I Enoch* 18:8, a part deriving from the precedent *Vision of Enoch*, see Milik, *The Books*, 35.
- 8 *I Enoch* 25.3–25.5, Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book*, 113–114.
- 9 *I Enoch* 25.5, Knibb, *ibid.*, 114. The throne of God on the northern mountains appears also in the prophecy of Isaiah, where it is placed on the Mount of Assembly *on the heights of Zaphon* (Is 14:13–14), that is, as it looks, “on the heights of the North.” Yet, the Hebrew word *zaphon* signifies not only “northern,” but also “concealed,” “hidden” (see Bautch, *A Study of the Geography*, 217–218; Tigchelaar, “Eden,” 44). This hidden heights could be therefore anywhere; it is important that they *are somewhere*. I express my gratitude to dr. Uri Gershowitz for a fruitful conversation that revealed a general lack of quiescence of holy places in the early Jewish cosmography: the heights of Zaphon could be any physically existing mountains, the mount Zion, for example; as well as the mount Zion could be “moved” to the heights of Zaphon, if its sanctity has to be concealed. The mobile principle, proper to the representation of geographic places possessing a sacral meaning, allows thus to keep their mystical secrecy, maintaining all physical veracity.
- 10 *I Enoch* 32.3–6, Knibb, *ibid.*, 122–123.
- 11 Tigchelaar, “Eden,” 45–49.
- 12 *The Book of Jubilees* 3:12, translation James VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees. A Critical Text* (CSCO 511, Louven: Peeters Publishers, 1989), 17.
- 13 *The Book of Jubilees* 8:19, VanderKam, *ibid.*, 53.
- 14 *The Book of Jubilees* 4:26, VanderKam, *ibid.*, 29. For an analysis of the text that shows that the Garden of Eden, according to the authors of the *Book of Jubilees*, was planted on the mountain, see Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven*, 56–57, n. 96. For the discussion if the Garden of Eden was situated on the mountain of East or on the mountain of incense, see VanderKam, “Enoch,” 250; Frey, “Zum Weltbild,” 273–276.

- 15 *The Book of Jubilees* 3:27, VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 30. The idea that Adam took fragrances from Paradise to offer sacrifices on the earth, reappears in *The Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, a Jewish apocrypha of the first century very popular in Christian world till the end of Middle Ages (*The Greek Life of Adam and Eve* 29, 3, in Daniel A. Bertrand, *La Vie grecque d'Adam et Eve* [Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1987], 92–93).
- 16 *The Book of Jubilees* 3:23–25, VanderKam, *ibid.*, 28–29.
- 17 This word is omitted by the best family of Ethiopian manuscripts; the word appearing in the Syriac manuscripts might be also translated as “south.” For the discussion on other possibilities of translation of this phrase, see the note of VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 28–29.
- 18 For the history of development of the theme of the Garden of Eden as a Temple in the Old Testament, *The Book of Jubilees*, but also in some Qumran texts, see Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, “Eden and the Temple: The Rewriting of Genesis 2:4–3:24” in the *Book of Jubilees, Paradise Interpreted*, 63–94; Peter T. Lanfer, “Allusion and Expansion of the Tree of Life and the Garden of Eden in Biblical and Pseudepigraphal Literature,” in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality*, eds. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2009), vol. 1, 98–103.
- 19 Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven*, 56–57, n. 96.
- 20 “the heaven and earth and all their creatures shall be renewed (...) the temple of the Lord will be created in Jerusalem on mount Zion,” *The Book of Jubilees* 1:29, VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 6–7. See also Lanfer, “Allusion,” 100.
- 21 See Grelot, “La géographie,” 33–69.
- 22 Martha Himmelfarb, “The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers and the Wisdom of ben Sira,” in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces*, eds. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley (New York: Greenwood, 1991), 65.
- 23 Reed, “Eden,” 85.
- 24 Reed, “Eden,” 70–73. Though in Second Temple Jewish materials, *Urzeit* can be represented not only by the story of Adam, Eve, and Eden, but also by the story of the Flood (see n. 12 on the page 70.). See also Tigchelaar, “Eden,” 57; Jan N. Bremmer, “The Birth of Paradise: To Early Christianity via Greece, Persia and Israel,” in *The Cosmography of Paradise: The Other World from Ancient Mesopotamia to Medieval Europe*, ed. Alessandro Scaffi (London: Warburg Institute, 2016), 9–30. For the later development of this theme in Jewish tradition, see Richard Baukham, “Paradise in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo Philo,” in *Paradise in Antiquity. Jewish and Christian Views*, eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56.
- 25 Beate Ego, “Heilige Zeit – heiliger Raum – heiliger Mensch. Beobachtungen zur Struktur der Gesetzesbegründung in der Schöpfungs- und Paradiesgeschichte des Jubiläenbuches,” in *Studies on the Book of Jubilees*, 215–216.
- 26 4Q305 2; 4Q504 8 recto 5: Tigchelaar, “Eden,” 56–57. See also Estelle Glickler Chazon, “The Creation and Fall of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, eds. Judith Frishman and Lucas van Rompay (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1997), 13–23; Florentino García Martínez, “Man and Woman: Halakhah Based upon Eden in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Paradise Interpreted. Representation of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 1999), 98–99.
- 27 It is interesting to recall here an assumption of Rosemary Wright that the ancient cosmology has a functional view of reality (*Cosmology in Antiquity* [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], 39); see also John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrouns, 2011); in a similar way, the mythical cosmology relies to a large extent on the mythical anthropology. Indeed, in another tradition (see, for example, the IVth Book of Ezra 10:50–56 in Michael E. Stone and Matthias Henze, eds., *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013], 65), representing Adam as an imperfect, predisposed to the fall being, the primordial Paradise loses its eschatological term (for the Christian development of this tradition see page 8–9).
- 28 Philip Wood, “*We have no King but Christ.*” *Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab conquest (c. 400–585)* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 76–81. See also John C. Reeves, “Exploring the Afterlife of Jewish Pseudepigraphia

- in Medieval Near Eastern Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings,” *Journal for the Studies of Judaism* 30/2 (1999), 148–177, cf. 163; see also bibliography in Minov, “Gazing the Holy Mountain,” 143, n. 35.
- 29 An interesting research on the representation of sacred mountain in Mesopotamian sources and its influence on the Syrian tradition see in Minov, *ibid.*, 149–152.
- 30 Ephrem the Syrian, II, 11, *Hymns on Paradise* VI, 15, ed. and trans. by Sebastian Brock in *St. Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns on Paradise* (New York: St. Vladimirs Seminary Pr, 1990), 89. The image of the New Jerusalem is completely absent in ephremian works. According to Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, the Syrian poet, at least at the time when he composed *Hymns on Paradise*, did not know the Apocalypse of John, and even if he knew, he would hardly admit its description of heaven, as far as for him the heaven was nothing else than the rediscovered Paradise of creation (“Le Paradis eschatologique d’après saint Éphrem,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1955), 470).
- 31 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* VI, 15, Brock, *ibid.*, 114. Paradise is a part of the sensitive world, according to Ephrem, but allegorical reading of his verses is also very important.
- 32 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* V, 8, Brock, *ibid.*, 105.
- 33 Ortiz de Urbina, “Le Paradis,” 467.
- 34 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* II, 5; Brock, *ibid.*, 86.
- 35 Ephrem the Syrian, VIII, *Hymns on Paradise*, 5–6, Brock, *ibid.*, 133.
- 36 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* VI, 6: “It is not Paradise / that gave rise to the creation of mankind; / rather, it was for Adam alone / that Paradise had been planted,” Brock, *ibid.*, 110.
- 37 *Hymns on Paradise* III, 5, Brock, *ibid.*, 92. If the Tree of Knowledge is the veil of the sanctuary, the Tree of Life, growing on the very top of the mountain, represents the Holy of Holies, the God’s presence in the Paradise. For the analyse of the theme of the Tree of Life as an allusion to the presence of God, see the article of Nicholas Séd, “Les Hymnes sur le Paradis de Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives,” *Le Museon* 81 (1968), 460. See also Lanfer, “Allusion,” 101–102.
- 38 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* V, 16; Brock, *ibid.*, 96. The parallel with Adam burning incense on the Paradise mountain in the *Book of Jubilees* 3, 27 is to notice.
- 39 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, Brock, *ibid.*, 72. See also Christopher Buck, “Sapiential Theōsis: A New reading of Ephrem the Syrian’s Hymns on Paradise,” *The Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society* 9/2 (1995), 100. For the parallels of this idea with the midrash tradition, see Séd, “Les Hymnes,” 501.
- 40 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* VI, 5–6; Brock, *ibid.*, 110. On the role of Christ in ephremian theological vision of restauration, see the introduction to the *Hymns on Paradise*, Brock, *ibid.*, 72–74.
- 41 On the parallels between *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* and Ephrem’s writings see Andreas Su-Min Ri, “La Caverne des Trésors et Mar Éphrem,” in *Symposium Sirciacum* VII, ed. Rene Lavenant (OCA 256, Roma: Pontificum Institutum Orientale, 1998), 71–83. For the date of this text see the introduction of Andreas Su-Min Ri to the French edition of the apocrypha (CSCO 487, *Scriptores Syri* 208, Louvaen: Peeters Publishers, 1987), xxiii).
- 42 *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* 3, 17, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1927), 69. The numeration of chapters is given after the edition of Su-Min Ri (CSCO 487).
- 43 *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* II, 13–14, Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave*, 52. Another prostration scene occurs at the moment when the angels are seeing Adam giving names to the animals. The idea of the importance of Adam’s *ratio* is also present in ephremian works (see, for example, *Hymns on Paradise* VI, 6: Adam’s words are superior to the fruits of Garden of Eden, “because rational speech has more savor than the produce of Paradise,” Brock, *ibid.*, 110). On this theme see Gary A. Anderson, “The Exaltation of Adam and the Fall of Satan,” in *Literature on Adam and Eve. Collected Essays*, eds. Gary A. Anderson, Michael Stone and Johannes Tromp (Leiden, Boston, MA and Köln: Brill, 2000), 88.
- 44 *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* III, 21-IV, 1, Wallis Budge, *ibid.*, 62–63.
- 45 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* VI, 8, “The assembly of saints bears resemblance to Paradise: in it each day is plucked the fruit of Him who gives life to all,” Brock, *ibid.*, 111.

- On the development of the theme *paradisus-ecclesia* in the works of the Church Fathers see, for example, Reinhold R. Grimm, *Paradisus caelestis. Paradisus terrestris. Zur Auslegungsgeschichte des Paradieses im Abendland bis um 1200* (München: Finck, 1977), 46.
- 46 Aleksander Kowalski, *Perfezione e giustizia di Adamo nel Liber Graduum* (Roma: Pontificum Institutum Orientale, 1989), 92–103.
- 47 Robert A. Kitchen, “Conflict on the Stairway and Heaven. The Anonymity of Perfection in the Syriac *Liber Graduum*,” *OCA* 256 (1998), 212.
- 48 Alison Salvesen, “Infants or Fools in the Garden of Eden? An Ambiguity in Early Syriac Tradition,” in *Hamlet on a Hill. Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Martin F. J. Baasten and W. Th. van Puersen (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 438; see also Kitchen, “Conflict,” 213.
- 49 See Rotraut Wisskirchen, “Der Adler auf dem Paradiesesberg. Zum Bodenmosaik in Ostteil der Kirche des Heiligen Märtyrer in Tayibat Al-Imam/Hama (Syrien),” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 48–49 (2005–2006), 154–163.
- 50 Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam. This mosaic was already mentioned in the context by Sergey Minovm, *ibid.*, 148.
- 51 Maria Teresa and Pierre Canivet, “La Mosaique d’Adam dans l’Eglise syrienne du Hūarte (V<sup>e</sup> siècle),” *Cahiers archéologiques* 24 (1975), 49–69.
- 52 Huarte, North Church. There are at least two other Syrian mosaics representing Adam in glory: one in the National Museum of Copenhagen (where Adam has a nimbus), the other in the Museum of Hama in Syria, see Canivet, “La Mosaique,” 56; see also Henry Maguire, “Adam and the Animals: Allegory and the Literal Sense in Early Christian Art,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), 363–373. It is noticed, that on mediaeval Syrian frescos and miniatures, Adam and Eve often have nimbus also, see, for example, the eleventh to twelfth century fresco of the Last Judgment on the west wall of Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi (Mat Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon* [Leuven, Paris and Walpole, MA: Peeters Publishers, 2009], 66). See also Erika Cruikshank Dodd, “The Three Patriarchs of Mar Musa al-Habashi: Syrian Paintings and its Relationship with the West,” *Al-Masaq* 12 (2000), 99–139. See also note 43 of the present article.
- 53 Janine Balty, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient. Chronologie, iconographie, interprétation* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), 222.
- 54 See Syrian fifth century mosaics from Shahba-Philippopolis and Tarse, for example (Balty, *Mosaïques*, pl. 12), or north-African fourth century mosaic from Archeological museum of Laon (Henri Stern, “La mosaïque d’Orphée de Blanzay-lès-Fismes (Aisne),” *Gallia* 13 (1955), 41–77).
- 55 Wisskirchen, “Der Adler,” 156–159, fig. 3.
- 56 See Monique Alexandre, “Entre ciel et terre : les premiers débats sur le site du Paradis (Gen 2:8–15 et ses réceptions),” in *Peuples et pays mythiques. Actes du V<sup>e</sup> colloque du Centre de Recherches Mythologiques de l’Université de Paris X (Chantilly, 18-20 septembre 1986)*, eds. François Jouan and Bernard Deforge (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988), 201.
- 57 “Οὐ γὰρ εἰς παράδεισον ἐπαγγέλλεται εἰσαγαεῖν ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεός, ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανὸν οὐδὲ βασιλείαν παραδείσου, ἀλλὰ βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν ἐκήρυξεν (...) Εἰ τοίνυν βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν ἐπηγγείλατο, εἰς παράδεισον δὲ εἰσήγαγε τὸν ληστήν, οὐδέπω ἀπέδοκεν αὐτῷ τὰ ἀγαθὰ,” John Chrysostom, *Eight Sermons on the Book of Genesis* 7, 5; ed. Laurence Brottier, SC 433 (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1998), 336–339; see also *Eight Sermons on the Book of Genesis* 5, 2 and the note 2 of Laurence Brottier, in the same edition (266–267); Markus Bockmuehl, “Locating paradise,” in *Paradise in Antiquity. Jewish and Christian Views*, eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 205.
- 58 See Judith Frishman, “Themes on *Genesis* 1-5 in Early East-Syrian Exegesis,” “Themes on *Genesis* 1-5 in Early East-Syrian Exegesis,” in *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, eds. Judith Frishman and Lucas van Rompay (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1997), 186.
- 59 *Homily* I, 325, Phillippee Gignoux, “Les doctrines eschatologiques de Narsai,” *L’Orient Syrien* 11 (1966), 325. See also Judith Frishman, *The Ways and Means of the Divine Economy. An Edition, Translation and Study of Six Biblical Homilies by Narsai* (Leiden: Doctoral dissertation, 1992).

- 60 *Homily on the Creation* III, 251–252, ed. and French trans. Philippe Gignoux, PO 34, 599 and *Homily on the Creation* III, 294–296, Philippe Gignoux, PO 34, 603.
- 61 Ephrem the Syrian, *Nisibene Hymns* LXIX, 12: “The Most High Knew That Adam Wanted to Become a God, so He sent His Son Who Put Him in Order to Grant Him His Desire,” trans. Sebastian Brock in: *The Harp of the Spirit: Poems of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (London: Sobornost Cistercian Press, 1983), n. 16.
- 62 *Hymn on Adam and Eve* 4, ed. and French trans. José Grosdidier de Matons, SC 99 (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1964), 74. See also kontakion, *The Victory of the Cross*, where the refrain is focused on the return to Paradise (for the English transl. see R. Joe Schork, *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1995), 126–134.
- 63 *4 Enoch*, 53, 6–7, ed. and French trans. of André Vaillant, *Le Livre des Secrets d’Hénoch. Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris: Institut d’études slaves, 1952), xvi.
- 64 See, for example, Epiphanius’ letter to Jerome, 51, 5, Jérôme Labourt ed., *Saint-Jérôme, Lettres* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1951), vol. 2, 164–165.
- 65 *De fide orthodoxa* 2, 11, Stewart D. F. Salmond, ed., *St. John of Damascus. De Fide Orthodoxa* (Oxford: J. Parker & co.: 1898), 546.
- 66 See, for example, Anastasius Sinaita (*Quaestiones et Responsiones* 23, PG 89, 540B), already mentioned in this context by Monique Alexandre: Alexandre, “Entre ciel et terre,” 201.
- 67 Most researchers agree that the prototypes of these Psalters were made before the iconoclastic dissension and had Syrian roots: Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustration in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of the Text Illustration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 117, 192, see also Gerold Vzdornov, *Исследование о Киевской Псалтири* (Moscow: Искусство, 1978), 41; Kathleen A. Corrigan, *The Ninth Century Byzantine Marginal Psalters; Moscow, Historical Museum Cod. 129; Mt. Athos, Pantokrator 61; Paris BN gr. 20* (Los Angeles, CA: Ann Arbor Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1987), 68–81. On the discussion about the interrelation of these Psalters, see Jeffrey C. Andersen, “The Palimpsest Psalter, Pantokrator Cod. 61: Its Content and Relationship to the Bristol Psalter,” *DOP* 48 (1994), 211–220.
- 68 Bristol Psalter, British Library, Add. 40731, fol. 16r. A hypothesis of Kathleen Corrigan that the Bristol Psalter follows a preiconoclastic model closer than other Psalters with marginal illustrations (Corrigan, “The Ninth Century,” 100), seems thus to be correct, as far as other eleventh century Psalters (Barberini and Theodore Psalter) exclude the mountain, and the artist of Theodore Psalter even changes the composition totally (Barberini Psalter, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 372, fol. 14v; [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Barb.gr.372](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.gr.372). Theodore Psalter, British Library Add. 19352, fol. 6v; [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_19352\\_f001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_19352_f001r)). Unfortunately, in the ninth century Chludov Psalter the page with this Psalm was damaged – the right margin is absent – so we can’t say if there was a figure of Adam there too; we can see here only different animals depicted on the lower margin (Chludov Psalter, Moscow, Historical Museum, Cod. 129; Marfa V. Scepkina, *Миниатюры Хлудовской Псалтири* (Moscow: Искусство, 1977), fol. 7r. In the ninth century Pantokrator Cod. 61 Psalter, the page with this psalm is missing.
- 69 Existence of a common source for the ninth century Byzantine and Carolingian Psalters does not raise doubts among art historians; it was noticed already by Johan J. Tikkanen, *Die Psalterillustration im Mittelalter* (Helsingfors: Finnischen Litteratur-Gesellschaft, 1895), vol. 1/3, 154, 298; see bibliography and a short review in Corrigan, “The Ninth Century,” 68–72. It is difficult, though, to say where and on which stage the composition was changed.
- 70 Stuttgart Psalter, fol. 9r. Württembergische Landesbibliothek bibl. fol. 23; Ernest T. De Wald, *The Stuttgart Psalter. Biblia Folio 23 Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 1930); <http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de>.
- 71 De Wald, *ibid.*, 13; Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalterium* 47, PL 70, 76C-77A. See also Augustin, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 8, 11.
- 72 In the Western iconography there is though an image of fully dressed Adam sitting on the throne and naming the animals, reminding Syrian mosaics, see for example the twelfth century miniature from the Aberdeen Bestiary (Library of the University of Aberdeen, Ms. 24, fol. 5r).



- 73 BN cod. gr. 1208; Vat. gr. 1162. For the text of Homilies see PG 127, Jacobi Monachi, *Ora-tio in Nativitatem SS. Deiparae*, 9, 580–584.
- 74 Kalliroe Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited: The Internal Evidence of the Books,” *Scriptorium*, 61 (2007), 386–390; Jeffrey C. Anderson, “The Illustrated Sermons of James the Monk: Their Dates, Order, and Place in the History of Byzantine Art,” *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1991), 76–78. On these manuscripts see also Kalliroe Linardou, “Mary and Her Books in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts. Female Literacy or Visual Strategies of Narration?,” *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 29 (2008), 35–48; Kalliroe Linardou, “The Couch of Solomon, a Monk, a Byzantine Lady, and the Song of Songs,” *Studies in Church History* 39 (2004), 73–78.
- 75 PG 127 581B-C; for the English translation see Linardou, “The Kokkinobaphos,” 393.
- 76 Linardou, “The Couch,” 392.
- 77 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 36v, 37r; Paris, BN cod. gr. 1208, fol. 49v, 50r.
- 78 *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* 5, 14–15, Wallis Budge, “The Book,” 68. For the idea that a cave in paradisiac mountains was the first house of Adam and Eve see also the Ethiopic version of the *Book of Adam and Eve* (Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of The Cave of Treasures*, [London: Aziloth Books, 2018], 14–19).
- 79 *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* 6, 27, Wallis Budge, “The Book,” 69. On the Paris miniature, Cain is killing his brother not with a stone, but with a knife that could bear witness of the primacy of the Vatican manuscript, contrary to the position of Jeffrey Anderson (Anderson, “The Illustrated,” 79–81).
- 80 See, for example, eleventh century Octateuch Vat. gr. 747 from the Vatican Library, fol. 22r; The Killing of Abel from the same manuscript (fol. 25v), see also the story of Adam and Eve from the same Kokkinobaphos manuscripts.
- 81 For the bibliography see above, n. 70.
- 82 Utrecht Psalter, fol. 81v. See also illustration to the first Canticum, Utrecht Psalter, Utrecht University Library, MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae I Nr 32, fol. 83v; <http://psalter.library.uu.nl>.
- 83 *Mount Zion in the heart of the north, the settlement of the great king; God himself among its palaces has proved himself its bulwark*, fol. 27v; see also illustrations to Ps. 134 (135):21, fol. 76r or Ps. 141 (142):6–7, fol. 79v.
- 84 Stuttgart Psalter, Württembergische Landesbibliothek bibl. fol. 23, fol. 60r.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 9r.
- 86 Theodore Psalter, British Library, Add. 19352, fol. 121r. The idea of God’s throne on the eschatological mountain does not, by the way, disappear from Syrian late antique – medieval texts, see, for example, Syriac *Apocalypse of Daniel* dated from the first half of the seventh century, where the throne of righteousness is seen in Zion on the mountains of Jerusalem (Sebastian Brock, “Two Editions of a New Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 48/49 [2005–2006], 9).
- 87 See the mid fourth century fresco from the Catacombs of Marcellino and Pietro in Rome, or reconstructions of mosaics from basilicas of Nola and Fondi: Teresa Piscitelli Caprino, “Paolino di Nola: le iscrizioni absidali delle basiliche di Nola e Fondi e la donazione delle reliquie,” in *Fondi tra antichità e Medioevo. Atti del Convegno, Fondi, 31 marzo – 1 aprile 2000*, ed., Teresa Piscitelli Caprino (Fondi: Comune di Fondi, 2002), 119–141. Paulinus of Nola describes these four rivers as the symbols of the four evangelists: “De qua sonori quattuor fontes meant./Euangelistae uiva Christi flumina” (Piscitelli Caprino, “Paolino di Nola,” 119), but this is undoubtedly a secondary level of commentary (thus, the author of the fresco from the Catacombs of Marcellino and Pietro makes an allusion to the baptismal fount and Rev. 22:1 (*He showed me the river of life (...) flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb*), writing IORDA(ne)S close to the Lamb’s head, crating here another typological commentary). See also the sixth century relief from the throne of Saint Mark from Venice, where the Lamb is represented on top of the mountain with four rivers and the Tree of Life behind him: Josef Engemann, “Images parousiaques dans l’art paléochrétien,” in *L’Apocalypse de Jean. Traditions exégétiques et iconographiques, III<sup>e</sup> – XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed., Yves Christe (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1979), 96–97, figure 19.

- 88 See the reconstruction in Francesca R. Moretti, “La *Traditio legis* nell’abside,” in *L’orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini (312-468)*. *Corpus*, ed., Maria Andaloro (Milano: Jaca Book, 2006), vol. 1, 88.
- 89 See also an early fifth century inscription from the Church of the Holy Cross from Ravenna: “Te coram fluvii currunt per secula fusi Tigris et Euprates, Fison et ipse Geon”: Yves Christ, “Traditions littéraires et iconographiques dans l’interprétation des images apocalyptiques,” in *L’Apocalypse de Jean. Traditions exégétiques et iconographiques, III<sup>e</sup> – XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed. Yves Christe (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1979), 131–132; however, the tendency to minimize the significance of primordial Paradise was quite strong also in the West, mainly after Augustin (see, for example, *De Genesi ad litteram* 8, 1). See also the first book of Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*.
- 90 This mosaic was realized at the same time that John’s *Revelation* was canonized by pope Innocent I, see Matteo Braconi, *Il mosaico del catino absidale di S. Pudenziana. La storia, i restauri, le interpretazioni* (Todi: Tau, 2016), 264–265; for the history of interpretation of this mosaic see the bibliography in the same monography.
- 91 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* XIII, 28; PG 33, 806B. See also Pseudo-Tertullian, *Carmen adversus Marcionitas* K. Pollmann ed., *Das Carmen adversus Marcionitas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 80. See also an article of Marina Montesano “Adam’s Skull,” in *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Catrien Santing, Barbara Baert and Anita Traninger (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), 15–30. *The Book of Jubilees* attributes this privilege, almost in the same words, to the Mount Zion: *The Book of Jubilees* 8, 19 (“Mt. Zion is in the middle of the navel of the earth”), VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 53. See also Alexandr V. Podossinov, “Это Иерусалим! Я поставлю его среди народов... О месте Иерусалима на средневековых картах,” in *Новые Иерусалимы. Иеротопия и иконография сакральных пространств*, ed. Alexey M. Lidov (Moscow: Индрик, 2009), 12–14.
- 92 This text comes from an Armenian commentary on the book of Isaiah that contains multiple fragments from the commentary of Ephrem the Syrian. See Edward G. Mathews, *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian* (CSCO 573, Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1998), xx, note 14.
- 93 See, for example, *Homily on the Annunciation* of Jacob of Serugh or *On the Nativity* of Ephrem the Syrian, where the Virgin is likened to the “holy of holies” and the Christ, dwelling in her, to the “High Priest”: Minov, “Gazinf the Holy Mountain,” 161.
- 94 *Homili I Di Laudibus S. Mariae* I, 1, 1; Leena M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden, Boston, MA and Köln: Brill, 2001), 103.
- 95 Peltomaa, *The Image*, 114.
- 96 The *Akathistos Hymn* 23, Peltomaa, *ibid.*, 19. See also Olga Etingoff, *Образ Богоматери: очерки византийской иконографии* (Moscow: Прогресс-Традиция, 2000), 40–41, 53–54 on some miniatures illustrating the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes from *Smyrna Physiologus* kept in the Library of Evangelical School in Smyrna and destroyed in 1922 (cod. B 8).
- 97 See, for example, the sixth *Hymn on Paradise* of Ephrem the Syrian.
- 98 Etingoff, *Образ Богоматери*, 17–18; Sophronios Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ* (Paris: Champion, 1930), 53, 70.
- 99 *Smyrna Physiologus*, Library of Evangelical School in Smyrna, (cod. B 8), fol. 166v; Etingoff, *Образ Богоматери*, 53–54.
- 100 Chludov Psalter, Moscow, Historical Museum, cod. 129, fol. 64r; Scepkina, *Миниатюры*; see also illustration to the same Psalm in the Pantokrator 61 (Mt. Athos), fol 83v; Theodore Psalter (British Library Add. 19352), fol 84r; Barberini (Barb. gr. 372, fol. 110v); Kiev Psalter (fol. 88v). This psalm was linked in its visual *glossa* with Daniel’s dream (Dn 2:31–35 34 *While you were gazing, a stone broke away, untouched by any hand, and struck the statue*). Baltimor Psalter commentator made an allusion to the Jacob’s ladder in this miniature (Baltimore, MA: Walters Art Gallery, W 733, fol 29r).
- 101 Chludov Psalter, fol. 79r; Theodore Psalter, Ps 77:68, fol. 106r; Barberini Psalter, fol 137r. On the typological parallel Virgin-Zion in the psalters with marginal illustrations see also Corrigan, “The Ninth Century,” 180–181; Etingoff, *Образ Богоматери*, 16–17.

102 Caprino, “Paolino di Nola,” 19.

103 “All of creation rejoices in you, O full of grace: the assembly of angels and the human race, You are a sanctified temple and spiritual paradise, the glory of virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a child, our God existing before all ages. He made your body into a throne, and your womb more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O full of grace: Glory be to you,” *The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great*, the Holy Anaphora.

104 Utrecht Psalter, fol. 81v.

105 Kiev psalter, fol. 181v.

106 *I Enoch* 25.3 – 25.5, Knibb, “The Ethiopic Book,” 113–114.

# 16 Rapture, ecstasy, and the construction of sacred space

## Hierotopy in the life of Symeon the New Theologian

*V. Rev. Maximos Constas*

### Introduction

Architectural imagery, with all its attendant spatial properties and perspectives, so abounds in Byzantine religious literature that its scope and application are not easy to assess. In both the Old and New Testaments, the figure of the building is an important symbolic manifestation of the divine presence, whether it is the temple of Solomon, the visionary temple of Ezekiel, or the celestial Jerusalem. As sites of divine presence and access to the deity, these symbolic structures were identified with the body of Christ, understood to be the par excellence temple of the divinity (cf. John 2:19). As the figural “corner-stone” of a “living spiritual edifice” in which “the fullness of the divinity dwells bodily” (cf. Mt 21:42; 1 Pet 2:5; Col 2:9), the mystical body of Christ was a structure that extended to include the body of the mystic as the site and edifice of the mystical encounter: a living, representational space paradoxically contained by the divinity and simultaneously containing it.

This paper, which I am pleased to offer to my friend and colleague, Professor Alexei Lidov, studies the use of spatial and architectural concepts in Niketas Stethatos’s *Life of Symeon the New Theologian* (scr. ca. 1055), along with parallel passages in the writings of its subject, Symeon the New Theologian (ca. 949–1022).<sup>1</sup> Symeon was an influential (and controversial) mystic, writer, and monastic leader, and Stethatos, his disciple and biographer, was one of the leading theologians of his age.<sup>2</sup> Approaching the *Life* from a broad spatial perspective has the advantage of expanding reductively epistemological and linguistic conceptions of mysticism and of engaging multiple levels of objects and discourse, including Symeon’s physical and social environment, his mystical experiences, and their spatialized representations. In exploring the convergence of space and mystical experience presented in the *Life*, this paper endeavors to reveal new insights into the understanding and production of sacred space. The visionary experiences described in the *Life* are always embodied experiences that unfold within a particular space: the multifaceted place where encounters with the divine converge with their social, textual, iconographic, and architectural representations.

### Space as light

In the *Life*’s complex hierotopy, the density of both the mystic’s body and the spatial structures it inhabits are transformed through the medium of light, which renders them ambiguously fluid and attenuates them in a manner analogous to the depiction of spatial forms in Byzantine icons (a subject we shall consider below). However, while

it is perhaps taken for granted that Byzantine spirituality is a “mysticism of light,” no writer before Symeon had emphasized the phenomenon of light to such a degree, nor with such emotional intensity.<sup>3</sup> Dozens of his pages recount his striking personal encounters with the divine light, which he frequently construes in distinctively spatial terms, a descriptive mode to which the *Life* remains faithful.<sup>4</sup> The convergence of space and light described in the *Life of St Symeon* has philosophical antecedents in the Neoplatonic tradition, and it will be helpful to consider those aspects of this tradition that are directly relevant to the argument of this paper.<sup>5</sup>

In the ancient Greek philosophical tradition, “space” denotes not primarily a void or vacuum but a quality of relation to “place” (τόπος), which fundamentally determines the nature of beings. This qualitative determination functions within a dynamic model of a universe animated by movements bearing things to their natural places, so that, for example, heavier objects are naturally drawn downward whereas an element such as fire rises upward. Thus, for Aristotle, the earth lies at the center of the cosmos, surrounded by water as its “place,” which in turn is located within the surrounding “place” of air and the concentric spheres of the fiery heavens.<sup>6</sup>

Neoplatonist philosophers, who sought to harmonize the ideas of Aristotle with those of Plato, criticized Aristotle’s concept of space as little more than a system of motionless boundaries, marking and measuring the limits of the objects contained within them.<sup>7</sup> They therefore reframed Aristotle’s categories in more ontological terms by locating them within a doctrine of participation, which encompassed physics, metaphysics, and psychology.<sup>8</sup> Rather than simply conveying bodies to particular locations, the notion of “place” was redefined as a bridge or medium between the levels of reality within a graded hierarchy, not only between the physical and the metaphysical but also between the incorporeal soul and spatially divided bodies. Movement between these realities required that the “spatial” intermediary between the two extremes, as it were, shared in the properties of both. This requirement was met by identifying space with light, an element that pervaded and bound together the entire cosmic system, reflecting the activity and presence of the intelligible as spatially extended into—or rather *as*—the sensible.<sup>9</sup> Space, then, understood as a luminous body became the intermediary element between the physical bodies and the noetic world. At each level of being, there was a mediating light, while the light itself was “nothing other than participation in divine existence.”<sup>10</sup>

From here it is but a small step to the *corpus Dionysiacum*, with its outpouring of the transcendent divinity as diffusion of light productive of “spatially” organized hierarchies of being. For Dionysios, the theophanic progression of the divine assumes a distinctively Christian character, insofar as the primal light of the divinity is Christ, who is the “light of the Father” and the “source” of all hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> It is intriguing to note that the “positive” (or “cataphatic”) self-manifestations of the divine are known as θέσεις, a word that literally means “places” or “positions” in the sense of localized determinations.<sup>12</sup> Such “placements” encompass everything from the “location” of quality in a substance to the formal arrangement of a structure, making θέσεις an equivalent of τάξις, which designates a rank, order, or hierarchical office or institution.<sup>13</sup> The notion of θέσεις is a mark of God’s providential care for creation, manifested in the harmonious order and placement of beings.

In the writings of Maximos the Confessor, the Dionysian notion of θέσεις undergoes a significant modification. No longer designating a kind of static or stationary relation to God, the term comes to denote *movement toward* God, and ultimately divinization,

which is likewise referred to as a *θέσις*.<sup>14</sup> This critical modification represents Maximus's disinclination for rigid ontological orders functioning as impenetrable boundaries between the levels of reality that could not be traversed.<sup>15</sup> If Dionysios coined the term "hierarchy," Maximus avoids the term completely.<sup>16</sup> Instead, the Confessor adopts a more "spatially open" model based on his celebrated doctrine of the *logoi*.<sup>17</sup> In this model, hierarchical super- and subordination are effectively collapsed and conflated—like "stars vanishing at the appearance of the sun"<sup>18</sup>—into the immediate and dynamic continuum of Logos, *logoi*, and beings. This new model found expression in a novel ordering of reality, not into Dionysian hierarchies, but into the five divisions of being described in *Ambiguum* 41. Here, the primary division is into uncreated and created natures, which are transcended and unified in the person of the incarnate Logos.<sup>19</sup> Consistent with this reconceptualization of the Dionysian universe, movement across these new ontological boundaries was surprisingly simple and depended on the freely determined capacities of each participant.

Maximos nonetheless remained committed to the reality of "place" as an irreducible property of being (and it is no coincidence that the Greek word *ἄτοπον* designates what is strange, unnatural, and irrational). Space and time are the conditions for the very possibility of beings, apart from which beings cannot exist.<sup>20</sup> "This is because all created beings came into existence relative to a "Where" and a "When," by means of which they exist relative to an outward position and in terms of its motion toward its principle of origin."<sup>21</sup> Here, the element of "motion toward" is significant and indicates that spatial and temporal determinations do not preclude the possibility of rational beings ecstatically "stepping outside" the boundaries of space and time toward their "principle of origin," which is God. The most striking example of this is Maximus' account, in *Ambiguum* 20, of the apostle Paul's upward passage (cf. 2 Cor 12:2–4) through the angelic orders, terminating in a condition of absolute immediacy with God, beyond all negation, boundary, and limit.<sup>22</sup> Dionysios rather tellingly avoids the Pauline verse in question, as well as any suggestion of upward movement through the hierarchy, which would problematically transgress, and allow a more perfect union with, the very divine activity that established creatures in their fixed locations within the hierarchy.<sup>23</sup>

If Symeon was directly familiar with Neoplatonic metaphysics, there is almost nothing in his writings to indicate this. His reformulation of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," with its distinctive juxtaposition of space and light, may perhaps appear to demonstrate direct familiarity with the Platonic corpus.<sup>24</sup> The celebrated myth, however, had long been absorbed into Christian discourse, and it seems likely that philosophical elements in Symeon's writings were mediated through the Platonizing Christian authors he is known to have read.<sup>25</sup> For example, the notion of sacred space as the illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit was a central point in the theology of Basil of Caesarea and was also a topic in John of Damascus's *On the Orthodox Faith*—two works that were undoubtedly known to Symeon.<sup>26</sup> Yet, Symeon could not have been completely disconnected from the general Christian Neoplatonic cultural fabric of middle Byzantine Constantinople, which would soon experience a renaissance associated with Michael Psellos (d. ca. 1078) and John Italos (d. ca. 1082), along with the contemporary publication of the "Constantinopolitan edition" of the works of Maximus the Confessor.<sup>27</sup> And if Symeon himself did not participate directly in the Neoplatonic revival of the early Komnenian period, his disciple and biographer, Niketas Stethatos, was exactly contemporary with it.<sup>28</sup>

The Neoplatonic metaphysics of space as light provides a suggestive, if not necessarily an immediate, philosophical framework for the spatial dynamics of the *Life of Symeon the New Theologian*. At the same time, it is clear that Symeon's self-understanding of his visionary experiences—which was shared by Stethatos—is deeply rooted in the tradition of Paul's rapture and ecstatic transport to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1–4), a tradition supported by centuries of patristic and early Byzantine exegesis of the *corpus Paulinum*.

### Paul's rapture

The influence of St. Paul on Byzantine spirituality has not yet been fully assessed and appreciated, although the great apostle has rightly been called the “model mystic for Symeon the New Theologian.”<sup>29</sup> Symeon's visions are indeed very closely modeled on the “rapture” (ἄρπαγή) of Paul (2 Cor 12:1–4), an event that in the Byzantine tradition had long been identified with Paul's vision of the divine light on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–11; 26:13–14).

Paul's account is the only firsthand description of an ascent to heaven to have survived from the first century.<sup>30</sup> It is tantalizingly brief—around 50 words—little more than an elliptical digression about “visions and revelations” embedded in a larger argument. In the tradition of ironic boasting, Paul writes of “a certain man” who was “caught up” into the “third heaven,” although he afterward states that this man was “caught up” into “paradise,” where he heard “certain ineffable words that cannot be spoken.” To complicate matters still further, the apostle repeatedly notes that he does not know whether this experience took place “in the body or out of the body.” We are consequently left to wonder about the precise relation of the “third heaven” to “paradise,” which may perhaps be one and the same destination, unless Paul is speaking of a two-stage ascent, or perhaps of two separate ascents.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, further ambiguity arises over whether or not this was a spiritual or a bodily experience; we are told nothing about the content, meaning, or purpose of the revelation, or why the words that were heard cannot be communicated to others.<sup>32</sup>

Despite these ambiguities—or perhaps because of them—this passage attracted considerable interest throughout the patristic and later Byzantine periods. On the whole, the Fathers of the Church accepted the account as entirely fitting and natural, recognizing in Paul's rapture a paradigm for their own spiritual experiences, a connection authorized by the influential *Life of Antony*.<sup>33</sup> The connection itself, however, is much older and appears in a highly developed form already in Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, which conflates the connubial “inner chamber” with the apostle's “third heaven.” The *Commentary* survives only in a Latin translation, although the passage linking Paul's ecstasy with Christian mystical experience is extant in Greek in the *Catena on the Song of Songs* compiled by Prokopios of Gaza (ca. 460–526).<sup>34</sup> From at least, then, the third century, spiritual writers interpreted Paul's ascent as an expression of the highest level of mystical experience, and to this general rule, Symeon the New Theologian is no exception.

Two elements in this dramatic experience were at the fore of Byzantine spirituality: the perceptually overwhelming manifestation of divine light and the ambiguous spatial location of the body because at the time of his rapture Paul confessed not knowing “whether he was in the body or out of the body” (2 Cor 12:3). In the *Life*, Symeon's mystical experiences are explicitly and repeatedly aligned with Paul's

rapture, which is equated with the mystical experience of “ecstasy” (ἔκστασις)—a word that means “to stand or be outside of one’s self or place”—so that Symeon’s cell is flooded with light, which “flashes around him just as it once did with Paul,” and “catches him up” (i.e., in rapture), alluding directly to Acts 26:13.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Symeon’s mystical experiences both signal and require the displacement of the body, so that, like Paul, he enters an ambiguously liminal space, which is paradoxically both embodied and disembodied.<sup>36</sup> The simultaneous embodiment and disembodiment of mystical experience reflect philosophical conceptions of space in which the body is at once a spatialized receptacle, while the negation of any bounded containment is localized within definable space.

### The architecture of the self

Throughout the *Life*, the cloistral space of the saint’s cell is the basic structural unit that functions both as an extension of the saint’s body and a microcosm of the physical world. As the body is enclosed within its cell, the body itself is a cell containing the soul, which in turn contains the uncontainable divinity.<sup>37</sup> Correspondences between the monastic body and its cell were not new, and Symeon would have learned of them from multiple sources, including standard monastic reading such as John Klimakos’s *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 27:

Strange as it may seem, the monk is a man who fights to keep his incorporeal self enclosed within the house of the body—the cell of a monk is the body that surrounds him, and within him is the dwelling place of knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

The cell/body analogy could, moreover, be extended to include the furnishings of the cell, which are themselves the spatialized forms of the cloistered body projected outward. The simple triad of floor, stool, and mat, for example, makes spatially and therefore steadily visible the collection of postures and positions when the body moves in and out of. These furnishings objectify the locations of the body that most frequently hold the body’s weight; they objectify the body’s continual need to shift within itself the locus of its weight, as well as its need to become wholly forgetful of its weight and to move weightlessly to larger mindfulness.<sup>39</sup> Spaces and physical structures are thus endowed with spiritual meaning, as the structures and spaces of the soul are embodied in cognate physical symbols. In this way, the mystic’s body and its enclosing cell give spatialized, observable expression to his inward spiritual state. As the invisible empties itself into visibility, and the incorporeal into corporeality, the spatial dynamics presented in the *Life* empower the transposition of spiritual undertakings and achievements into tangible, hierotopic forms. And so closely does the *Life* identify Symeon’s body with the space of his cell that when the latter is dismantled by Symeon’s persecutors, Stethatos notes that the “inanimate cell underwent a punishment equal to that of its owner.”<sup>40</sup> Thirty years after the saint’s death, an *epsilon*—the fifth letter of the Greek alphabet—mysteriously appeared on a piece of marble in the saint’s cell, foretelling the translation of his bodily remains during the Fifth Indiction.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Symeon’s restoration of the monastic church of St. Mamas is described by Stethatos as an outward image of Symeon’s efforts to reform and renew the inner lives of his monks, a spiritual project spatialized in the physical rebuilding of fallen and dilapidated monastic structures.<sup>42</sup>



### Ecstasy and displacement

As described in the *Life of Symeon*, mystical experience does not simply generate the emplacement of the body but brings about its transcendence: the ecstatic displacement of the mystic into a realm outside the limits of the body's proper spatial location. In the *Life*, this transcendence is typically expressed through the attenuation and even disappearance of the physical space of the cell. As Symeon's cell is "flooded with light from above," the physical space of his cell is "dissolved" (ἀφανισθέντα), whereas the saint is (like St. Paul) "caught up into the air" and "completely forgets his body." Afterward, in reverse order, the saint is "contracted back into himself" (συσταλέντος πρὸς ἑαυτό), back into his body, and back into the space of his cell.<sup>43</sup> This is a formula that Stethatos repeats throughout the *Life*, so that later, while Symeon is praying in his cell, the "roof of the house is lifted away" (τῆς στέγης ἀρθείσης τοῦ οἴκου) as a "cloud of light" descends from heaven and settles above his head. During another visionary moment, while the saint is standing at prayer inside (ἔνδον) his cell, he "seemed to be outside in the open air" (αἴθριος ἔξω), and "the building and everything else disappeared (παρήρχοντο), and he seemed no longer to be inside."<sup>44</sup>

These experiences are also recounted in Symeon's own writings, where they are presented in exactly the same language and imagery. Three passages, in particular, stand out as central to the argument of this paper and merit full citation. In *Hymn 25*, Symeon, describing a mystical vision, states that: "I was not aware I was within the house; it seemed I was sitting in the dark open air, and I was utterly oblivious even of my own body."<sup>45</sup> In *Catechetical Discourse 16*, Symeon notes that the divine light:

Is radiant like the sun, and I perceive all creation enclosed within it. It shows me all that it contains, and enjoins me to respect my own limits. I am enclosed between walls and under a roof, yet it opens the heavens to me. I raise my eyes to contemplate the realities on high and everything appears as it was at first.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, In *Ethical Discourse 5*, he notes that:

Light appeared to me, and the walls of my cell immediately vanished, and the world disappeared, and I remained alone in the presence of the Alone. And I do not know if this my body was there, too; I do not know if I was outside of it.<sup>47</sup>

The common thread that runs through these three passages is the transformation of Symeon's state of mind or consciousness—including a loss of awareness regarding the reality of his own body—which is paralleled in the perceived physical transformation of the space of his cell. Such experiences are not without precedent in patristic literature, but the high concentration of such experiences is unique to the writings of Symeon.<sup>48</sup>

### The saint as the icon and iconic space

These literary descriptions of a sainted figure standing in a ground of light devoid of architectural framing are analogous to the artistic forms and compositional features of Byzantine icons. In Byzantine iconography, sacred events, as a rule, are never depicted within closed, confined spaces, even if historically they took place indoors.

For example, the Annunciation, the Last Supper, and Pentecost, which all took place indoors are traditionally depicted “outdoors,” in the open air, often set before schematic clusters of buildings and other architectural forms, or simply within a field of golden light. That these events historically took place indoors is typically denoted by a red cloth draped over the upper edges of the architectural forms. In addition, the overwhelming manifestation of light characteristic of Symeon’s visionary experiences would seem to correspond to the general absence of shadows in Byzantine religious art.<sup>49</sup> As a rule, bodies do not cast shadows within icons, because the sacred persons and events have no external source of light. Instead, the lighted forms and surfaces that one sees are illumined from a source within the icon, not least from the icon’s gold surface, which literally reflects light making the icon a source of light.<sup>50</sup>

Henry Maguire has recently argued that imagery from the natural world, which was common in late-antique religious art, was increasingly avoided by middle Byzantine artists, who tended to place sacred figures against architectural backgrounds, which he suggests function as projections or metaphors—like cast shadows, in a sense—of the enframed saintly bodies.<sup>51</sup> Maguire further notes that in some iconographic scenes, the figures are disengaged from their architectural setting having become less tied to physical surroundings and less earthbound.<sup>52</sup> He concludes that, after Iconoclasm, the first role of architectural forms was to indicate, by their relative presence or absence, the spiritual status of the person or scene. The second role is the complete absence of architectural forms, which indicates a sense of spiritual transcendence, a higher spiritual place, an image of divine glory, in which there was no room, so to speak, for architecture.<sup>53</sup> Here, of course, one thinks of Yeat’s poetic image of “sages standing in God’s holy fire, as in the gold mosaic of a wall.”<sup>54</sup>

In this way, the saint or mystic is an icon, a model or image of sanctity for others, becoming a sacred site for the faithful and a visible example of liminality, existing visibly within the world but nonetheless representing something beyond it. It is worth noting that Symeon himself was directly involved in the design and production of icons, particularly of his spiritual father, Symeon the Elder. The icon proved to be popular, and local religious leaders requested copies of it. It also proved to be controversial, and when the cult of Symeon the Elder came under attack, resulting in the theft of the icon and the slandering of the saint, Stethatos deemed the affair a “new Iconoclasm,” and its proponents were naturally compared to Iconoclasts.<sup>55</sup> During his lifetime, Symeon the New Theologian, while in his cell, was observed to be suspended six feet in the air, rising to the “same level as a large icon of the Deesis” hanging close to the ceiling. A bright and radiant light emanated from Symeon’s body, and his hands were raised in prayer, like a figure in an icon.<sup>56</sup> After his death, Symeon himself was depicted in an icon, the face of which was seen to glow a “fiery burning red.”<sup>57</sup> These passages suggest that the form of space envisioned in the *Life*, the “place” of the sainted body, is a fully iconic space, at once a *hierotopy* and a *heterotopia*, virtualizing the inherent liminality of the icon, and seeking to represent, in literary form, something of the spiritual visions experienced by the saints.

## Conclusion

The Byzantine religious mind had deep confidence in the harmonious order of things, which included a view of physical space that did not exist in isolation from the metaphysical space of spiritual experience. As we have seen, both spheres co-existed in a

creative tension between (ungraspable, abstract, and immaterial) space and (material, localized, and circumscribable) place. Among the modes of spatial expression characteristic of Byzantine monasticism, solitary enclosure was prominent, marking both the narrow compass of the monastic cell and the separated expanse of the desert. In neither case did such isolation necessarily leave the monk socially or physically isolated, and this was especially true of the monasteries in which Symeon lived, which were located within or near a large urban center.

Monastery walls also constitute symbolic, representational spaces, and the decision to enter monastic life involved physical separation and enclosure as the outward sign of the monk's separation from the world and spiritual enclosure in God.<sup>58</sup> Such enclosures lent themselves to multiple representations: the soul dwelling in God, or God in the soul. Alternatively, the same enclosures were permeable boundaries, as if the walls and windows of the monk's cell or the monastic church were understood as porous skin or a permeable membrane: a threshold between the inner microcosm and outer macrocosm. From both points of view, the body is central to the respective spatial representations of mystical experience. Symeon may seem to minimize the role of the body, the actual or at least conscience presence of which is not guaranteed, or which at the very least is ambiguous. And if the mystic's rapture into overwhelming light brings with it a forgetting or loss of the self, then the body must also be forgotten. But the body cannot be completely ignored: it is God's creation and has a role to play in serving God. Thus, the seeming diminishment or loss of the body does not issue in a call to set aside the body or discard all material associations. Symeon himself was a builder and beautifier of churches, and the life of the coenobium is a shared and highly social life, in which the human beings are fully interdependent.<sup>59</sup>

The nature and authenticity of mystical experience has probably always been a provocation to those who have no experience of it and may likewise puzzle even those who have had such experiences. To the modern reader, what the saint describes might seem akin to visual hallucinations and perceptual distortions, both of which are forms of psychosis that are common primarily in schizophrenics. Yet, the most common types of schizophrenic hallucinations are auditory. Visual hallucinations are second in frequency and occur when perceptions that are perceived as real occur in the absence of any external stimulus, such as a room "flooded with light from above," or whose "walls and roof are lifted away." Such hallucinations are typically terrifying for the one who suffers them, whereas for Symeon they were accompanied by feelings of ineffable tranquility, sweetness, and bliss. The loss of self described in these accounts might seem comparable to what psychiatrists call depersonalization and derealization—extreme forms of disassociation from one's self or body—yet, these tend to occur as a result of severe trauma, and are normally linked with dissociative disorders ranging from schizophrenia to post-traumatic stress.<sup>60</sup>

The relationship between the saint and his cell is another fascinating phenomenon. Some neuroscience research suggests that when a person is intimately attached to a physical object (such as a professional musician with his instrument or a racecar driver with his vehicle) the brain's somatosensory map physically expands to accommodate the object as if it were an actual appendage (as in cases of phantom limb pain). Internal body maps can be flawed, or at least incorrectly scaled, as it were, producing false perceptions of one's body. Individuals with eating disorders, for example, report seeing an overweight person when they look at themselves in the mirror, suggesting that their mind's body map (for whatever reason) is smaller or contracted. On the opposite

end of the spectrum are over-expanded maps. It is thought that road rage might be attributed to a map extending beyond the body to encompass the entire vehicle so that a threat to the latter causes the brain to react as if the body itself had been violated. In the case of Symeon, long years of intense prayer and spiritual experiences in his cell may have extended his internal map to the space of the entire cell, so that the vandalism of the cell was equal to an attack on the saint himself.<sup>61</sup>

In the end, Symeon's mystical experiences, like all mystical experience, cannot but be elusive and paradoxical, being both embodied and disembodied: embodied in that such experience requires a body as locus and conduit, but disembodied in that the experience is spiritual, not physical. The simultaneous embodiment and disembodiment of mystical experience point to a conception of space that renders the body a receptacle and site of mystical experience, but at the same time something open and generative, moving the self beyond the notion of space itself. In this, we might see an analogy to the dual nature of light, thought to be the medium of these experiences, which behaves as both a particle and a wave.

The *Life of St Symeon the New Theologian* is a rich and in many ways a unique source for the understanding and production of sacred space in the middle Byzantine period. Moreover, while the *Life* has been studied from various perspectives, its coupling of space and mystical experience remains largely unexplored. In studying the spatial dynamics put forward by the *Life*, in particular the abolition of spatial perspective in the ecstatic vision of the divine light, this paper has argued that accounts of such visionary experiences may have influenced, or at the very least encouraged, the depiction of space and spatial perspective in Byzantine iconography.

## Notes

- 1 The *Life* was published by Iréné Hausherr, *Un grand mystique byzantine. Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949–1022) par Nicétas Stéthatos*, *Orientalia Christiana* 12 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1928); and in an improved edition by Symeon Koutsas, *Βίος και πολιτεία τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Συμεῶν ὁ Νέος Θεολόγος* (New Smyrna, Athens: Akritis, 1994). A collation of these two editions, together with a facing-page English translation, was published by Richard P.H. Greenfield, *The Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 20 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). For studies of Symeon's life and thought, see Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Basil Krivocheine, *In the Light of Christ: St Symeon the New Theologian: Life-Spirituality-Doctrine*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986); and H.J.M. Turner, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).
- 2 For assessments of Stethatos's hagiographical work, see Symeon A. Paschalides, "The Hagiography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiades (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), vol. 1, 143–171, esp. 149; Martin Hinterberger, "Ein Editor und sein Autor: Niketas Stethatos und Symeon Neos Theologos," in *La face cache de la littérature byzantine. Le texte en tant que message immédiat: actes du colloque international, Paris, 5-7 juin, 2008*, ed. Paolo Odorico, *Dossiers byzantins* 11 (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, 2012), 247–264; id., "The Byzantine Hagiographer and His Text," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiades (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), vol. 2, 211–246, esp. 228–229; and Frederick Lauritzen, "An Ironic Portrait of a Social Monk: Christopher of Mitylene and Niketas Stethatos," *Byzantinoslavica* 65 (2007), 201–210. For Stethatos's works, some of which were included in the *Philokalia*, see Jean Darrouzès, *Nicétas Stéthatos, Opuscules et lettres*, *Sources chrétiennes* 81 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961).

- 3 See, for example, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought* (New York: Harper, 1962); Andrew Louth, “Light, Vision, and Religious Experience in Byzantium,” in *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 85–104; and id., “Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, eds. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 137–146.
- 4 The notion that Niketas was himself the *author* of the works ascribed to Symeon cannot be seriously maintained. Greenfield, *Life of Saint Symeon*, ix, is correct when he notes that, “Niketas drew on his deep knowledge of the autobiographical accounts embedded in Symeon’s own works,” but not when he suggests that Niketas was virtually the author of Symeon’s work, due to his allegedly heavy-handed editorial interventions (p. x). In Niketas’s own writings (see above, n. 2), one does not find any sustained interest in the kinds of spatial dynamics characteristic of Symeon’s writings.
- 5 While both ancients and moderns have considered space to be of fundamental importance to an understanding of the physical universe, the ancient Greek philosophical notion of “space” does not correspond to the modern use of this word. In deference to the well-established academic discourse of “sacred space,” in what follows I will use the term with the qualifications outlined below.
- 6 Aristotle, *Physics* 4.5, 212a31–b1; id., *On Generation and Corruption* 1.5, 320a21–24; cf. Benjamin Morrison, *On Location: Aristotle’s Concept of Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 7 These questions are treated extensively by the Neoplatonist philosopher Simplicius, *Corollaries on Place and Time*, trans. James Opie Urmson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
- 8 For discussion see Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space, Motion* (London: Duckworth, 1988); and Keimpe Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).
- 9 For details and earlier bibliography, see Michael Griffin, “Proclus on Place as the Luminous Vehicle of the Soul,” *Dionysius* 30 (2012), 161–186; Samuel Sambursky, “Place and Space in Later Neoplatonism,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 8 (1977), 173–187, suggests that such views are not unlike Einstein’s theory of relativity and the relation of material mass to energy. See also See Lutz Bergemann, “‘Fire Walk with Me’: An Attempt at an Interpretation of Theurgy and its Aesthetics,” in *Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium*, eds. Sergei Mariev and Wiebke-Marie Stock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 143–197.
- 10 Proclus, *Platonic Theology* 2.7.48, eds. Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, *Proclus: Théologie platonicienne* (Paris: Belles Lettres), vol. 2, 108; cited in Griffin, “Proclus on Place,” 176, n. 44.
- 11 Cf. *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 1.2 (121AB); and *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1.1 (372AB); see also William Riordan, *Divine Light: The Theology of Denys the Areopagite* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008), 151–168.
- 12 Cf. *On the Divine Names* 2.4 (641B); and *On Mystical Theology* 1.2; 5 (1000B; 1048B);
- 13 Cf. Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita* (Collegeville: Cistercian Publications, 2013), 164–168 (= “Hierarchy as τάξις”).
- 14 In the sense of something determined or established by God; cf. Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1995), 62–63; and Nicholas [Maximos] Conostas, *Maximos the Confessor: On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), vol. 1, 486, n. 31. See also the *Life of Symeon* 111: Θεὸς ἐχηρημάτιζε θεῖσαι, which Greenfield, 259, renders as “He (i.e., Symeon) came to be God by adoption.”
- 15 See, for example, the difficulties Dionysios had in explaining the prophet Isaiah’s description of a seraph engaging in activities on a level not properly its own, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 13.1–4 (300B–308B). These difficulties were the legacy of Proclus; on which, see Radek Chlup, *Proclus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21–24.
- 16 Maximos uses the words “hierarchy” and “hierarch” in the Prologue and chap. 9 of the *Mystagogy* (CCSG 69:6, line 55; 38, line 620): the latter is a simple reference to a bishop, and the former occurs when Maximos cites the title of Dionysios’ *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

- 17 On Maximos's doctrine of the *logoi*, see Eric Perl, "Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, Deification in Saint Maximus Confessor." Ph.D. diss., Yale, 1991, 147–149; and Paul Blowers, "The Logology of Maximos the Confessor in his Criticism of Origenism," in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. Robert Daly (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 570–576.
- 18 Maximos, *Amb.* 7.12 (DOML 1:93).
- 19 Maximos, *Amb.* 41.2 (DOML 2:103–105). Here Maximos is indebted not to Dionysios but to Gregory of Nyssa, and in a sense is rejecting the hierarchies of Proclus for the immediacy of Plotinus; cf. Chlup, *Proclus*, 16–29; and Frederic M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 45–56. John Gavin, *They Are Like Angels in Heaven: Angelology and Anthropology in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2009), 102–103, states that, for Maximos the "ontological order of creation depends less on a [Dionysian] hierarchical structure, and more upon the ordering of the *logoi* of divine providence and judgment united in the *Logos*. The structure of the cosmos emerges from the divine desire to become 'immanent' in the Incarnation, eliminating the need for the strict scalar chain of being."
- 20 In *Amb.* 10.58; 10.91 (DOML 1:242; 292); and *Questions to Thalassios* 55 (CCSG 7:485); 64–65 (CCSG 22:209; *ibid.*, 283 and 285), Maximos describes "place and time" as the "necessary conditions" (τῶν ὄντων οὐκ ἄνευ) of beings, a phrase which is the equivalent of the Latin *sine qua non*, indicating necessary actions or conditions without which other things cannot exist. Neoplatonic writers used the phrase to denote two or more objects or entities whose existences are mutually and qualitatively conditioned (if not necessarily mutually caused). The notion that "time and place" are fundamental among such conditions is attested in the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, ed. Leendert Gerrit Westerink (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1963), 16: "Time and place constitute the *sine qua non* for existence." The phrase was also used by Philo, *On the Decalogue* 31.1: "Those who study the doctrines of philosophy say that the categories in nature, as they are called, are ten only, which is, substance, quality, quantity, relation, activity, passivity, state, position, along with the necessary conditions for the possibility of their existence, namely, time and place" (LCL 7:20–21); cf. *id.*, *On Arithmetical Numbers*, ed. K. Staehle (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931), 99, lines 4–5.
- 21 Maximos, *Questions to Thalassios* 55, scholion 6 (CCSG 7:517). The "where" and the "when" are terms established by Aristotle, who expressed the relational aspect of space not with nouns but with adverbs (i.e., ποῦ, πότε); cf. *Categories* 1b25–2a4.
- 22 Maximos, *Amb.* 20.5 (DOML 1:417); cf. Marius Portaru, "Gradual Participation according to St Maximus the Confessor," *Studia Patristica* 68 (2013), 281–293, who argues persuasively for a "transposition of Dionysian participation through hierarchy" into what he calls the "territory of personal experience," which is essentially a shift away from fixed ontological categories to the role of freedom in the divinization of rational creatures.
- 23 As noted by Gavin, *Angelology*, 208–209.
- 24 *Ethical Discourse* 1.12 (SC 122:296–302); cf. Vladimir Baranov, "Escaping Plato's Cave: Some Platonic Metaphors in Symeon the New Theologian," *Scrinium* 11 (2015), 181–196, who believes that Symeon had direct knowledge of Platonic texts and traditions.
- 25 Including Evagrius of Pontus, Gregory the Theologian, and, perhaps, Dionysios the Areopagite; cf. See Pablo Argárate, "Simeón el Nuevo Teólogo. *Status quaestionis*. Fuentes e teología," *Studia monastica* 55 (2013), 269–290; and Istvan Perczel, "Denys l'Aréopagite et Syméon le Nouveau Théologien," in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et Occident. Actes du colloque international, Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994*, ed. Ysabel de Andia (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 341–357.
- 26 Basil's second doxology, which he defended against criticism, used the locative preposition "in" (ἐν) to characterize the Holy Spirit as the "locus" of the faithful; see his *On the Holy Spirit* 25–26 (SC 17bis:456–77); cf. Mary Ann Donovan, "The Spirit, Place of the Sanctified in Basil's *De Spiritu Sanctu*," *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982), 1073–1078. See also John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* 13: "The place (τόπος) of God is the place where God's energy is present; it is that which participates in God's energy and grace," in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. Boniface Kotter (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), vol. 2, 38, lines 12–18.

- 27 On which, see Raphael Bracke, “Two Fragments of a Greek Manuscript containing a Corpus Maximianum: Mss. *Genavensis graecus* 360 and *Leidensis Scaligeranus* 33,” *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 4 (1985), 110–114; and Maximos Conostas, “St. Maximus the Confessor: The Reception of his Thought in East and West,” in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, ed. Maxim Vasiliević (Belgrade and Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2013), 25–53, esp. 36–38.
- 28 Frederick Lauritzen, “Areopagitica in Stethatos: Chronology of an Interest,” *Византийский временник* 97 (2013), 199–215, argues that Niketas played an important role in the revival, largely through his interest in the writings of Dionysios.
- 29 Alexander Golitzin, *St Symeon the New Theologian, On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, vol. 1: The Church and the Last Things (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 117; see also Maximos Conostas, “The Reception of Paul and of Pauline Theology in the Byzantine Period,” in *The New Testament in Byzantium*, eds. Derek Kreuger and Robert S. Nelson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2016), 147–176.
- 30 Paula R. Gooder, *Only the Third Heaven? 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 and Heavenly Ascent* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), helpfully surveys a century of scholarship. Also helpful is James D. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul’s Ascent in Greco-Roman, Judaic and Early Christian Context* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986); and Riemer Roukema, “Paul’s Rapture to Paradise in Early Christian Literature,” in *The Wisdom of Egypt*, eds. Anthony Hilhorst and George H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 267–283.
- 31 That Paul experienced (at least) two raptures, one to the third heaven and another to paradise, was a widely held opinion; cf. Photios, *Bibliotheca* cod. 234 (ed. René Henry, *Photius, Bibliothèque* [Paris: Belles Lettres, 1967], vol. 5, 85); Michael Psellos, *On the Words: “I Know a Man in Christ who Fourteen Years Ago” (2 Cor 12:1)* (ed. Paul Gautier, *Michaelis Pselli Theologica* 1 [Leipzig: Teubner, 1989], 111); and Leontios of Constantinople, *On Pentecost*, who believed that, while in paradise, Paul saw the “good thief” (cf. Lk 23:43) (CCSG 17:401); the same view taken by Zigabenos, *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*, who adds that Paul also saw there the “souls of the saints at rest” (ed. Nikephoros Kalogeras, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὰς ἸΔ’ Ἐπιστολὰς τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου καὶ εἰς τὰς Ζ’ Καθολικὰς* [Athens: Τύποις Ἀδελφῶν Περρῆ, 1887], vol. 2, 480).
- 32 Of course, writers of apocryphal works eagerly provided answers to these questions; cf. Gooder, *Third Heaven*, 104–127; and J. Edward Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 148–163.
- 33 Athanasios, *Life of Antony* 65.8–9 (SC 400:306); cf. the *Saying* of Abba Silouanos, who for hours stood in state of ecstasy, his hands stretched out to heaven; when pressed to reveal what he saw, he replied: “I was caught up into heaven and saw the glory of God” (PG 65:408).
- 34 Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1 (GCS VIII/33:108–109); cf. Prokopios, *Catena in Canticum canticorum* (PG 17:253; PG 87:1552). See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologia in Hexaameron*, who also describes Paul’s ascent into the third heaven as an “entrance into the innermost sanctuary of intelligible nature” (PG 44:121B).
- 35 Cf. *Life of Symeon* 5; 9; 19; 68–69; 130; 134 (Greenfield, 13–15; 27; 47; 155–157; 315; 329); cf. *ibid.*, 135 (331).
- 36 See, for example, *Catechetical Discourse* 16, which describes another vision of the divine light, which, after it withdrew, prompted Symeon to note that: “I regained possession of myself” or “I regained consciousness” (ἐν συναισθήσει ἐγενόμην) (SC 104:246, line 111).
- 37 See the response of St Silouan of Athos (d. 1938), when asked why he did not relocate to a cave, in order to avoid the trouble and noise associated with life in a large monastery: “I do live in a cave: my body is the cave of my soul, and my soul is a cave of the Holy Spirit” (cited in the Athonite periodical: *Hosios Gregorios* 30 [2005], 24).
- 38 PG 88:1097D; cf. John Wortley, *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), no. 275, 185:

An elder said to some brother: ‘The devil is the enemy and you are the house (ὁ οἶκος), for the enemy, casting into it all his uncleanness, makes no end of throwing at your house whatever he finds. It is up to you not to be remiss in throwing such things out. If you are remiss, your house will be filled with all uncleanness and you can no longer enter there;

cf. *ibid.*, no. 535, 365.

- 39 These insights are borrowed from Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 39.
- 40 *Life of Symeon* 98 (Greenfield, 227).
- 41 *Ibid.*, 129 (313).
- 42 *Ibid.*, 34–35 (75–79).
- 43 *Ibid.*, 5 (13).
- 44 *Ibid.*, 69 (157).
- 45 *Hymn* 25: οἰκίας ἡμνημόνησα ὅτι ἐντὸς ὑπάρχω, ἐν τῷ δοκεῖν ἀέρι δὲ τοῦ σκότους ἐκαθήμην, πλὴν καὶ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ λήθην ἔσχον εἰς ἅπαν (SC 174:256, lines 16–18).
- 46 Ἀπαστράπτει ὡς ἥλιος καὶ τὴν κτίσιν συνεχομένην κατανοῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ πάντα δεικνύει μοι καὶ φυλάσσειν προστάτει μοι τὰ μέτρα τὰ ἴδια. Συνέχομαι ὑπὸ στέγης καὶ τοίχων καὶ τοὺς οὐρανούς διανοίγει μοι. Τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς μου αἶρω αἰσθητῶς τὰ ἐκεῖσε θεάσασθαι καὶ πάντα βλέπω καθὼς ὑπῆρχον τὸ πρότερον (SC 104:248, lines 131–136).
- 47 *Ethical Discourse* 5: ὠράθη μοι ἐκεῖνο τὸ φῶς, ἦρθη ὁ οἶκος τῆς κέλλης εὐθύς καὶ παρήλθεν ὁ κόσμος, ἔμεινα δὲ μόνος ἐγὼ μόνω συνὼν τῷ φωτί, οὐκ οἶδα δὲ εἰ ἦν καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦτο τηρικαῦτα ἐκεῖ, εἰ γὰρ ἔξω τούτου γέγονα ἀγνοῶ) (SC 129:102, lines 301–306); cf. *Ethical Discourse* 10, where Symeon states that visible objects will be concealed (καλυφθήσεται) at the coming of Christ in glory, “just as the stars are concealed when the sun appears,” which would seem to parallel the disappearing ceiling and walls, which continue to be present but are no longer visible, although the language of “concealment” differs from the verbs translated above as “disappear” (ἦρθη) and “vanish” (παρήλθεν), which literally mean to be “taken up” or “lifted away,” and to “pass away” or “to be surpassed” (SC 129:260, lines 19–35); cf. above, n. 18.
- 48 See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *Funeral Oration on his brother Basil the Great*: “One night, there appeared to Basil an outpouring of light when he was praying, and, by means of divine power, the entire dwelling was illuminated by an immaterial light, having no source in anything material” (PG 46:809C); and Dionysios the Areopagite, *Ep.* 8:

The place where he was seemed to be shaken completely and then split into two halves in the middle from the roof down. A shining flame appeared coming down to him from heaven, for the place now seemed to be in open air (ὑπαιθρος ὁ τόπος). The sky itself seemed to be unfolding and in the vault of heaven Jesus appeared amid an endless throng of angels in human form.

(1100AB)

- 49 With the obvious exception of shaded areas used to model solid forms and figures in order to give them volume.
- 50 Cf. Rico Franses, “When All that is Gold does not Glitter: On the Strange History of Looking at Byzantine Art,” in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*. *Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 13–24.
- 51 Henry Maguire (ed.), “Nature and Architecture,” in *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 135–165.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 144, referencing an image of the Presentation of Christ from the *Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, *Paris gr.* 510, fol. 137. He makes a similar point with respect to the twelfth-century images of the Annunciation at the Well and the Annunciation at Hagioi Anargyroi at Kastoria, for whereas the former (apocryphal image) contains significant (and detailed) architectural detail, architectural forms are absent in the image of the Annunciation, which is biblical and “spiritually more significant” (p. 144).
- 53 *Ibid.*, 152. See also the remarks in Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjityrphonos, eds., *Architecture as Icon: Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2010), 3–37; and Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).
- 54 William Butler Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium,” from *The Poems of W.B. Yeats: A New Edition*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 1996), 193. The poem was written in 1926, and first published in W.B. Yeats, *The Tower* (London: MacMillan, 1928), 1–3.
- 55 *Life of Symeon* 92–93 (Greenfield, 211–215); cf. Charles Barber, “Icon and Portrait in the Trial of Symeon the New Theologian,” in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*.



*Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, eds. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 25–33.

56 *Ibid.*, 117 (Greenfield, 277); cf. 126 (305).

57 *Ibid.*, 143 (Greenfield, 355).

58 Cf. *Ibid.*, 39, where, conversely, a group of insubordinate monks, staging a revolt, “smashed the bolts of the monastery gate ... as though they had lost their minds and gone mad” (Greenfield, 85).

59 *Ibid.*, 34:

He lavishly rebuilt the whole monastery ... he paved the floor of the church with marble, he beautified it with votive offerings, and made it resplendent with holy icons of the saints. He also ... adorned it with windowpanes made from turned disks of glass and with candelabra that were amazing in their beauty.

(Greenfield, 75–77)

60 Information accessed from the website: “Functional and Dissociative Neurological Symptoms: A Patients Guide” (<http://www.neurosymbols.org/>). I am thankful to Luke Constas for discussion and assistance with this material.

61 *Life of Symeon* 98 (Greenfield, 225–227).

# Tabula Gratulatoria

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