

Oxford Handbooks Online

Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline

Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack

The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies

Edited by Robin Cormack, John F. Haldon, and Elizabeth Jeffreys

Print Publication Date: Oct 2008

Subject: Classical Studies, Classical Reception, Medieval Studies

Online Publication Date: Nov 2012 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199252466.013.0001

Abstract and Keywords

Byzantine Studies are concerned with the history and culture of what has come to be known as the Byzantine Empire, that is, the empire of East Rome. The term 'Byzantine' derives from Byzantium, the name of the city founded in the eighth century BCE that had previously occupied the site of Constantine's Constantinople, and is a modern construct first used in seventeenth-century Europe. 'Byzantium' and 'Byzantine' are now used freely to refer to all aspects of the East Roman Empire and its culture. Today, Byzantine Studies is an academic discipline represented in many universities throughout the Western world, whether in autonomous departments or by the special research interests of individual scholars. Byzantine Studies, in the sense of the study of Byzantine history, language, and literature, has a long pedigree. This book provides a picture of the state of Byzantine Studies today, with bibliographies and references to guide the neophyte reader.

Keywords: Byzantine Studies, Byzantine Empire, Byzantium, Constantinople, history, language, literature, East Roman Empire, culture

BYZANTINE Studies are concerned with the history and culture of what has come to be known as the Byzantine Empire, that is, the empire of East Rome. This was centred on the city of Constantinople (modern Istanbul), generally agreed to have been founded in 324 by the emperor Constantine to be the capital of the eastern portions of the Roman Empire (although the issue of Constantine's actual intentions remains debated). Its boundaries fluctuated over the centuries but it remained as a distinct, and for the most part major, political entity in the world of Europe, the east Mediterranean, and the neighbouring regions for more than a millennium, until its final capture by the Ottoman Turks in 1453; its influence lives on to the present day. Its emperors and citizens thought of themselves as Roman (*romaioi*) while the inhabitants of Constantinople regularly referred to themselves as Constantinopolitans and their city as the Queen City.

(p. 4) The term 'Byzantine' derives from Byzantium, the name of the city founded in the eighth century BCE that had previously occupied the site of Constantine's Constantinople, and is a modern construct first used in seventeenth-century Europe. 'Byzantium' and 'Byzantine' are now used freely to refer to all aspects of the East Roman Empire and its culture. As an extension of the Roman Empire Byzantium's structures of government and administration evolved seamlessly from those of the late Roman empire of the first centuries CE, with Latin initially the language of administration. The language of its literary culture, however, was Greek. From its inception Constantinople was a Christian city, whose bishop in time became the ecumenical patriarch of the Orthodox Church while the rituals and thought patterns of Christianity became all pervasive in the Byzantine way of life. The defining characteristics of this empire are thus that it was Roman in law and government, Greek in language and literary culture, and Christian in its religion.

For the English-speaking world of the twenty-first century, or the world of western Europe in general, Byzantium is something of a black hole, a shadowy force if known at all, unlike the empire of West Rome whose physical remains are a conspicuous and very real reminder of its former presence. At its most basic this difference in perception reflects the linguistic and cultural—as well as political—divisions between eastern and western Europe that grew up in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, when the east was predominantly Orthodox and with a literary culture based on Greek whilst the west was Roman Catholic with a Latin literary culture: at some points an impermeable barrier could be said to have been in place between the two. In modern times this separation is still visible in many areas. It has also been reflected in the curricula at secondary and tertiary levels of education where Byzantium has been given a very small place indeed, although classicists (albeit often grudgingly) would admit that without the intervention of Byzantine scribes no texts in ancient Greek would have survived to the present day. Byzantium has been of esoteric interest only. This *damnatio memoriae*, this condemnation to oblivion, however, is no longer quite so true as it once was. Good witness to this is the intense interest generated by exhibitions of Byzantine art, most notably the exhibitions staged in the Metropolitan Museum of Art ('Age of Spirituality' in 1977, 'Glory of Byzantium' in 1997, and 'Byzantium: Faith and Power, 1261–1557' in 2004), with huge sales of the exhibition catalogues. Among the considerations that will have led to this heightened awareness of Byzantium and its culture must be included the development of tourism and inexpensive travel to Greece and Turkey, where access to major monuments is no longer the hazardous adventure it used to be not so very long ago.

However, academic centres devoted to the study of Byzantium have existed in many forms in most countries of Europe and North America for many years, in some cases informally as the result of an individual's special interests, in other cases formally since the last years of the nineteenth century. These centres have turned what might have become an antiquarian hobby for dilettante collectors (p. 5) of precious artefacts, such as enamels or icons, into a coherent discipline. An important initial, though not necessarily automatic, stimulus for the investigation of Byzantium lay in the major collections of Greek manuscripts, whether of classical or medieval texts—all of course dating from the Byzantine period and copied in areas under Byzantine domination. Such collections,

brought together as the result of widely varied historical circumstances, are to be found, for example, in Athens, London, Madrid, Paris, the Vatican, and Vienna. This has meant that a primary focus for interest in Byzantium has often been as much philological as historical. For others, of course, 'Byzantium' immediately implies a theological tradition and ecclesiastical structures, though these are only part of the definition of Byzantine culture.

France saw the first interest in 'le bas empire', as the later stages of the Roman Empire came to be known, in the court of Louis XIV, where optimistic comparisons could be drawn between parallel imperial aspirations. This led to an interest in the acquisition of texts, particularly histories, from the Byzantine period, and the first printing of a number of these, largely from the royal collections. These Paris editions, reprinted in Venice, remained important tools until replaced by the Bonn editions of the nineteenth century. The manuscripts kept in the Paris libraries also provided the wherewithal for other important academic tools such as Du Cange's *Glossarium mediae et infimae Graecitatis* (1688), which is still not entirely superseded. Intellectual interest in Byzantine studies has remained a constant in French academic life, represented in recent years by important work at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France.

Perhaps the most significant step towards creating the discipline was taken by Karl Krumbacher (1856–1909) in Munich in the 1890s, where he founded *Byzanti-nische Zeitschrift*, the first journal to focus on this field and still the journal of record, and set up an Institute for Byzantine Studies within the University of Munich which continues to this day. In Germany other important centres appeared in, for example, Berlin, Bonn, and Hamburg. Also of significance were developments in Athens, where the newly founded university and the Academy had a strong interest in this area. Pre-revolutionary Russia saw much important work that was with difficulty continued through the Stalinist period but which was reflected in the invigorating perspectives brought by the late Alexander Kazhdan when he moved from Moscow to Washington in the 1970s.

The next most significant step for the discipline came with the institution of a series of international congresses of Byzantine Studies, the first taking place in Bucharest in 1924, with some thirty participants. These have come to be held every five years, with interruptions only for the Second World War. The most recent have been in London (2006), Paris (2001), Copenhagen (1996), and Moscow (1991). For virtually every congress plenary papers and many of the shorter contributions have been published: these are an invaluable record of changing areas of interest and methodologies.

(p. 6) In the 1920s and 1930s Byzantine artefacts (icons, ivories, enamels) came to the attention of collectors of fine art—their abstract qualities accorded with the taste of the time, and they were relatively inexpensive. Mr and Mrs Robert Bliss, American connoisseurs, built up a choice collection with an associated scholarly library which was housed in their home, a charming eighteenth-century mansion in Washington, DC. In 1940 they presented this to Harvard University: the ensuing Research Library and Collection in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks has become one of the most

significant resources in the field, with a holding of books that can only with difficulty be matched elsewhere. The existence of Byzantine Studies in many North American universities owes much to this institution.

In the years after the Second World War Byzantine Studies developed as part of the general expansion of tertiary education. In Austria, with a significant holding of Greek manuscripts in the State Library in Vienna and situated centrally at the crossroads between Catholic and Orthodox Europe, the Institut der Öster-reichischen Byzantinistik was set up and soon, under the astute guidance of the late Herbert Hunger, initiated a major series of research projects, starting with modern manuscript catalogues and encompassing editions of texts, studies of seals, and mapping Byzantine territories (*Tabula Imperii Byzantini*). In Britain, where Byzantine studies had been promoted by individual scholars such as J. B. Bury (1861–1927) and later his pupil Steven Runciman (1903–2000), weak institutional support was transformed in the educational creativity of the 1960s and departments were set up (Birmingham) or strengthened (Cambridge, London, Oxford). On the model of the Dumbarton Oaks' symposia and the quinquennial international congresses, British Byzantine studies are held together by annual symposia, which are regularly published. The rather surprising strength, on paper, of Byzantine studies in Australia can be seen as an offshoot of the British developments since most of those involved were trained in the UK.

Today, Byzantine Studies is an academic discipline represented in many universities throughout the Western world, whether in autonomous departments or by the special research interests of individual scholars. Its main organs of communication continue to be academic journals, such as *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, *Byzantinoslavica*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, *Revue des Études Byzantines*, *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, though electronic means of publication are gaining ground.

As an area of scholarship the current popularity of Byzantine Studies reflects the expansion of mass tertiary education through universities and equivalent institutions, especially in the United States and western Europe, as well as an increased awareness of, and interest in, the post-classical antecedents of much of 'western' culture. There is in addition a corresponding awareness of the proximity to its medieval forebears of contemporary cultures in which the Orthodox Church has played a role from medieval times up to the present day. And it also reflects the interest in one aspect of their own heritage shown by second- and third- or fourth-generation (p. 7) immigrants from Greece and eastern Europe to the United States, Canada, and Australia in particular, where the popular combination of Byzantine with Modern Greek Studies demonstrates the expansion of a small but lively educational market. Recent and current political and cultural issues in South-East Europe have raised the consciousness of many with regard to the Byzantine past and its contribution to the shaping of the modern world in the Balkan and East Mediterranean region. It is significant, and perhaps also ironic, that it was primarily for reasons of political concern that interest in the Byzantine world and its heritage received such stimulus in the early Renaissance period in the first place. For the

threat from the expanding Ottoman state which was perceived in central and western Europe served directly to arouse interest in Byzantine accounts of the Turks and their history, an interest which in its turn promoted further probing into the East Roman, or at least post-Roman imperial past, among political and intellectual circles of the West, especially in Italy, during the sixteenth century (see the useful brief introduction to the field in Moravcsik 1976).

Closely bound up with this political historical, indeed, strategic geographical interest, study of the Greek language and its evolution in the post-classical world was a central part of this developing tradition. The linguistic evolution of Greek in its various spoken and written forms, the functional and cultural differentiation between the various registers and dialects, proved to be a vast field for linguists and philologists, an interest again stimulated by the need to make sense of medieval Greek historical writing and chronicles, and tied in with the very immediate demands of the cultural politics of the period which produced it.

But like much of the subject-matter of western science, Byzantium has remained the object until quite recently of outside scrutiny, for the scholarly study of 'Byzantium' evolved last of all in those areas most directly part of the heritage: the Greek-speaking regions of the south Balkans and Asia Minor. An interest did exist throughout the Tourkokratia, the period of Ottoman control, evolving especially towards the end of the eighteenth century, but less as a revival of interest in the Byzantine past than as a re-directing of already existing intellectual currents, from a more-or-less strictly 'Orthodox' view of the God-guarded empire and its heritage, to a more openly pluralistic and, dare one say, more 'scientific' attitude, as the effects of rationalism and the Enlightenment were felt.

The Enlightenment did not necessarily signal an enlightened approach to Byzantium. The judgement of Edward Gibbon (1776–89) is all too familiar, a view determined largely by the eighteenth-century English interpretation of Greek philosophy and the stoic values of the Roman republic (which fitted comfortably with the self-image of the English upper class), together with the distaste felt by many enlightenment thinkers for the politics of the medieval Church, eastern or western—a view also shared, to a degree at least, by Greek rationalist thinkers such as Adamantios Koraes (1748–1833). The 'rationalist' hostility to Byzantium displayed by writers such as Gibbon is, of course, quite different from the prurient moralizing (p. 8) hostility of later writers of the Victorian age such as William Lecky, whose views Gibbon would probably have found equally distasteful (Lecky 1869: vol. 2, 13–14): 'Of that Byzantine empire, the universal verdict of history is that it constitutes, without a single exception, the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed. There has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all forms and elements of greatness, and none to which the epithet mean maybe so emphatically applied ... The history of the empire is a monotonous story of the intrigues of priests, eunuchs, and women, of poisonings, of conspiracies, of uniform ingratitude.'

Byzantine Studies, in the sense of the study of Byzantine history, language, and literature has a long pedigree, as we have seen. But whether we consider Hieronymus Wolf, Edward Gibbon, or Karl Krumbacher (Beck 1966, 1958) to be the founders of 'modern' Byzantine Studies, it is clear that, more than with many other areas of the study of past societies, it is a multi-disciplinary and, perhaps most importantly, a multicultural field. In this it reflects its subject, itself a multicultural and, for much of its history, a polyglot state in which the Greek language and the Orthodox Church served among many other elements as key unifying factors. The enormous range of material presented in this volume provides a neat illustration of the point. Yet at the same time the situation of the empire itself, and the nature of the skills and study which are required to pursue Byzantine culture and civilization intellectually and academically—on the margins of mainstream 'western' culture, so to speak—has sometimes had negative results, insofar as Byzantine Studies can be seen as an esoteric and somewhat marginal area of interest. To some extent this is a result of the languages of the sources, and partly also a result of the geographical centre of the field as it first developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, well away from most of the regions where the subject first evolved.

Only in Greece (and in emigré Greek communities) is Byzantium 'mainstream', and this has, in turn, brought its own particular disadvantages. For here the exigencies of cultural politics, ethno-history, the continued role of the Orthodox Church and its particular view of the Byzantine past, along with contemporary national political issues of identity and relations with neighbouring states and cultures, have all combined to affect the ways in which Byzantium has been appropriated, studied, and re-presented to the indigenous consumer of recent and contemporary Greek culture. The internal debate has in turn had its effects upon the external readership, so that both a romantic Philhellenic and an anti-Hellenic perspective can be detected in the writings of non-Greek Byzantinists (Cameron 1992). The literature on this topic is considerable and well known, and it is unnecessary to pursue the subject further in this context. But it is important to bear it in mind, because the bifocal lens of Byzantine studies—informed both by an 'internal' perspective of those born and brought up within the modern Hellenic tradition, and by an 'external' point of view of those outside modern Greek culture—has determined a good deal of the discourse of Byzantinists.

(p. 9) Byzantine Studies, as we have now seen, is a convenient term that comprises a vast range of sub-fields which often have little direct contact one to another—indeed, the contents of this volume illustrate this very clearly. But these sub-fields, if that is an appropriate term, themselves fall into two broad categories: instrumental and interpretational. By the former, we mean those disciplines which are primarily concerned with the preparation and analysis of source material of one type or another, without which it must reasonably be conceded that no more broadly based interpretative or generalizing study can properly be effected. And because of the nature of the sources, whether literary, epigraphic, archaeological, or visual representational, the instrumental tradition has tended, by necessity, to dominate the field of Byzantine Studies as a whole. Most 'Byzantinists' possess a competence in at least one, and usually more than one, of these instrumental skills. Such skills are rooted in the positivism of nineteenth-century

notions of 'scientificity' which have dominated and moulded European and North American historiographical thinking, and it has been until recently the emphasis on the technical and methodological skills which are required for the internal and external assessment of textual evidence that have dominated—quite correctly, of course, in many respects—the training of those who wanted to study Byzantium more closely. In particular, the methods and priorities of classical philology have necessarily had a major influence, even if this is no longer the case today (and without pronouncing any value judgements in that regard). While there are many individual exceptions, however, this necessary emphasis on skills also tends to discourage conscious theorizing and reflection. Theoretical abstraction has been avoided without too many qualms as largely unnecessary, enabling specialists to pursue their aims using methods which, by virtue of their proven scientific value, are seen as more-or-less neutral. Such an approach inevitably has important implications for how Byzantinists understand their purchase on 'the past', and the ways in which knowledge of the past is constructed or generated.

In the 1980s some of the traditional views were subject to questioning, reflecting a broader trend in history-writing and an ongoing debate between those who were interested in challenging the theoretical assumptions underlying and informing their research, and those who were not interested in such debates, preferring to see them either as irrelevant or as inaccessible (Haldon 1984). Byzantine Studies was itself in the mid-1980s in the process of what T. S. Kuhn referred to as a 'paradigm shift', a process through which a traditional set (or sets) of assumptions and priorities, as well as theories and approaches, is replaced or complemented and then transformed by different sets of ideas. The changes in the nature of the subject and in those who pursue it have not been particularly marked, yet there did take place considerable movement in attitudes and assumptions about what is acceptable material for study and what are appropriate questions to ask. This was in some respects entirely predictable: changes in social and cultural values and priorities, in secondary education, and in the context of the major political (p. 10) issues of the day, naturally worked themselves through to the level of university and college degree programmes. The effects of gender-studies programmes and feminist history-writing in particular have been seen in the sorts of social history questions which are now being asked, especially by successive generations of younger scholars. But equally impressive changes in the agendas of art historians and archaeologists have also taken place, with the result that the subject, or bundle of subjects, known as 'Byzantine Studies' looks today very different from only twenty years ago.

Since the quality of Byzantine art has been more frequently appreciated than the character of its history or literature, art history has claimed a good proportion of scholarly attention. Yet the superficial (but often voiced) view of the study of the art of Byzantium is that it has developed to a great extent in isolation from other disciplines of the field, and even from the broader interests of art history; that it is really the empirical study of material objects from an archaeological standpoint. In fact a historiography of

Byzantine art history shows up considerable responsiveness to intellectual trends, and its development has been a complex mix of national and international interests.

Interest in the art history of Byzantium was until the middle of the nineteenth century virtually the preserve of French and German scholars, and their concern was with the 'neo-Greek' character of the culture (Crinson 1996: 73). The subject then flourished internationally in response to current aesthetic and political attitudes, church debates, and personal whims for medievalism (Bullen 2003: 4). In Britain, John Ruskin was a prime mover through his best-selling book *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3) and his critical promotion of the church of San Marco; and consequently interest in Byzantine art was advanced initially through the study of architecture, thereby avoiding the negative Enlightenment attitudes of Gibbon. Influential on Ruskin was the traveller Robert Curzon (1849: 34–40), who in turn owed many of his attitudes about the 'intellectual' and 'passionless' character of Byzantine art to A. N. Didron's *Manuel d'iconographie chrétienne* (1845) with its publication of the eighteenth-century *Hermeneia* of Dionysius of Fournia which, despite its late date, was interpreted to show the subservience of Byzantine artists to the Church and their lack of originality (see Hetherington 1974). A well-rounded interest in the antiquities of Byzantium emerged in the key monograph by W. R. Lethaby and H. Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building* (1894). The arts and crafts architect and architectural historian Lethaby was influential in raising the profile of Byzantium in Britain, and he encouraged young architects to travel to the British School of Archaeology at Athens and to record the Byzantine monuments of Greece and Asia Minor. A feature of this intense period of activity up to the 1914 war was the combination of architectural draughtsmanship and photography to record Byzantine monuments in fieldwork by energetic teams from Germany, Russia, France, and Britain. Particularly thorough were the photographic campaigns of Millet all over Greece and of de Jerphanion in Cappadocia.

(p. 11) The 'big question' that lay behind this activity was the origin of Early Christian and Byzantine art. The centrally planned domed church of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople was at the centre of this debate. It was energized by Strzygowski (1901) who first looked for sources in the Hellenistic East but then moved his sights to the east beyond the Graeco-Roman world and into Iran, with Armenia as the intermediary for the transmission of oriental ideas. The opposing view was that the antecedents of the dome lay in imperial Rome alone. The argument in these stark binary terms was brought to an end by Ward-Perkins (1947), who set out the case for the development of early Christian architecture within the Roman Empire, while recognizing the complexity of Roman architecture itself. The striking discoveries at Dura Europos made no difference to this interpretation of the importance of Rome (despite Breasted 1924), but the great geographical range of eastern Roman Christian monuments does cast doubts on what exactly the term Byzantine art and architecture should ideally encompass and how broad its definition should be. The question remains: the most popular definition of Byzantine art has been as the art of Constantinople, but it is the narrowest and may distort our perceptions, since it sets the notion of a norm against which variations may be seen negatively as provincial or inferior. The current discourse sees the genesis of Byzantine

art as a progressive 'transformation' of Graeco-Roman art rather than a rejection of it. But it avoids the question whether the category of Byzantine art represents a political state, a religion, or a style (Mango 1991).

Byzantine architectural history has followed four approaches (Mango 1991): classifications of buildings by typology and by so-called regional 'schools'; the approach to architecture as symbolic or ideological (ways in which dome, for example, symbolized heaven); the functional approach to explaining architectural forms and features (expounded by Krautheimer 1942 and Grabar 1946); and the social and economic approach (as in Tchalenko 1953–8). These can be said to match the approaches in other art histories too.

Questions of origins equally engaged Russian scholarship, which judiciously compared the contributions of the Hellenistic east and Rome (Kondakov 1886; Ainalov 1961; Lazarev 1947–8), with attention particularly focused on the evidence of manuscripts. Manuscript study was also promoted by Wickhoff (1895) through his rehabilitation of Late Antiquity and emphasis on the innovations of the Vienna Genesis. Book illustration became the training ground for art historians for much of the twentieth century. Weitzmann (1947) set out a philological method for the study of manuscripts which made assumptions about the quantity of illuminated books in antiquity and the derivative character of Byzantine manuscripts. His methodology operated on the assumption that the processes of copying pictures were subject to the same 'rules' as the transmission of texts, and that they all derived from a 'correct' archetype. Although influential, in time this was criticized for exaggerating the study of the postulated lost model over the surviving materials (see Walter 1971; Lowden 1992). Weitzmann's practice was undermined by the approach (p. 12) of der Nersessian (1962), who sought not the sources of the ninth-century Homilies of Gregory but an analysis of how its producers conceived and chose the cycle of pictures to demonstrate the meanings and allusions of each of the patristic sermons. Meanwhile a broader, highly formalist, approach to Byzantine art was pursued by Kitzinger (1976), concerned to deduce the dialectics of stylistic change (and the disruption of iconoclasm), which owed much to the treatment of Renaissance art by Wölfflin (1915) and the Viennese school of art history.

Manuscript study was gradually superseded as the main focus of art historical attention as major discoveries were made in Constantinople by the Byzantine Institute set up by Whittemore who in 1932 initiated the campaigns to uncover the mosaics of Hagia Sophia and the Kariye Camii. After 1959 under the auspices of Dumbarton Oaks this work of uncovering and consolidation of monuments and their decoration in Istanbul was continued and expanded to Cyprus, with the effect of shifting attention away from Ravenna and Italy and towards the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time publication of monuments in Greece and the Balkans continued apace, and the work of, among others, Djurić, Orlandos, Soteriou, Xyngopoulos, Chatzidakis, and Mouriki documented the quantity and nature of the surviving heritage in Greece (and its post-Byzantine monuments). This interest in establishing the dates and stylistic sequences of Byzantine art was matched in the themes of the International Congresses in which Byzantine art

was treated in key periods or centuries. The broader debate within the coverage of monumental art was the so-called 'Byzantine Question', or how to measure the contribution of Byzantium to the emergence of the Italian Renaissance. Demus (1948, 1950, 1970) set out a definition of the nature of mosaic decoration, explored its diffusion to the west (more subtly than Byron and Talbot Rice 1931), and rejected the conventional art historical attitude inherited from Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) which assumed that the Italian Renaissance was a denial of the Byzantine tradition. Demus set out the case that east and west were in close contact in the thirteenth century and gradually followed different (but not unrelated) paths in the fourteenth century.

The next major shift in emphasis came with the discovery and ongoing publication of the icons of the Monastery of St Catherine's (see Soteriou 1956–8; Weitzmann 1982) with the revelation that panel painting was a major medium throughout the Byzantine period, and that despite its distance from Constantinople the monastery holds the works of the highest quality. Weitzmann 1982 gave considerable attention to icons which he interpreted as the work of western artists, following the methodology of Buchthal 1957 derived from the study of manuscripts from the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Considerable research has recently been devoted to the study and conservation of icons in other Orthodox monasteries and collections to establish the functions and roles of icons (and this has been helped by the existence of documentary evidence about art in the notarial archive of Venetian Crete). Belting 1990 has surveyed this material and shown the importance of the (p. 13) eleventh- and twelfth-century monastery in the formation of new patterns of the devotion of icons in Easter and other rituals, including the cult of miraculous icons.

Maguire 1992 has described some patterns of recent art history (interest in art and text; art and liturgy). In common with the art history of other periods the main shift of emphasis has been from the stylistic appreciation of masterpieces from the producer's perspective (as in Talbot Rice 1959) to the anthropological analysis of the viewing of images within society (Cormack 1985; Nelson 2000). This move to a post-structuralist theoretical framework was assisted by the highly influential collection of texts about art of Mango 1972.

The paradox of Byzantine art history is that its treatment is often seen as fragmented and confined to specialist literature, yet it has been the constant subject of surveys covering the whole period (as Dalton 1911, Diehl 1925–6). These have covered the general questions of their period, and what media and materials have survived, and how the losses from Constantinople might distort the sequence. The agenda of these surveys owes much to national traditions and interests, and are biased by their choice of supporting literatures and their attitudes. Indeed a recent polemical survey on the origins of the representation of images of Christ caricatures a supposed European imperial bias distinct from a more egalitarian, presumably transatlantic, position (Mathews 1993). The current agenda of art history is to a large part prompted not by theoretical interests but by major exhibitions of selected materials in major European and American galleries. Such displays bring together new discoveries and the key materials of the field and invite public

appreciation and scholarly interpretation. These exhibitions prompt the question of how Byzantine art is aligned with the history of world art, and what kinds of art history intersect with its traditional questions.

Some of the developments outlined here are simply the natural result of a shift in attention introduced by successive generations of scholars and students. But it is also true that changes that occurred from the late 1970s were faster and more far-reaching than those beforehand, and that a real broadening of the intellectual agenda took place which contrasted very strikingly with the slower rate of change of the period from before the Second World War until the 1970s. Two fields in particular benefited from closer engagement with ongoing theoretical debates, namely art history (discussed above) and literary studies (Brubaker 1992; Mullett 1990). Attitudes towards Byzantine literature have traditionally been deeply conservative and largely modelled on older approaches towards classical texts: the prime focus has been on the production of critical editions, with manuscript and linguistic studies as a secondary goal. The *Corpus Fontium Byzantinae Historiae*, which since 1967 has been providing modern editions of the Byzantine historians to replace the nineteenth-century Bonn Corpus, follows this austere pattern, though increasingly including a translation into a modern language. It is striking that, although there are a number of series which provide parallel texts and translations (e.g. Loeb: Prokopios, the Greek Anthology; Budé: Psellos, *Chronographia*, Anna Komnene, (p. 14) *Alexiad*; Sources Chrétiennes: Kosmas Indicopleustes) with limited annotation, there are as yet virtually no serious attempts at full literary commentaries despite challenging examples of successful literary interpretations (e.g. Smith 1999) and vigorous exhortation from critics such as Alexander Kazhdan or Jakov Ljubarskij (1998).

As with social and economic history, which had similarly engaged to an extent with developments inaugurated in other fields, Byzantine Studies as a whole remained peculiarly slow to take up—even if only to debate with and to reject—some of the issues raised. This was nicely illustrated by Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable's *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*, which presented historiographical debates about structuralism, for example, as though they were relatively new, when in fact they had long dominated the scene outside Byzantine Studies (Kazhdan and Constable 1982). Certainly, individuals in many areas of the subject demonstrated a willingness to challenge a given consensus, but they had little direct influence, apart from in the tendency and direction of their own further work. This conservatism, or perhaps caution, may be ascribed to the rather self-contained character of the field as a whole. It is perhaps ironic that the study of the Byzantine world and its culture, economy, and society evolved directly out of classical philology, and classical philology, with its earlier empirical and positivist emphasis, bequeathed to Byzantine Studies a similar tendency. Yet this seems now somewhat paradoxical, insofar as the last quarter of the twentieth century saw classical philology open up to developments both in structural linguistics, comparative literary theory, and post-structuralist critiques of traditional approaches to notions of author, reader, and intertextuality, while the study of

Roman history, society, and institutions was likewise transformed from the 1960s by similar developments as well as by exciting advances in archaeology and related sciences.

The study of Byzantium is by no means impervious to the influence and effects of the debates in historical and social scientific theory which carry on around it. Discussion about authorial intention (in respect of the multiple possibilities open to the reader of a text, written or visual), or the culturally determined nature of perception, have opened up new debates about interpretational possibilities and the sorts of questions that can be asked of the evidence. But other debates, in particular those surrounding the culturally determined construction of evidence itself have, on the whole, remained marginal to the concerns of Byzantinists. This is especially true of what has loosely come to be referred to as 'post modernism'. With a few exceptions, Byzantinists again have tended to shy away from such discussion, relying for their interpretational framework upon the unstated assumptions of the positivism of traditional western historiography. In the 1990s the effects of debates about what was called the New Historicism and of post-modernism left few marks on Byzantine Studies, again with the exception of those actively involved in art and literary theory (see, for example, Stone 1991, Joyce 1991, Kelly 1991). Discussions (p. 15) among historians and philosophers of history around issues raised by debates about the epistemological status of history-writing and the ontological status of the past produced polarizations of opinion which hardly touched most Byzantinists, although this is not to say that they were unaware of them—there is often a gap between personal intellectual practice and the intellectual or institutional context in which it exists.

In spite of the fact that it represents one of the most interesting examples of a late ancient state formation which survived, with substantial modifications, well into the medieval period, the Byzantine Empire has received remarkably little attention from either comparative historians or state theorists, certainly when compared with the treatment afforded Rome, out of which Byzantium evolved. This is a reflection, we suggest, of the fact that historians and specialists of the Byzantine world have generally been reluctant to generalize from their work or to draw broader conclusions within a comparative context. One result has been that the subject has remained fairly difficult of access to the non-specialist, although in the first decade of the twenty-first century a number of general histories appeared which began to break down this relative isolation (Treadgold 1997; Haldon 2000; Gregory 2005; Mitchell 2007; Cameron 2007).

There have been an increasing number of challenges to the intellectual caution of the field. Significant innovative perspectives have been opened up, especially in the study of Byzantine literature (e.g. Cameron 1991; Mullett 1997) but also, under the influence of western medieval and Roman archaeology, in the study of Byzantine material culture, urbanism, and related phenomena. But the lack of synthesizing works by specialists in the field, which would put Byzantium into a longer-term comparative perspective, means that outsiders still tend to pass over Byzantium with little or no comment. Work by scholars such as Peter Brown (1971, 1981) and Alexander Kazhdan (1974) on aspects of the social-cultural history of the late Roman, Byzantine, and western medieval worlds, by Michael McCormick (1998, 2001) on the ways in which the Islamic and East Roman, and medieval

Italian and Frankish worlds, were connected through patterns of travel and communication, Chris Wickham (2005) on the evolution of society and economy across the European and Mediterranean worlds after the fifth century CE, or Alan Harvey (1989) and Michel Kaplan (1992) on the agrarian economics of Byzantium in their wider context, began to address the issues from a broader, comparative perspective. But even in 2008 Byzantium still appears frequently, especially in general histories and more popular literature, as some sort of uniquely privileged survival, a haven of Orthodox spirituality, Roman law, and oriental despotism, taken as a special case rather than in its natural Balkan and Anatolian context. Those working from a broader comparative standpoint have only recently begun, and mostly fairly superficially, to integrate the Byzantine world into their syntheses. The first volume of Michael Mann's admirable survey, *The Sources of Social Power* (1986), mentions it briefly and problematically; the second volume of Runciman's *A Treatise on Social Theory* (1989) is just as brief, although better in respect of the conclusions it draws; most other comparativist surveys—for example, Tainter's *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (1988)—barely pay lip-service to the Byzantine case. Perry Anderson's *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (1974) pays serious attention to the East Roman context, but his very able treatment is vitiated for today's reader in part by the fact that since the time of writing in the early 1970s, a number of important advances in understanding how the East Roman state evolved have been made. In addition, most of these debates were distorted still by a perspective which tended, even if unintentionally, to present medieval eastern Roman culture as stagnant and fossilized, thus further inhibiting any possibility of seeing the dynamic structures which underlay the apparently slow rates of change evident in some of the sources. But it is perhaps indicative of the situation that work of this sort, even if flawed and problematic, has largely been the product of outside specialists and comparativists, and with few exceptions (e.g. Haldon 1993, 1995) has met with little response from inside the field. A good example was the attempt to place Byzantine culture in a comparative and 'civilizational' context as part of a critique of work on the 'Byzantine' background to Balkan and eastern European history (Arnasson 2000), which was not read by Byzantinists.

The Byzantine world and Byzantine Studies have attracted 'outside' attention in two further respects: first, in respect of the evolution of the so-called 'Byzantine commonwealth', that is to say, the development of a distinctly 'Byzantinizing' cultural zone in eastern and south-eastern Europe and western Russia. Here, Byzantine traditions, predominantly in respect of Orthodox Christianity and ecclesiastical organization, and in the associated culture of an imperial court with ecumenical pretensions, became firmly established and influenced the development of those cultures thereafter, and until the present day in certain respects. This influence was not restricted to the level of popular piety and Church structures, or to palace culture and religious art; it affected also attitudes to and definitions of power, the relationship between ruler and elite, and between centre and periphery. Although there have been few broadly comparative treatments from outside the specialist field (again, Mann and Runciman deserve mention, both of whom approached the issue from very different perspectives, and neither said

very much on the question of Byzantine influence), a useful descriptive account of the issues by a specialist did appear (Obolensky 1971) which served as a good starting point for further comparative work.

The second case is to do with transition or transformation: where the Byzantine world impinges directly on the outside world, and especially upon the history of western medieval Europe, it has attracted greater attention. Thus the period from the later fourth to the seventh century, during which the western Roman world was transformed into the various 'Germanic' successor kingdoms, and during which the Roman Empire in its supposedly traditional form finally disappeared, has attracted some comparative historical discussion, in which broader issues are raised (e.g. de Ste. Croix 1981; (p. 17) Cameron 1993; Haldon 1993, 1995). Even more explicitly, the period of the Crusades, and in particular the first to fourth crusades (c.1097–1204), during which Byzantine and western Christian cultures came into direct and sometimes hostile contact, has been an important stimulus to comparative work, both in respect of cultural history as well as in terms of political structures and the social relationships underlying them. This has been most apparent in the debate about whether or not Byzantium was ever 'feudal' in the western sense, even if that debate now seems passé (see Reynolds 1994), but it has affected other aspects of the history of the Byzantine world also (e.g. Jacoby 1993).

The greatest advantage Byzantine Studies possesses is, arguably, its international and multicultural intellectual and institutional base. Whatever the difficulties faced by scholars of Byzantine culture and history in their different national contexts, and however conservative or radical some elements of that very considerable international body may be, its internationalism means that it is an enormously lively subject, and its exponential growth over the last thirty to forty years means that new influences, new currents, new approaches to old problems, and new ways of working to resolve some of those problems are a regular feature of every major international conference or symposium. And increasingly this body of scholarship and intellectual endeavour is impacting on neighbouring areas of study.

This volume is intended to give a picture of the state of Byzantine Studies today, with bibliographies and references to guide the neophyte reader. As many of the subject's constituent areas as proved feasible have been covered: their number and variety are solid evidence of the vigour of the subject at present and an indication of the challenges and issues that demand future debate.

References and Further Reading

AINALOV, D. V. 1961. *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* (1900–1), trans. E. Sobolevitch and S. Sobolevitch, ed. C. Mango (New Brunswick).

ANDERSON, P. 1974. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London).

ARNASSON, J. 2000. 'Approaching Byzantium: identity, predicament and afterlife', *Thesis Eleven* 62: 39–69.

BECK, H.-G. 1958. 'Die byzantinischen Studien in Deutschland vor Karl Krumbacher', *Χάλικες* (Munich): 67–119

(repr. in

Ideen und Realitäten in Byzanz (London 1972): no. 1

).

— 1966. 'Hieronymus Wolf', in *Lebensbilder aus dem Bayerischen Schwaben* (Munich): 169–93

(repr. in

Ideen und Realitäten in Byzanz (London 1972): no. 11

).

— 1977. *Byzantinistik Heute* (Munich).

BELTING, H. 1990. *Bild und Kult* (Munich)

(trans.

E. Jephcott, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago, 1994)

).

BREASTED, J.H. 1924. *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting* (Chicago).

(p. 18) **BROWN**, P. 1971. *The World of Late Antiquity* (London).

— 1981. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago).

BRUBAKER, L. 1992. 'Parallel universes: Byzantine art history in 1990 and 1991', *BMGS* 16: 203–33.

BUCHTHAL, H. 1957. *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford).

BULLEN, J.B. 2003. *Byzantium Rediscovered* (London).

BYRON, R., and **TALBOT RICE**, D. 1931. *The Birth of Western Painting* (London).

CAMERON, A.M. 1991. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley).

— 1992. 'The use and abuse of Byzantium: an essay on reception', Inaugural lecture, King's College, London (London, 1992)

(repr. in

Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium (Aldershot, 1996): no. **XIII**

).

— 1993. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395–600* (London).

— 2007. *The Byzantines* (Oxford).

CORMACK, R. 1985. *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London).

— and **JEFFREYS**, E. 2000. *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes* (Aldershot): 147–211.

CRINSON, M. 1996. *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture* (London).

CURZON, R. 1849. *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* (London).

DALTON, O. M. 1911. *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (London).

DE STE. CROIX, G. E. M. 1981. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London).

DEMUS, O. 1948. *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London).

— 1950. *Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (London).

— 1970. *Byzantine Art and the West* (New York).

DER NERSESSIAN, S. 1962. 'The illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus: Paris Gr. 510. A study of the connections between text and images', *DOP* 16:195–228.

DIDRON, A. N. 1845. *Manuel d'iconographie chrétienne* (Paris).

DIEHL, C. 1925–6. *Manuel d'art byzantine* (Paris, 2nd edn.).

GRABAR, A. 1946. *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (Paris).

GREGORY, T. E. 2005. *A History of Byzantium* (Oxford).

HALDON, J. F. 1984. '"Jargon" vs. "the facts"? Byzantine history-writing and contemporary debates', *BMGS* 9: 95–132.

— 1993. *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London).

— 1995. 'Pre-industrial states and the distribution of resources: the nature of the problem', in A. M. Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East III: States, Resources and Armies: Papers of the Third Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Princeton): 1–25.

— 2000. *Byzantium: A History* (Stroud).

HARVEY, A. 1989. *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900–1200* (Cambridge).

HETHERINGTON, P. 1974. *The 'Painter's manual' of Dionysius of Fournas: An English Translation [from the Greek] with commentary of cod. gr. 708 in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Leningrad* (London).

JACOBY, D. 1993. 'The Venetian presence in the Latin empire of Constantinople (1204–1261): the challenge of feudalism and the Byzantine inheritance', *JÖB* 43:141–201.

JOYCE, P. 1991. 'History and Post-Modernism I', *Past and Present* 133: 204–9.

(p. 19) **KAPLAN**, M. 1992. *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI^e au XI^e siècle: propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris).

KAZHDAN, A. 1974. *Social'nyj sostav gosподstvujuscego klassa v Vizantii XI–XII vv.* (Moscow).

— and **CONSTABLE**, G. 1982. *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, DC).

KELLY, C. 1991. 'History and Post-Modernism II', *Past and Present* 133: 209–13.

KITZINGER, E. 1976. *The Art of Byzantium and the Mediaeval West: Selected Studies*, ed. W. E. Kleinbauer (Bloomington).

KONDAKOV, N. 1886. *Histoire de l'art byzantin considéré principalement dans les miniatures* (Paris).

KRAUTHEIMER, R. 1942. 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"', *JWCI* 5:1–33.

LAZAREV, V. N. 1947–8. *A History of Byzantine Painting* (in Russian) (Moscow).

LECKY, W. E. H. 1869. *A History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, 2 vols. (London).

LETHABY, W. R., and **SWAINSON**, H. 1894. *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building* (London).

LJUBARSKIJ, J. 1998. 'Quellenforschung and/or literary criticism: narrative structures in Byzantine historical writings', *Symbolae Osloenses* 73: 5–21.

LOWDEN, J. 1992. *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination* (University Park).

MCCORMICK, M. 1998. 'Bateaux de vie, bateaux de mort. Maladie, commerce, transports annonaires et le passage économique du Bas-Empire au moyen âge', *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda Antichità e alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 45 (Spoleto): 35–118.

Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline

- 2001. *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge).
- MAGUIRE, H. 1992. 'Byzantine art history in the second half of the twentieth century', in A. E. Laiou and H. Maguire (eds.), *Byzantium: A World Civilization* (Washington, DC): 119–55.
- MANGO, C. 1972. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs).
- 1991. 'Approaches to Byzantine architecture', *Muqarnas* 8: 40–4.
- MANN, M. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1: *A History of Power from the Beginnings to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge).
- MATHEWS, T. F. 1993. *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton).
- MAZAL, O. 1988. *Manuel d'études byzantines* (Louvain): 14–24.
- MITCHELL, S. 2007. *A History of the Roman Empire, A.D. 284–641* (Oxford).
- MORAVCSIK, GY. 1976. *Einführung in die Byzantinistik* (Darmstadt)
(trans. of
Bevezetés a bizantinológiába (Budapest, 1966)
).
- MULLETT, M. 1990. 'Dancing with deconstructionists in the garden of the Muses: new literary history vs.?', *BMGS* 14: 233–43.
- 1997. *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot).
- NELSON, R. (ed.) 2000. *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge).
- OBOLSKY, D. 1971. *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453* (London).
- OSTROGORSKY, G. 1968. *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey (Oxford): 1–21.
- REYNOLDS, S. 1994. *Fiefs and Vassals* (Oxford).
- (p. 20) RUNCIMAN, W. G. 1989. *A Treatise on Social Theory*, vol. 1: *The Methodology of Social Theory*; vol. 2: *Substantive Social Theory* (Cambridge).
- RUSKIN, J. 1851–3. *The Stones of Venice* (London).

- SMITH**, O. 1999. *The Byzantine Achilleid: The Naples Version* (ed. P. A. Agapitos and K. Hult, Vienna).
- SOTERIOU**, G. M., and **SOTERIOU**, M. 1956–8. *Icons of Mount Sinai* (in Greek) (Athens).
- STONE**, L. 1991. 'Notes. History and post-modernism', *Past and Present* 131: 217–18.
- STRZYGOWSKI**, J. 1901. *Orient oder Rom: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig).
- TAINTER**, J. 1988. *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge).
- TALBOT RICE**, D. 1959. *Art of Byzantium* (London).
- TCHALENKO**, G. 1953–8. *Villages antiques de la Syrie nord: le massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine* (Paris).
- TREADGOLD**, W. 1997. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford).
- WALTER**, C. 1971. 'Liturgy and the illustration of Gregory of Nazianzen's Homilies: an essay in iconographical methodology', *REB* 29:183–212.
- WARD-PERKINS**, J.B. 1947. 'The Italian element in late Roman and early medieval architecture', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 33:1–32.
- WEITZMANN**, K. 1947. *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration* (Princeton).
- 1982. *Studies in the Arts at Sinai* (Princeton).
- WICKHAM**, C. 2005. *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford).
- WICKHOFF**, F. 1895. *Der Wiener Genesis* (Vienna).
- WÖLFFLIN**, H. 1915. *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Munich).

Elizabeth Jeffreys

Elizabeth Jeffreys, Emeritus Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature and Emeritus Fellow of Exeter College, University of Oxford.

John F. Haldon

John F. Haldon is Professor of History and Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. His research focuses on the history of the early and middle Byzantine empire; on state systems and structures across the European and Islamic worlds from late

Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline

ancient to early modern times; and on the production, distribution, and consumption of resources in the late ancient and medieval world, especially in the context of warfare.

Robin Cormack

Robin Cormack, Emeritus Professor of Byzantine Art, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

