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Translation and Evolution: Byzantine Monastic Studies since ca. 1990

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CHALLENGES AND IMPORTANCE OF BYZANTINE MONASTICISM:

The single best way to characterize Byzantine monasticism is *diverse*. Coenobitic, lavriot, and eremitic forms of monastic life coexisted across the empire, while monasteries of varying sizes existed in cities and the countryside alike. Furthermore, until losses to the Normans and Seljuqs in the eleventh century, the empire's geographical breadth encompassed territories from southern Italy to modern-day Greece and the Balkans to Asia Minor and parts of Syria. Even in the later centuries, when the empire contracted to include only smaller and smaller pieces of Greece and Asia Minor, the wide range of cultures and geographical landscapes in this territory naturally also contributed to variation in monastic forms and practices. However, even within a given region the monastic field could be hugely competitive. For all that some monasteries became major landowners, others struggled for relevance or financial footing after the deaths of their founders (Morris 1995). Famously, there were no western-style monastic orders in the empire; rather, individual monasteries or small networks of institutions followed a *typikon*—an administrative document, or charter—written by an individual founder, or re-founder. While some *typika* borrowed language and ideas from other monasteries, the system was primarily decentralized and dependent upon the intentions of individual patrons and holy men (Thomas & Hero 2000; Mullett 2007, p. 5-27).

As such, the study of Byzantine monasticism can be quite complicated. General overviews of the topic do exist, but as either articles/book chapters (i.e., Mango 1980, pp. 105-124; Talbot 1985a, 1991 & 2005; McGuckin 2008) or as accompanying material to monastic primary source texts (i.e., Thomas & Hero 2000). There has been no larger history of monasticism in the Byzantine Empire—as Aristeides Papadakis complained in 1986, and Alice-Mary Talbot (2005) emphasized again more recently. Thanks to the heterogeneous nature of Byzantine monasticism and the scattered nature of the sources, too much is still unknown and comprehensive conclusions are too difficult. Monograph-writing scholars find firmer footing in sub-topics of Byzantine monasticism: for example, John Thomas (1987) on the development of privately-held monasteries and churches, Catia Galatariotou (1991) on self-sanctifying ascetic monk Neophytos the Recluse, Rosemary Morris (1995 & 1993) on the permeable relationship between monasteries and the lay world, and Kostis Smyrlis (2006) on the economic development of middle and late Byzantine monasteries. Byzantine monastic studies likewise remain extremely interdisciplinary: art historians, historians, literary scholars, archaeologists, paleographers, numismatists, liturgists, and music historians all contribute to modern understandings of Byzantine monasticism. As a result, a deep, cohesive work on Byzantine monasticism is still far off; too much work remains even in specialized niches of the field.

Along with the intricacies of the larger monastic system, sources present a major challenge to those who wish to study Byzantine monasticism—and deeply define the relatively narrow ways in which secondary scholarship has evolved. On the one hand, scholars have access to a broad variety of sources (for key primary sources, see Talbot 2005, pp. 119-20, and discussion below). From the monasteries themselves, scholars have a few dozen foundation-*typika*, the late antique monastic rules of Basil and Pachomius, the archives of roughly half a dozen monastic

complexes, some liturgical works, and a wide variety of hagiography and other literary or theological texts composed inside the monasteries, including some letter collections. Scholars can further augment these sources with texts that come from outside of the monastery: for example, imperial legislation, incomplete patriarchal records, and many relevant literary texts by non-monks. These last works can include everything from imperial histories to poetry to sharp critiques by local bishops (i.e., Eustathios of Thessaloniki's famous attack on the monks in his diocese). Archaeology, too, increasingly represents an important evidence base.

On the other hand, much evidence has been lost, both textually and in terms of material remains. Repeated invasions of the empire—from the Fourth Crusade to the Ottoman Turks—caused the destruction of archives and disbandment of monasteries, leaving inherent gaps in modern knowledge. Aside from the cases of surviving Orthodox monasteries active since the Byzantine period, luck has largely dictated the survival of Byzantine monastic evidence (Talbot 2012, pp. 995-996). The past is not the only destructive force, however. Material evidence from formerly Byzantine regions like Syria and northern Iraq have suffered in recent military conflicts, while political decisions can menace even key monastic remains within the former Byzantine capital (i.e., the 2013 announcement that the famous Stoudios monastery would be restored as a mosque). As such, global and national developments continue to encumber certain avenues of Byzantine monastic studies.

Even within the surviving materials, however, information can be unevenly distributed. Two polar opposite challenges illustrate this point. First, for some areas or periods, there simply is not enough evidence: for example, of the sixty-one extant foundation-*typika*, only two date from before the ninth century (Thomas & Hero 2000, pp. 51-66). This leaves the earliest history of the genre relatively obscure, especially as there is so little to which to compare these two texts (Thomas & Hero 2000, pp. 43-50 even shoehorns the two texts into a remarkably general chapter, for lack of a better alternative). Second, on the opposite end of the spectrum, individual monasteries can have an outsize presence in the field. Mount Athos, the famous monastic complex still operation today, is a case in point. The *Archives de l'Athos* project has published twenty-two volumes of critical editions of Athonite archival material since 1937, making it an incredibly rich source for scholars (and, importantly, much more accessible to women, who are banned from visiting the peninsula). However, there is no comparable quantity of archival evidence for any other complex. Scholars must therefore be careful in how they balance Athonite and other monastic material.

All that said, despite the variety of Byzantine monastic foundations and the challenges of the sources, monasticism is intrinsically tied up with the Byzantine world; understanding the former allows better comprehension of the latter (Papadakis 1986). Far from being removed from the rest of the Byzantine world, monks and holy men regularly influenced life in the empire. Monasticism was a “microcosm of Byzantine social structure” (Talbot 2009, p. 258), in its hierarchies, in its close ties to the lay world, and in its often-active role in the Byzantine economy (Morris 1995; Smyrlis 2006). Moreover, monks—especially those near Constantinople—had always, even from their earliest centuries, played vigorous roles in theological and political debates in the empire (Hatlie 2007). A case in point could be monastic involvement in the iconoclasm controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries. While Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon have valuably demonstrated that Byzantine monks were not

inherently iconoclastic and by no means represented the orthodox front later writings implied, the fact that individual monks and monasteries took active roles opposing imperial policies (including those on patriarchs and royal marriages) reflects their positions as involved members of the imperial elite (2011, pp. 650-664).

So, given both the importance of monasticism in Byzantium *and* the challenges of its forms and sources, where does this leave scholars? Much of the key work being done on Byzantine monasticism starts small, with translations from individual monasteries, works on specific monks, and evaluations of subfields rather than the institution as a whole.

Naturally, most scholars also work on particular periods as well. Generally speaking, these periods break into either the late antique period or a later phase beginning roughly in the ninth century. The former era shaped Byzantine understandings of monasticism as an institution, in terms of both monastic lifestyles and spiritual developments. As such, late antique monasticism across the Byzantine world—from the western edges of the empire to Syriac Christianity on the eastern frontiers—has rightly received considerable attention from scholars (Talbot 2005, pp. 121-124). Later Byzantine monasticism, while naturally informed by the earlier centuries of monastic tradition, represents an evolved form of the institution. New theologians influenced monks' spiritual lives; new foundations achieved preeminence (not in the least Mt. Athos!); larger wealth altered monasticism's relationships to the Byzantine state and economy. Later monastic study is dominated by a focus on the 'middle' Byzantine era, which lasted from the ninth through the thirteenth centuries. This period constituted another monastic heyday, especially given the number and variety of new monastic foundations that emerged and thrived at this time (Morris 1995, pp. 9-63). Middle Byzantine monasticism was dominated by questions of monastic property, spiritual leadership, and institutional autonomy (Talbot 2005, pp. 124-126). Scholarship on this period echoes these interests. Late Byzantine monasticism, covering roughly the period between the two losses of Constantinople has received comparatively less attention in its own right, despite featuring the seminal hesychast movement and debates over whether the Orthodox and Catholic Churches should unite.

In the interests of space and given the strength and richness of middle Byzantine monasticism and its scholarship, this study will proceed to primarily address monastic studies on this era. As an examination of the state of the academic field, it evaluates major developments from the last few decades. Thanks to a number of prominent translation and critical edition projects during the 1990s and 2000s, it is increasingly easy for scholars to make use of an increasingly wide range of sources. This presents two major benefits. On the one hand, while it can be tricky to draw broad, representative conclusions about Byzantine monasticism, these texts spur new scholarship and help to reconstruct particular monasteries, monks, and eras in great detail. On the other hand, the translation projects in particular have increased accessibility to Byzantine monasticism for those without advanced training on the subject. A great deal of research remains to be done, but understandings of Byzantine monasticism and its sources are increasingly sophisticated—and increasingly more inviting to new audiences.

PRIMARY SOURCE PROJECTS: ACCESSIBILITY AND IMPACT:

In the last two decades, further availability of monastic texts in critical editions and modern translations has both spurred new debates within modern scholarship and eased accessibility to Byzantine monasticism, including to students and to scholars who focus on other regions or cultures. While evidence on Byzantine monasticism is quite varied—as highlighted above—the most significant primary source projects have largely fallen into two categories: (1) monastic *typika* and other administrative works and (2) hagiography of monastic saints.

In the former grouping, the *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* project, edited by John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero (2000), has been especially significant. The five-volume work is a collection of English translations of sixty-one surviving *typika* and related documents. Nearly all of the texts had been previously available in printed Greek editions, but half had never been published in modern language translations. Many of those previously translated were modern French efforts by Paul Gautier, easily attainable via the *Revue des études byzantines*, but the others had largely appeared in languages potentially even less intelligible to researchers than the original Greek (e.g., Russian, Bulgarian, Macedonian). The collection immediately inspired new scholarship, even forming the basis for the interdisciplinary March 2000 Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium (part of which later appeared in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 in 2002). The English translations are a boon to modern researchers—especially as Dumbarton Oaks has made them widely available for free on its website ever since the collection fell out of print. This is especially beneficial to those who do not have easy access to research libraries. The *typika* have not only become a standard resource for any Byzantine monastic scholarship, but scholarship based on *typika* and other founding documents has surged in recent decades.

The collection also transcends more than language barriers: Giles Constable’s preface to the collection helps to translate the importance and possibilities of these texts to those more familiar with western monasticism. The preface not only helps to define monastic terminology unique to the Byzantines and to sketch key historical context for those without specialist training on Byzantine monasticism, but also includes many useful comparisons between eastern and western monasticism (for example, highlighting when Byzantines struggled with institutional challenges also encountered at seminal western monasteries like Cluny). Unusually, this helps make the collection as useful to those new to Byzantine monasticism as it is to the experts, and offers the potential for further comparative work by monastic scholars on either end of the field.

A controversial element of the collection, however, comes from the editors’ grouping of the different texts into chapters based around institutional type (e.g., “Imperial and Royal Monasteries in the Twelfth Century”). While this helps Thomas and Hero to set the *typika* within their historical contexts, these clusters can overemphasize similarities and relationships between texts—and especially support for any type of cohesive “reform movement” within Byzantine monasticism. As Rosemary Morris (2005) notes, the organization in effect promotes an under-proven argument better suited to systematic analysis in monograph format. Margaret Mullett (2007, pp. 4-5) and Dirk Krausmüller (2011) likewise object to the sweeping claims about reform drawn from this evidence. From its earliest appearance, the collection has been an essential starting point for monastic scholarship, but further work and sources are necessary for forming broad conclusions about Byzantine monastic development.

The Evergetis Project, begun in the early 1990s at Queen’s University in Belfast and still ongoing, marks another key set of publications that help scholars to access and contextualize Byzantine monastic administration. This time the texts relate to the particular monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis, an institution founded just outside Constantinople in 1049. The project’s aim has been to study “all the materials produced in a major metropolitan monastery of the mid-eleventh century and to study them as both texts and through any discipline germane to those texts” (Mullett 1994, p. 1). This has included both English translations of monastic texts and the production of modern scholarship based on the monastery. By deeply looking at just one monastery, the project reconstructs a detailed view of monastic life, using a cluster of sources not often extant for non-Athonite monasteries.

The project has published two major texts so far: a three-volume edition and translation of the *synaxarion* (or calendar of liturgical commemorations) by Robert H. Jordan (2000-7) and a further annotated translation of the *hypotyposis*—that is, the *typikon* covering daily administration—by Jordan and Morris (2012). This last volume also includes a variety of additional translated excerpts relating to the monastery, including a *typikon* by Paul Evergetinos, the monastery’s founder, which predates the later re-founder’s *typikon* included in the Thomas and Hero collection.

Like the Thomas and Hero *typika* translations, the Evergetis Project has also prompted broad scholarship. Notably, the project sponsored two symposia (published as Mullett & Kirby 1994 & 1997), held in the midst of both texts’ translation projects. The wide-ranging scholarship, from liturgists, historians, art historians, and archaeologists alike, speaks to the multi-faceted nature of Byzantine monasticism as much as to the rich evidence of the Evergetis dossier. Later, a third collection (Mullett 2007) probed issues of monastic foundations (and re-foundations) that resonated across both the Thomas and Hero collection and the Evergetis project, drawing the two enterprises together in thoughtful ways.

These are some of the highest-profile translation projects in the last decades, but given the variety of sources needed to understand Byzantine monastic administration, every newly published text helps to make the field more accessible to modern scholars. A case in point is an early twelfth-century psalter recently published by Jeffrey Anderson and Stefano Parenti (2016), a manuscript used (and likely compiled) in a Constantinopolitan monastery. While the original text admittedly lacks many social and institutional details, Anderson translates liturgical observances for different monastic hours and offices, while Stefano provides detailed textual analysis that ties the manuscript and the monastery where it was produced to both the monasteries of Theotokos Evergetis and Stoudios. Furthermore, as a text used every day by ordinary monks, Anderson and Parenti note that this perhaps offers more authentic evidence on lived monasticism than the aspirations outlined in a founder’s *typikon*. Given how dense and complicated liturgical texts are even in English, such translation projects are valuable in illuminating genre-specific information to a more general audience.

Beyond texts related to the operation of monasteries, a second major set of evidence for Byzantine monasticism comes from hagiography. Given the Byzantines’ fondness for monastic saints, a relatively wide collection of monastic hagiography survives—and has attracted the attention of translators and textual editors. The very first text published in the Belfast Byzantine

Texts and Translations series was *The Life of Michael Synkellos* (Cunningham 1991), about a traveling ninth-century monk who clashed with iconoclasts. Meanwhile, the Hellenic College Press has published multiple monastic translations, including *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Sullivan 1987), a tenth-century monk famous for founding churches and a monastery in Sparta, and the letters of Irene Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina (Hero 1986), a fourteenth-century princess who spent much of her life as abbess. Likewise, the *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* series from Uppsala features monastic hagiography translations and editions, including a life of ninth-century abbess Irene of Chrysobalanton (Rosenqvist 1986). Dumbarton Oaks in particular has published multiple volumes of monastic hagiography, through its *Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation* and *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* series—the latter of which are also surprisingly affordable. Some of these volumes center on specific saints (e.g., Lazaros of Mt. Galesion and Symeon the New Theologian in Greenfield 2000 & 2013; Basil the Younger in Sullivan, Talbot & McGrath 2014), while others are broad collections of *vitae* that include monks (e.g., Talbot 1996 & 1998; Greenfield & Talbot 2016).

The list above is only a relatively small sample of translated monastic hagiography available for the post-antique period; for further examples of hagiographic translations across all Byzantine periods and in a variety of modern languages, the ongoing index available on the Dumbarton Oaks website provides a more complete overview, including projects in preparation (Talbot 2017). While it naturally does not differentiate between monastic and non-monastic saints, this index highlights the relative quantities of hagiography available in translation for each century's saints. Hagiography for saints prior to the eleventh century (and especially late antiquity) represent the lion's share of current translations. Further translation work can, and ought, to be done for the later centuries as well.

All of this hagiographical translation naturally coincides with active scholarship on the genre. Stephanos Efthymiadis (2011a, pp. 2-7) provides a summary of such work, though he notes that most studies, until relatively recently, focused on historical rather than literary analysis (2011b). Consequently, his two-volume edited collection *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* represents an especially valuable resource on the field. Volume 1 contains up-to-date and extremely readable overviews and bibliographies of hagiography across all periods and both Byzantine and neighboring regions (2011a), while the entire second volume focuses heavily on those less developed literary and genre considerations (2014). Admittedly, literary study of hagiography may reveal more new insights than historical approaches; due to genre considerations, including formulaic elements and the influence of fiction, hagiography can prove remarkably slippery as historical source material. The scholarship in these three volumes does not focus specifically on monastic hagiography, but texts about and authored by monks represent a considerable percentage of the evidence discussed across all angles of hagiographic study.

Access to Byzantine monastic primary sources has become dramatically easier over the last decades. The publication of major critical editions and translation projects helps researchers to approach monastic history from a wider range of perspectives and to understand better an increasing number of monks and monasteries. This is important, as the breadth and variety of Byzantine monasticism can make sweeping conclusions about monastic history dangerous. Furthermore, thanks to the translations and thoughtful introductory material accompanying them, students and those without specialist knowledge of Byzantine monasticism have an easier time

understanding the Byzantines in their own words. Byzantine monasticism still might be heterogeneous and complicated, but the labor of numerous editors and translators has helped shed light on a range of rich evidence.

SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIP: PROGRESS AND NEW AVENUES:

While broad monographs on Byzantine monasticism remain a distant prospect, scholarship on more specialized elements of the field have continued to thrive over the last decades. The 1990s represented a particular boom in the publication of monastic evidence, especially in critical editions: this was the decade when the Evergetis and *typika* projects first got off the ground, and multiple volumes of the *Archives de l'Athos* materials and a critical edition of the letters of Theodore the Stoudite, the famous monastic theologian and iconophile, appeared in print. Moreover, the publication of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Kazhdan 1991) has made the task of interpreting such texts much more straightforward. Byzantine monastic vocabulary can be extremely opaque: for example, it can make subtle distinctions between types of monastic administrators (i.e., *hegoumenos* [abbot] vs. *kathegoumenos* [ordained abbot] vs. *prohegoumenos* [ex-abbot]). However, the dictionary has made such distinctions remarkably more intelligible for those who do not know Greek. Moreover, its concise definitions and histories of major monasteries and individual monks provide simple yet vital orientations to the key actors in Byzantine monastic history, theology, and literature.

Naturally, significant monastic scholarship has followed the dissemination of such useful resources. Major examples of monographs include Morris's *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium* (1995), Michael Angold's *Church and Society under the Comneni* (1995), and Thomas Pratsch's book on Theodore the Stoudite (1998), among other works. Examples of colloquia include the international *Le monachisme à Byzance et en occident du VIIIe au Xe siècle* colloquium (Dierkens, Misonne & Sansterre 1993, published as *Revue Bénédictine* 103), the Athos-centric Birmingham Spring Symposium (published as Bryer & Cunningham 1996), and the two Evergetis symposia (Mullett & Kirby 1994 & 1997). Among all of the lively monastic scholarship produced in the last couple of decades, several particularly intriguing threads and subtopics within monastic scholarship have emerged. These include cross-cultural evaluations, debate over the nature of monastic reform in Byzantium, economic studies, art historical contributions, further distinction between male and female monasticism, and further work on a range of monastic institutions.

Scholars who focus primarily on the medieval west have traditionally struggled to understand Byzantine monasticism and the ways in which it developed. As a result, comparative work has often been disappointing. Papadakis's (1986) complaints about western attempts to shoehorn Byzantine monasticism into western models sound eerily similar to Hussey's (1939, pp. 56-59) stark descriptions from half a century earlier, of western medievalists seeking to find western-style monastic rules in the empire, overlooking the diversity of Byzantine monastic forms, and failing to appreciate the fact that Byzantine monasticism changed over time. It is only relatively recently that scholars have gained a better grasp of comparative eastern and western monasticisms. Such comparisons are most useful when scholars who are able to understand Byzantine monasticism on its own terms can point to relevant connections to the West without

imposing western ideas on the Byzantines. Giles Constable's preface (2000) to the Thomas and Hero *typika* collection serves as one notable example of this: his focus is explaining Byzantine monastic texts to a western audience, which inherently places the Byzantine material in the foreground, while still drawing out useful comparisons and contrasts with the West. Another valuable study comes from Andrew Jotischky (2012), whose familiarity with *both* Byzantine and Catholic monastic systems allows him to explore contemporaneous parallels in reform rhetoric in each. Significant scope for comparative work remains; while Western models of monasticism may not translate fully onto Byzantium, Byzantinists may profit from examining the considerable body of western monastic historiography as they continue to advance their own field.

Another area of Byzantine monastic scholarship that has seen intriguing development is on the topic of monastic reform. As in the West, the high medieval/middle Byzantine period experienced challenges with rapid growth of monastic property and changing ideas about the nature of holiness, but Byzantinists have had a harder time connecting threads of reform together. Thomas (1984, 1986 & 1987, pp. 149-243) importantly examined two key Byzantine 'reforms' in the middle period, namely the institution of *charistike* (the management of monastic property by outside caretakers granted the privilege) and a reactionary trend against the practice of *charistike* for perceived failures and corruptions. However, more recent scholarship has cautioned that Thomas's vision of monastic reform—which includes the monastery of Theotokos Evergetis in a prime reforming role (e.g., Thomas & Hero 2000, pp. 441-453)—is likely oversimplified. As more scholars draw on an increasingly broad range of primary sources, they have been able to add more nuances to the concept of Byzantine reform, and further draw distinctions between eastern and western 'reform' models. Dirk Krausmüller has been the most active scholar on Byzantine monastic reform in the last decade, challenging Thomas's Evergetis-centric view with material from the Stoudios monastery (2011; Krausmüller & Grinchenko 2013), and exploring issues of monastic autonomy (2008). Byzantine monastic diversity clearly complicates any larger study of monastic reform at this time, but Krausmüller's type of foundational work on smaller reform elements will help scholars to gain ground on such a goal.

A third subfield, economic analysis of monasticism, has likewise been promoted by the availability of source material. Many of the documents preserved in monastic archives are financial and legal in nature, though their publication has been slow. As far back as 1948, Peter Charanis noted the extent of monastic property and the threat it represented to the empire's interests, but it is only comparatively recently that the *Archives de l'Athos* project has allowed monograph-length investigation of monastic wealth. Kostis Smyrlis's (2006) study of large monastic foundations between the 10th and 14th centuries marks the most thorough work to date, though a number of articles highlight more specialist aspects of monastic economies (e.g., Kaplan 2006; Smyrlis 2002; Živojinović 1991; also see Talbot 2009, pp. 269-73 for a succinct economic overview). The relative breadth of Smyrlis's larger study is especially notable, as it highlights geographical differences in economic fortunes over time, further underscoring the elements of change and evolution in Byzantine monasticism.

Art history, a particularly vibrant area in Byzantine studies more generally, has made its own contributions to monastic studies, especially in terms of recreating and analyzing the physical spaces of monasteries, including both architecture and decorative motifs. Such work exists

largely exists in article rather than monograph form, however, which makes it a somewhat diffused subfield—and summary difficult. Notable contributors to the field include Sharon Gerstel (i.e., 2003) and Robert Ousterhout (i.e., 2008 & 2001 & 1994). Monumental paintings at monasteries represent a particularly valuable set of visual evidence (i.e., Papacostas, Mango & Grünbart 2007), at times even attracting the attention of text-centric scholars (i.e., Talbot 1994). Integrating art historical approaches to monasticism alongside those of other disciplines would be beneficial to broad understandings of Byzantine monasticism; aside from in monastic colloquia or archaeologically-informed history, artistic and textual evidence often remain quite segregated.

A fifth important subfield is the study of female monasticism as something distinct from the male version. This was a major area of research in the 1980s, when scholars undertook major groundwork in the field, but has been comparatively lightly researched in more recent decades. As outlined by Dorothy Abrahamse, studying female monasticism is complicated by the emphasis on the male version found in the sources (1985, pp. 35). That said, the forms of monastic life and numbers of institutions available to women were much more restricted than those available to male monks (Talbot 1985b). Essential earlier works include a consistent slew of invaluable articles by Alice-Mary Talbot (collected in Talbot 2001), Abrahamse's assessment of the practice's essential characteristics (1985), a 1988 symposium on women in Byzantine monasticism that featured both historical and art historical studies (Perreault 1991), and Catia Galatariatou's analysis of monastic *typika* written by and/or intended for women (1988). Several primary sources on female monks were likewise published in these decades, namely the letters of Irene Eulogia Choumaina Palaiologina (Hero 1986) and a rather literary life of Irene of Chrysobalanton (Rosenqvist 1986). Both women, though living 500 years apart, were abbesses of Constantinopolitan monasteries; the letters are an especially valuable resource for scholars, as they represent a female monk's own voice.

Scholarly activity on the subject of female monasticism continues, but has largely moved to more specific topics after the foundational work done in the 1980s. Talbot remains one of the most prolific authors. A notable example of her new secondary scholarship is a fascinating study of the frequent appearances of women within Athonite archival materials, despite Mt. Athos' famous exclusion of women (2012). Her collection of translations of the lives of female saints also deserves specific mention, which include ascetics and monks (1996). Manuscripts for and about women have also inspired new scholarship (Rapp 1996; Lappin 2002), while prosopography has shed new light on the extent of rural female monasticism (Gerstel & Talbot 2006). Art history has elucidated the wardrobes of female monks (Ball 2009-10). Otherwise, colloquia and monographs have largely integrated female monasticism into the broader experiences of Byzantine women (e.g., Connor 2004; Garland 2006; Neil & Garland 2013). Such fusions usefully underscore the way in which monasticism was a key component of Byzantine life, but lose some of the focus of earlier scholarship on female monasticism. Likewise, the more specific new studies add valuable detail for understanding female monasticism, but also emphasize how piecemeal the sub-field has become in more recent decades.

A final significant area of recent monastic scholarship has been examination of an increasingly wide number and types of monasteries, which facilitates deeper knowledge of Byzantine monastic variety. In terms of research, the two most prominent monasteries are likely Mt Athos

and Theotokos Evergetis, thanks to the Evergetis and *Archives de l'Athos* projects and numerous symposia (in addition to the Evergetis conferences discussed above, Athonite ones include 1987 at Dumbarton Oaks—published in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42, 1994 at Birmingham—published in Bryer and Cunningham 1996, and two meetings in 2006—published in Gothóni & Speake 2007). However, scholars have recently spent significant time on other monasteries, too. Within Constantinople, Krausmüller (2013b, Krausmüller & Grinchenko 2013) and Olivier Delouis (2009, 2008 & 2005) have each examined elements of Stoudios, while Krausmüller has also studied Panagiou (2013a). Archaeology has played an instrumental role in investigating monasteries further afield from the capital. For one example, Pamela Armstrong (2008) has paired archaeology and texts while placing St. Nikon the Metanoite and his foundations in a regional perspective in Laconia. On a larger scale, archaeological surveys have helped recreate the monastic history of Bithynia (Auzépy, Delouis, Grélouis & Kaplan 2005). Georgios Makris (2016) has only quite recently tackled the formidable task of investigating the monasteries of Byzantine Thrace, some of which depend heavily on material evidence rather than textual remains.

CONCLUSIONS:

Due to the diversity of Byzantine monastic forms and both the geographical and historical breadth of the empire, Byzantine monastic studies can be a daunting field. Until scholarship has progressed to the point where more systematic analyses are possible, researchers must pursue further work on individual monks and monasteries, texts and genres, and subfields of monasticism. As new texts, material evidence, and interpretations fill in additional details about the monastic landscape, new avenues of research will emerge—as they have over these last several decades.

Admittedly, much of this valuable recent scholarship focuses on middle Byzantine monasticism (and also late antique forms), rather than that in the last few centuries of the empire. The late Byzantine period, however, represents a particularly ripe era for further investigation. A wide range of archival materials survives for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the *Archives de l'Athos* and a number of non-monastic projects have published materials relevant to this period. However, despite the breadth of surviving evidence from the late Byzantine period, comparatively little of it exists in modern translations. Moreover, the late Byzantine period lacks much monograph scholarship of the sort Rosemary Morris has been able to provide for middle Byzantine monasticism. These relative deficiencies represent scholarly impediments to those who do not specialize in either the period or Byzantine monasticism; it may behoove Byzantinists to publish further on late Byzantine monastic topics.

As another challenge, while comparing eastern and western monasticism can often be a matter of apples and oranges, scholars comfortable with the Byzantine world ought to take the lead on bringing the two fields into closer dialogue. For all that countless western medievalists have previously misunderstood or oversimplified Byzantine monasticism, the body of scholarship on western monasticism is both large and significant—and may provide useful interpretative lenses or historiographical approaches for Byzantinists, even if the monastic systems themselves varied. Comparisons with forms of Christian monasticism elsewhere in the eastern world—for example,

Syriac and Orthodox monasticism from beyond the borders of the empire—may likewise be useful.

The Byzantine monastic field is currently vibrant and promising. An all-encompassing monograph on the subject is admittedly still far off and a great deal of work remains even on sub-topics like evaluating what ‘reform’ meant to Byzantines, and how smaller and more rural monasteries operated—but this review highlights some of the places where progress has and may still be made. Ultimately, Byzantine monasticism’s very diversity offers broad scope for scholarship, and therefore represents an opportunity as much as a challenge.

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