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Closing address: ‘Invisible Byzantiums’

The papers in this collection deal with a very broad range of themes and material objects and one’s first impression may be of their sheer heterogeneity or apparent mutual incompatibility. The goals of material well-being and freedom or relief from pain are, after all, rather different from those of avoiding sin and seeking unimpeded access to the divine. Such access may best be attained through the self-denial and physical suffering sought by holy men, and in that scale of values material want and physical pain could acquire highly positive connotations. Yet a number of connecting themes do run through these papers, for all the diversity of their subject matter and approaches. Viewed in the round, they show that the divide between material health and well-being and a sound spiritual condition did not appear as clear-cut to many Byzantines or other peoples of the pre-industrial period as it may do to us. In fact, there was a widespread assumption that these two conditions were closely interdependent and in practice many ordinary people seem to have tried, in their pursuit of material security and well-being and also of spiritual salvation, to have the best of both worlds. That there were perceived boundaries and tensions between the worlds of body and soul is undeniable. But the interaction and varying degrees of coexistence and cooperation between them are one of the more distinctive features of the Byzantine way of life and death. This ambivalent – and volatile – quality of the Byzantine experience is apt to remain elusive because it was seldom articulated or delineated, and it provides one of the reasons why one may justifiably speak of ‘Invisible Byzantiums’. The contributions to this volume offer new means of probing behind the smooth façade of the familiar sources authorized by Church and State. They conjure up a scene at once variegated and three-dimensional, accommodating currents of thought and custom that long co-existed, without ever being wholly integrated. And they lay down markers for new pathways to the ‘invisible’ realms of Byzantium through making fuller use of its highly visible, sometimes apparently humdrum, material culture¹.

By demonstrating the constant interplay between everyday life and the supernatural and transcendent spheres, this collection may also reveal something of Byzantium’s hidden strengths as both society and empire. It picks out ‘the ties that bind’, the affinities that made Byzantines the readier, if not always positively to heed the State’s commands or to meet its needs, at least to endure. A thread running through many *prima facie* unrelated papers in the collection is their intimation of a ‘community’ of one sort or another. ‘Community’ is, of course, a loose term and it may be applied to many different kinds of grouping. It can cover, for example, the deliberately formed communities of those opting to live as monks, and these receive attention from the Priestmonk Justin (141–45) and from S. Torallas Tovar’s study of the names and symbolism of monastic garments in Egypt (219–24). A gazetteer of all the consciously joined, self-regulating, communities in the Byzantine world would also include the many groups of venerator of particular saints and their icons; the guilds in Constantinople with their respective sets of rules and, in the case of the notaries at least, clear-cut preconditions for membership;² and also the broad peer groups of professionals such as medical doctors.

Several papers illuminate the world of Byzantine medical practitioners. Thus S. Geroulanos offers a graphic demonstration of the surgical operations described in Byzantine medical texts (129–34), collating the terms used with the medical instruments found in archaeological contexts, always assuming that these objects have been dated, and their functions identified, correctly. His data matches recent inferences drawn from the writings of Leon Iatrosophistes as to the sophistication of practising surgeons in the ninth century: it has been suggested that ‘more was going on in surgery than [Leon] records’³. This offers a substantive rebuttal to the

¹ Numerous aspects of everyday life, including medicine, marriage and the social and cultural life of townsfolk, receive due attention in C. G. ANGELIDI (ed.), *Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο* (Πρακτικά του Α΄ διεθνούς συμποσίου). Athens 1989.

² *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen*, 1.1–2, ed. and German tr. J. KODER (*CFHB* 33). Vienna 1991, 74–5.

³ See L. J. BLIQUEZ, The surgical instrumentarium of Leon Iatrosophistes. *Medicina nei Secoli* 11 (1999) 291–322 at 318. See also IDEM, Two lists of Greek surgical instruments and the state of surgery in Byzantine times. *DOP* 38 (1984) 187–204.

view that the various lists of Greek names of surgical apparatus composed between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries were ‘merely bookish catalogues of instruments used in an earlier age’, a view which the literary sources alone cannot fully dispose of⁴. They suggest that the expertise and, ultimately, the empirical approaches to illness current during Antiquity were not wholly effaced by the cultural changes of the sixth and seventh centuries, drastic as these may well have been⁵.

A slightly different angle is provided by A. Diamandopoulos, who reconstructs the methods of what amounts to a profession of urologists (93–99). It seems that these specialists examined urine as a means of assessing general health, while using steam-baths as a way of inducing sweat and thus gaining additional body fluids for analysis and diagnosis. Diamandopoulos shows that new works on urology were still being composed in the later Byzantine period, in a conscious attempt to fill the gaps left by ancient writers. And yet the main intellectual scheme was still that of Antiquity and, in the case of medical practice, this meant Galen, whose standing in Byzantium is subtly delineated by V. Nutton (171–76). The Byzantines took what seemed to them necessary and useful from Galen’s voluminous works in order to create a ‘new medical orthodoxy’, whose adherents themselves constituted a kind of community. They filled in many gaps, but always within the framework that they had devised for themselves out of Galen’s works.

Besides these professional and intellectual communities there were other, more tangible if less rigorously defined, entities such as neighbourhoods in towns and the rural settlements. Their composition was determined more by the accidents of physical proximity, family and birth than by career choice or training. Within these groups, too, a fair degree of mutual cooperation was needed, even if their ‘group identity’ was seldom formally defined. This is obviously the case with Middle Byzantine towns. Many of these were, in H. Buchwald’s words, ‘machines for defence’, packing many inhabitants inside their walls; their ‘canyon-like’ streets would have been easily defensible by a smallish number of troops (57–74). There was, as Buchwald observes, every incentive for property-owners to erect tall buildings and thereby create extra living-quarters. This, however, raised various problems, for example issues of privacy and the blocking of views. Many households in such towns were unavoidably interlinked because the dwellings were built choc-à-bloc, as they had been in Justinian’s era.

For her part, C. Saliou demonstrates the difficulties caused by balconies, which brought air, light and aesthetic views to their owners but were liable to intrude upon the privacy of households which they overlooked (199–205). This was a recurrent problem in Constantinople, and the ‘permanent darkness’ created in the streets by the overshadowing structures of the rich was remarked upon by Odo of Deuil in the mid-twelfth century⁶. Saliou shows how the legislation attempted to provide for problems that are all too familiar to the neighbours of twenty-first century high-rise buildings. But much as the authorities tried to lay down guidelines in the form of legislation, reconciliation of the different points of view remained largely a matter for the households in a neighbourhood to work out among themselves. In other words, a considerable amount of informal arbitration and cooperation between neighbours probably underpinned the civil peace in the capital that impressed visitors from afar, and this most probably holds true of Byzantine provincial towns, too.

Some groupings were formed largely by the accidents of family and geography while others were entered into deliberately by, for example, gaining a qualification, undergoing an initiation procedure or participation in a cult. The former tended to be primarily ‘territorial’ – exclusively so, in the case of neighbourhoods in towns and fiscal units in the countryside – whereas practitioners of ‘professions’ and the members of ‘craft guilds’, trading associations and confraternities were not necessarily anchored to any one spot. Neither were the devotees of saints, and the claim of many saints’ Lives that their heroes drew admirers from afar and from all walks of life should not be dismissed as invariably stereotypical. For understandable reasons of genre the

⁴ See BLIQUEZ, *Surgical instrumentarium*, 292. Bliquez himself argues strongly that writers such as Leon Iatrosophistes were drawing on their own personal experience of conducting a wide range of operations.

⁵ See, for example, contributions to the Dumbarton Oaks symposium on Byzantine medicine (= *DOP* 38 [1984]), ed. J. SCARBOROUGH, including V. NUTTON, *From Galen to Alexander: aspects of medicine and medical practice in late antiquity*; J. DUFFY, *Byzantine medicine in the sixth and seventh centuries: aspects of teaching and practice*; S. ASHBROOK HARVEY, *Physicians and ascetics in John of Ephesus: an expedient alliance*; M. DOLS, *Insanity in Byzantine and Islamic medicine*. *DOP* 38 (1984) 1–14; 21–7; 87–93; 135–48.

⁶ Odo of Deuil, *De profectioe Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. V. G. BERRY. New York 1948, 64–5. See also R. MACRIDES, *Constantinople: the Crusaders’ Gaze*, in: EADEM (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World*. Aldershot 2002, 193–212, at 196.

saints' Lives make their heroes the lynchpins of these communities of admirers, disciples and beneficiaries and give the impression that single-minded veneration of a saint or a relic was the main preoccupation of devotional groupings. But it is becoming clear that the veneration of saints and relics formed one extremity of a broad spectrum of loyalties that shaded into collegiate and commercial affiliations and on into more general predispositions towards – and practical arrangements for – mutual support. In other words, groups defined primarily by 'professional' functions such as craftsmen and traders could also have important convivial and religious traits, bringing together not merely fellow spirits but different sectors of society. Still more variegated were the confraternities, which were not confined to the practitioners of a particular trade or vocation and which are most clearly attested by evidence of provincial origin. Judging by the charter re-affirming and describing a confraternity in the region of twelfth-century Thebes, the members combined support for one another on earth with active veneration of the icon of the Theotokos Naupaktetissa and prayers for one another. The conjunction of the material and the heavenly planes is reflected in the fairly even balance in the membership of the confraternity – twenty clerics and twenty-nine of the laity. Among them are members both of prominent families of office-holders and of families whose names derived from their crafts or trades⁷.

There were, of course, functional and structural differences between the various 'guilds' and commercial partnerships⁸ on the one hand and, on the other, the confraternities and still looser-knit associations which came together for mutual support and the joint-veneration of a saint. The latter congregations were so disparate and, in many cases, so amorphous that one might doubt whether they really amounted to a 'community' in any meaningful sense. But for all the variety in shapes and sizes the fore-mentioned groupings were all, in a sense, 'horizontal' and they reached across diverse sectors of Byzantine urban society, when not formally constituting peer groups or guilds. And even the guilds should not be viewed as mere organs of the State⁹. The largely voluntary, often overlapping, nature of these associations gave them qualities of resilience and adaptability to changing circumstances. Persons belonging to them could pool resources so as to provide financial and moral support for those in need, often one another but also, on occasion, the manifestly wretched beyond their ranks, for example the unburied and abandoned dead¹⁰. The various commercial, charitable and pious associations are the largely unsung counterparts to the vertical axes and hierarchical structures of the Byzantine imperial order that loom so large in the extant literary sources. They register diffuse yet deep-rooted devotional tendencies that are seldom hymned in the polite literature of the metropolis. Being pluralistic and having many mundane practical concerns, they did not generate the kind of outpourings that individual holy men evoked. No narratives of their collective feats and endeavours, paralleling the Lives of individual saints, seem to have emanated from the members of confraternities and other such voluntary associations.

In comparison with the vertical axes of Byzantine society, the horizontal ones of town and country are difficult to trace in our extant literary sources. They constitute an elusive, yet not quite 'invisible', aspect of Byzantium¹¹. The sources stemming from the imperial Establishment or focused on its activities present that

⁷ J. NESBITT – J. WITA, A confraternity of the Comnenian era. *BZ* 68 (1975) 360–84 at 364–73 (text and translation), 377–8, 381–4; P. HORDEN, The Confraternities of Byzantium, in: W. J. SHEILS – D. WOOD (eds.), *Voluntary Religions (Studies in Church History 23)*. Oxford 1986, 25–45 at 34–8. See also G. DAGRON, "Ainsi rien n'échappera à la réglementation". Etat, Eglise, corporations, confréries, in: V. KRAVARI – J. LEFORT – C. MORRISSON (eds.), *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin, II*. Paris 1991, 155–82, at 175–81.

⁸ The form of business association termed *syntrophia* in later Byzantine sources and generally comprising only three individuals is closely comparable to the *koinonia* or *koinotes* of Late Antiquity: P. SCHREINER, *Texte zur spätbyzantinischen Finanz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte in Handschriften der Bibliotheca Vaticana (StT 344)*. Vatican City 1991, 404–06, 431–3.

⁹ It is noteworthy that Constantinopolitan guilds featuring in the Book of the Eparch mostly possessed their own customs and ordinances. These may be detected behind the subsequent revision and codification carried out by the City authorities which were responsible for the issue of the Book: Leo VI, *Eparchenbuch*, ed. KODER, 21, 23–31, 33 (introduction). See also J. KODER, *Delikt und Strafe im Eparchenbuch*. *JÖB* 41 (1991) 113–31.

¹⁰ Comparable features may be observed in the associations of craftsmen and tradesfolk in later medieval towns in the West: G. ROSSER, *Crafts, guilds and the negotiation of work in the medieval town*. *Past and Present* 154 (1997) 3–31, at 19–22, 27–9.

¹¹ The imprint of pious lay associations may well be discernible in tales of journeys to, and visions of, the Other Side: Jane BAUN, *The Living and the Dead in Middle Byzantine Apocalypses: Confraternities, Commemoration, Patronage and Purgatio*, paper delivered to the Byzantine Studies Seminar, University of Oxford, January 15, 2002.

version of Byzantium which ‘worked’ best for them. Axiomatic to this was the notion of the emperor as the measure of all things on earth. One’s place in society should be in accordance with his will, which was exercised on behalf of God. This is most obviously the case with official propaganda, court rhetoric, legislation and other formal constructs and prescriptions issued from on high¹². But it also holds true of sources of a more functional nature, such as texts relating to the taxation of the inhabitants of rural settlements. These sources, whether they are prescriptive fiscal treatises¹³ or, in rare instances, working documents, tend to concentrate on such communities and populations as were clear-cut and fixed and therefore relatively straightforward to tax. The texts tend to presuppose arable farming and crops that could be harvested with a degree of regularity every year. Their details of peasants’ fiscal obligations offer a plausible picture of those who made their living mainly from this form of agriculture. But sources such as the cadaster of Thebes¹⁴ or the deeds relating to the privileges of Athonite monasteries are less forthcoming about life in the uplands, woodlands and wetlands or about the rural economy which they sustained¹⁵. A. Dunn draws attention to the case of Eastern Macedonia (101–09). He emphasizes that many forms of peasant activity other than arable farming did not show up in the tax rolls or other standard documents of Byzantine officialdom. Viticulture was rooted to particular plots of land, but the products of stock-raising and especially of forms of pastoralism were harder to pin down and tax at the same rate, year by year. The scarcity of fiscal regulations or other details concerning these activities at grass roots needs to be allowed for in debates as to how far agrarian households and communities were self-sustaining and the overall viability of the peasant unit. Dunn has uncovered considerable evidence of adaptability to local conditions in Eastern Macedonia. For example, the pigs in its forests seem to have been fattened for the market in large quantities: peasant producers were fully capable of diversifying their economic activities, taking advantage of local variations. Provided that markets – meaning, for the most part, towns or ports – were accessible and profit was to be had from them, production of surpluses was feasible and worthwhile.

It may well be that the value of commercial exchanges and the consequent prosperity of at least some areas in the medieval Byzantine provinces have been underestimated, partly because of the restricted scope of administrative texts concerning taxation and partly because of the way in which the archaeological evidence tends to have been approached hitherto. The same may perhaps be said of the frequency of local and regional exchanges. Some light on the economy of Asia Minor during the ‘Dark Age’ has been cast by recent field surveys and by a few more systematic excavations. Judging by surveys in South Central Anatolia, settlements seem to have been numerous and robust in hilly areas whereas in the plains the population seems to have diminished from the seventh century onwards; nearly all the pottery appears to have been made locally¹⁶. A slightly different picture is emerging from the excavations at Amorium and the surveys of the rural settlements around it. Local exchanges involving low denomination coinage seem to have continued through the seventh, eighth and early ninth centuries, albeit on a smaller scale than in Late Antiquity or the central Middle Byzantine period. This has tended to escape the attention of modern students of Anatolia, because in C. S. Lightfoot’s words, ‘the scruffy copper alloy issues of the Dark Ages...even if acquired by museum staff, would in most cases not be individually registered but relegated to the ...study collection’¹⁷. Not that conditions or environments were uniform, and in fact Amorium may, as a key military centre, turn out to prove the general rule that the imperial administrative apparatus was the prime mover of significant economic activity.

¹² See, for example, H. HUNGER, *Prooimion. Elemente der byzantinischen Kaiseridee in den Arengen der Urkunden (WBS 1)*. Vienna, 1964, 49–73, 94–102, 109–12; H. AHRWEILER, *L’idéologie politique de l’empire byzantin*. Paris 1975, 37–55, 132–41; E. MCGEER, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors (Mediaeval Sources in Translation 38)*. Toronto 1999, 5–6, 25–6 (introduction), 51–3 (commentary).

¹³ See N. OIKONOMIDES, *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IX–XI)*. Athens 1996, 42–61.

¹⁴ N. SVORONOS, *Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XI et XII siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes. BCH 83 (1959) 1–166*, repr. in IDEM, *Études sur l’organisation intérieure, la société et l’économie de l’Empire byzantin*. London 1973, III.

¹⁵ This is not to detract from the ultimate significance of corn-growing, which features prominently in late Byzantine working records of accounts and loans: SCHREINER, *Texte zur spätbyzantinischen Finanz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 360, 429–30.

¹⁶ D. BAIRD, *What can Archaeological Survey tell us about Byzantine Settlement and Land Use? – an Example from the Konya Area in South Central Anatolia*, paper delivered to the Byzantine Studies Seminar, University of Oxford, February 12, 2002.

¹⁷ C. S. LIGHTFOOT, *Byzantine Anatolia: Reassessing the Numismatic Evidence*, XX congrès international des études byzantines, Table Ronde 4.23. Paris 2001, 1–5 at 4; see also IDEM, *The survival of cities in Byzantine Anatolia: the case of Amorium. Byz 68 (1998) 56–71 at 68–70*.

A prominent theme in D. Stathakopoulos' paper (211–17) is the advantages accruing to districts near administrative or military centres or with ready access to the coast, as against those inland population centres which did not enjoy 'State privileging'. His focus is on the contrasts between levels of food supply in different areas rather than on cultural differences between or within regions and such diversity is not exactly the stuff of imperial propaganda or of the working documents of the administration.

Yet the existence of what seem to be local forms of costume and ornament can sometimes be teased out of fairly well-known sources such as wall-paintings. In certain instances they appear to depict everyday realia, as M. Parani shows (181–92). She draws attention to the form of headgear worn by a midwife in a painting on Cyprus and the ear-rings worn by youths in a Serbian wall-painting. It may well be that further study of the low-value and unbeautiful artefacts – the material culture – excavated in Byzantine sites will place local variants in perspective, modifying the sense of uniformity and timelessness given by the Establishment's administrative and literary texts and by the generally conservative iconography of the symbols of Church and State.

On the whole, it is the empire's hierarchical organizations and insistently Orthodox Christian and 'Roman' self-images that prevail in modern Byzantine studies, relegating horizontal structures and regional variations to the sphere of 'invisible Byzantium' in effect if not intention. Yet there has been growing attention to the various kinds of 'minority', conscious exceptions to the norm, dwelling beneath the emperor's sway¹⁸. And the Twentieth International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Paris in August 2001 highlighted the importance of the rural community for understanding the household, village and other local units of Byzantium¹⁹. There is also mounting recognition of the differences between regions. It has recently been remarked that 'the history of the landscapes of Byzantium...has yet to be written for each of the empire's constituent regions'²⁰. Welcome as these observations are, it is important that the spotlight should not turn to the opposite extreme and focus solely on the local, sectional, and private facets of society, as if they were in stark contradiction to the public face of the empire. There is need for better appreciation of the intersection between the official and the popular and communal planes of society. In many ways the strong tendency to convergence – synergy – of these diverse planes holds the key to the distinctiveness of the Byzantine empire and also to its peculiar resilience and durability. There was, after all, no inevitability in the close cooperation between the imperial Establishment and the organized Church, monastic communities and congregations and cult-followers at grass-roots. The very emphasis in court rhetoric, ceremonial and iconography on the merits of harmony between the emperor, the patriarch and other senior churchmen suggests that it could not in fact be taken for granted.

This is in no way to deny that, at least in the Early and Middle Byzantine periods, more often than not a high degree of collaboration was achieved between the imperial authorities and what may loosely be termed 'the populace at large'. A number of instances of this collusion are well-known, particularly in the Schauptplatz that was Constantinople. The citizens as well as institutions such as monasteries were expected to do their bit towards putting on a show of pomp and circumstance, and many seem to have been willing to do so. Thus processions along the triumphal way from the Golden Gate to the Arch of the Milion and along the other main routes passed beneath hangings of precious cloths, brocade and arrays of gold and silver vessels and other ornaments set out by those living along the thoroughfares²¹. Such drawing on the luxury goods of private citizens and churches could be viewed as an admission of the limitations upon the empire's resources. On-lookers who were out of sympathy found fault with the populace's participation in State ceremonial. Liudprand

¹⁸ See, for example, H. AHRWEILER – A. E. LAIOU (eds.), *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*. Washington, D. C. 1998; D. C. SMYTHE (ed.), *Strangers to Themselves. The Byzantine Outsider*. Aldershot 2000; P. HERZ – J. KORBS (eds.), *Ethnische und religiöse Minderheiten in Kleinasien. Von der hellenistischen Antike bis in das byzantinische Mittelalter (Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 2)*. Wiesbaden 1998.

¹⁹ See XX Congrès international des études byzantines. Pré-actes, I. Séances Plénières. Paris 2001: L'évolution du village dans l'empire byzantin V^e–XIV^e siècles, 61–88; II. Tables Rondes, Économie et société, 9–54; Littérature et culture, 237–44; III. Communications Libres, Civilisation, 215–28.

²⁰ B. GEYER, Physical Factors in the Evolution of the Landscape and Land Use, in: *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. E. LAIOU. Washington, D.C. 2002, I 31–45.

²¹ Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, II 15, ed. J. J. REISKE, I. Bonn 1829, 572–3; John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. H. THURN (*CFHB* 5). Berlin–New York 1973, 417. M. McCORMICK, *Eternal Victory*. Cambridge 1990, 207–08.

of Cremona chooses to ridicule the crowds of ‘traders and low-born folk’ who lined Nikephoros II Phokas’ route from the palace to St Sophia with their cheap-looking shields and spears, and he derides the ‘barefoot multitude’²². But a more positive gloss can be placed on the essentially voluntary nature of the citizens’ involvement in these ceremonies. The City’s guilds probably played an important part in supplying decorations and skilled manpower for them. But one must remember that Constantinople’s guilds had traditions of their own and they were to a large extent self-regulating, even while cooperating closely with the imperial authorities and being ultimately subject to their sanctions²³.

In that sense, the trellis of mutual support ran ‘vertically’ as well as ‘horizontally’. The citizens’ prevailing order and – in the form of ritualised competition between factions – ‘team spirit’ were noted by visitors such as the Muslim prisoner-of-war, Harun ibn Yahya. He remarked upon the Hippodrome beside the palace and gained the impression – no less significant for being exaggerated – that ‘all who are in Constantinople attend these races and look at them’²⁴. There can be little doubt that these impressions were deliberately fostered. The gatherings to watch races, games and ceremonies in the Hippodrome demonstrated the broad base of the imperial order no less effectively for being quite infrequent²⁵. The spectacle of a ruler acting as onlooker, patron and judge over the proceedings in majestic concord with his subjects had appeal far beyond the empire’s borders. Scenes from the Hippodrome – games, chariot-races and the emperor watching from his box beside tiers of spectators – were depicted in wall-paintings in the western staircase towers of Saint Sophia in Kiev²⁶.

The image of the different sectors of Byzantine society in common obeisance to the emperor is well-enough known, and that it should have been noticed and envied by foreign potentates is unsurprising. It is much harder to gauge the extent to which reality matched the rhetoric: how enthusiastic and how broadly based was support for the imperial order in the capital itself, and in the provinces? And if the support was often widespread and can – at least on occasion – be shown to have been active and positive, how did this come about? This collection of papers offers answers to these questions, through its interlinking of the spiritual and the material dimensions. The measures taken by the State to provide for the material well-being of persons of direct concern to it worked in tandem with the more conspicuous and highly publicized rites of worship and celebration. The latter proclaimed hopes of heavenly aid for all. In making the palace complex together with St Sophia a kind of metronome for constant intercession with and access to the divine, the emperor tapped into the beliefs, fears and yearnings of *homo byzantinus*. The imperial order gained strength from its appeal to the private concerns, whether material or spiritual, of so many of its subjects. The authorities provided an orderly setting for large-scale religious rites, as well as staging court ceremonies in which the emperor himself was centre-stage.

Thus, under ultimately imperial auspices, the profane ambiance of the market square near the Hodegon monastery was transformed into a scene of liturgical performance and supplication that was believed to be prompting direct divine intervention: the City as a whole was elevated and transformed into the New Jerusalem each Tuesday, as its inhabitants processed with the icon of the Hodegetria the short distance to the square. On several other occasions each year the icon was paraded through the streets to venues such as the Pantokrator monastery, St Sophia and the imperial palace. By the eleventh century a confraternity of laymen was responsible for transporting the icon in the processions, forming the nucleus of what de Clavijo at the beginning of the fifteenth century called ‘a great concourse of folk’²⁷. This sort of collective re-enactment of sacred

²² Liudprand of Cremona, *Legatio*, 9, *Opera omnia*, ed. P. CHIESA (CCCM 156). Turnhout 1998, 191; transl. F. A. WRIGHT, *The Works of Liudprand of Cremona*. London 1930, 240.

²³ KODER, *Delikt und Strafe*, 123–4; J. SHEPARD, *Silks, skills and opportunities in Byzantium: some reflexions*. *BMGS* 21 (1997) 246–57 at 250–2.

²⁴ A. VASILIEV, *Harun-ibn-Yahya and his description of Constantinople*. *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 5 (1932) 149–63, at 155. See also S. MÉTIVIER, *Note sur l’Hippodrome de Constantinople vu par les Arabes*. *TM* 13 (2000) 175–80, at 176–7.

²⁵ For the engagement of the population in the events and the emperor’s role as prize-giver, see G. DAGRON *et alii*, *L’organisation et le déroulement des courses d’après le Livre des Cérémonies*. *TM* 13 (2000) 3–200, at 124–8, 158, 165–70.

²⁶ V. LAZAREV, *Old Russian Murals and Mosaics from the XI to the XVI Century*. London 1966, 56–7 and figs. 40, 41; fig. 28, p. 238.

²⁷ Cited by N. ŠEVČENKO, ‘Servants of the Holy Icon,’ in: C. MOSS – K. KIEFER (eds.), *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*. Princeton 1995, 547–53, at p. 548. See also A. LIDOV, *Miracle-working Icons of the Mother of God*, in: M. VASSILAKI (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*. Athens 2000, 47–57, at 50–1. A.

events, as well as the shrines, relics and topography, brought substantiation to the idea that Constantinople was the image of the first Jerusalem. As with the tableau of imperial order in the Hippodrome, this concept exerted powerful appeal on external elites. The icon of the Mother of God sent to Polotsk in the mid-twelfth century by Manuel I Komnenos and Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges at the request of Euphrosyne seems to have attracted similar veneration in the Rus town to that enjoyed by the icon of the Hodegetria in Constantinople²⁸. And from the late fifteenth century onwards the Tuesday ritual surrounding the miraculous replica of the icon of the Mother of God in Moscow elaborated further variants of 'liturgical performance'. It celebrated the presence of the Mother of God in Moscow and sought to ensure her protection for her city, much as the Byzantines had sought her help for Constantinople²⁹. In this conjunction popular devotion to a wonder-working icon, priest-conducted rites and the ruler's cares of state all had their place. Not dissimilar instances of this synergy may be found in the early medieval West, for example in the procession of the 'Greek School' bearing a celebrated icon of Christ the Pantokrator through the streets of Rome under the auspices of Otto III on the Vigil of the Festival of her Assumption in 1000³⁰.

The rites and customs enshrouding the imperial court and City were attractive to Byzantine provincials as well as to foreigners. In many ways these 'signifiers' were intended to mark out the City as specially favoured by the Mother of God and other supernatural powers, 'God-protected' and supreme as the *polis basileousa*. But precisely for this reason persons outside the magic circle were eager to partake of the benefits and blessings that the City so emphatically enjoyed. Those who did not, as individuals, aspire to rise high in the imperial service could still declare or imply some sort of affinity with the centre and, combining fidelity towards the imperial order with faith in its supernatural protectors, they could at the same time hope to gain for themselves direct access to those higher powers.

This could be achieved by means of religious cults and services and other types of ritual and also by material forms such as ornament and costume. Such appropriation of symbols is most evident and understandable in the case of the members of elites on the empire's periphery, but the desire to imitate or interact with the exemplary centre was not confined to peripheral or provincial elites. It is upon the mentalités of those living at grass-roots that closer study of finds of material objects and their archaeological contexts may well shed light. A. Muthesius shows what the systematic examination of textiles can reveal (159–69). Not only silks and other costly vestments but also plainer fabrics seem to have been styled and decorated in the manner of the products of imperial workshops. Some of the examples apparently emanate from quite low-level social strata, as Muthesius shows. This is the case with items found in the Byzantine provinces as well as those found in the ambit of external elites and there is little reason to doubt that their connotations of the imperial court and its divinely instituted order were familiar to many of their handlers and wearers. They were in vogue because of these connotations at least as much as for their purely aesthetic qualities, and very likely more so. This constituted a 'subversion of signifiers' in the sense that such imitation and adaptation diluted the original purpose of the dress-code instituted at court and in the workshops manufacturing top-quality textiles. The message of the vestments and adornments sported there was, after all, one of exclusiveness, a hierarchy of silks and symbols ranked according to one's proximity and level of service to the emperor³¹. However, the copying or adaptation of court garb could also mean acceptance of the imperial taxis

WEYL CARR, The Mother of God in Public, in: *op. cit.*, 325–37, at 334; C. ANGELIDI – T. PAPAMASTORAKIS, The Veneration of the Virgin Hodegetria and the Hodegon Monastery, in: *op. cit.*, 373–87, at 377–80, 382. I am very grateful to Jane Baun for the latter two references.

²⁸ I. A. SHALINA, Bogomater' efesskaia-polotskaia-korsunskaiia-toropetskaia: istoricheskie imena i arkhety p chudotvornoy ikony, in: A. M. LIDOV (ed.), *Chudotvornaia ikona v Vizantii i drevnei Rusi*. Moscow 1996, 200–51, at 201–09, 223; LIDOV, Miracle-working Icons, 51.

²⁹ LIDOV, *Miracle-working Icons*, 53.

³⁰ *MGH, Poetae Latini Medii Aevi*, V 465–8; J. SHEPARD, Byzantium and the West, in: T. REUTER (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History*, III. Cambridge 1999, 605–23, at 619.

³¹ See R. S. LOPEZ, The silk industry in the Byzantine empire. *Speculum* 20 (1945) 1–42, at 21, 41–2; A. MUTHESIUS, Crossing traditional boundaries: Grub to Glamour in Byzantine Silk Weaving, repr. in EADEM, *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving*. London 1995, 173–200, at 187–8; Silk, Power and Diplomacy in Byzantium, in: *ibidem* 231–44, at 231–3; L. SIMEONOVA, In the depths of tenth-century ceremonial: the treatment of Arab prisoners of war at imperial banquets. *BMGS* 22 (1998) 75–104 at 82–6; EADEM, Constantinopolitan attitudes toward aliens and minorities, 860s–1020s. *Etudes balkaniques* 2001, no. 1, 83–98, at 85–92.

as a kind of universal style-setter and it need not imply conscious rejection or defiance. In fact these designs on fairly humdrum bits of textile may well be a key instance of the effective convergence of the vertical and the horizontal axes in Byzantine society mentioned earlier. Such evocation of imperial symbols may often register pride and one-upmanship among members of local communities. If, as is conceivable, the Theban confraternity's veneration of the icon of the Theotokos Naupaktetissa owed some inspiration to the cult of the Hodegetria icon in Constantinople, this could represent acknowledgement of the capital's rites, directly devotional as well as imperial, as being definitive. It would be in key with the prayers that were said for the emperor and the patriarch as well as for fellow members of the confraternity³².

These hints of the extensive complex of centripetal forces exerted from Constantinople need to be borne in mind when one considers the practical steps taken by the State to provide for its subjects' earthly needs. A group of papers in our collection deals with the organization of water and food supplies and the attention paid to public health and other preconditions of physical survival. Here, too, an elaborate form of complementing the material with the spiritual dimension may be observed. Stathakopoulos shows that the priorities of the government were quite clear-cut (211–17). Feeding and protecting the inhabitants of the capital was of paramount concern; the material needs of the other towns and populations did not receive the same degree of painstaking attention, even when they were of outstanding strategic and administrative importance. The implementation of this strategy seems to have functioned effectively for a very long time. There are very few records of famines in Constantinople that were induced by enemy sieges in Late Antiquity, and careful attention was still being paid to the welfare and wishes of the citizens of Constantinople in the twelfth century. As M. Grünbart notes, an oration of Eustathios Kataphloron concerning the shortage of water in Constantinople in 1168/69 evoked a response from the emperor, in the form of repairs to an aqueduct (135–39). To ensure abundant supplies of drinking water in the capital was in part a matter of prestige, since water of high quality needed to be fresh and this, in turn, required Herculean feats of organization on the part of the authorities. As E. Kislinger puts it, for Byzantine society of the early middle ages “(fresh) water is essential for being, (tasty) wine improves the quality of well-being” (147–54).

Inevitably, such standards could not easily be maintained even for other cities of major strategic concern such as Thessalonica, and this did not escape the notice of their inhabitants. Stathakopoulos remarks upon the implications of the miracle-tales of the diversion of grain ships from their intended destination of Constantinople in 597 and around 608–11. Reportedly, on both occasions Saint Demetrius appeared to the officials in charge of the shipment of grain. He ordered them to turn the ships round and sail to his city, Thessalonica, which was being blockaded by the Slavs and stricken by famine. The tales seem to take it for granted that the capital has first call on resources but indicate that a community's supernatural protector might overrule the customary order of priorities. Similar awareness of the relatively low priority accorded to Thessalonica is shown in John Kaminiates' complaint about imperial governors' neglect of its fortifications on the eve of the Muslim raiders' assault on the city in 904³³. While awareness among the more educated provincials of this order of priorities is unremarkable in itself, it is striking that outright and extensive protests about government neglect of, or discrimination against, provincial populations seldom feature in our sources before the last quarter of the twelfth century³⁴. This is, of course, partly a reflexion of the sparseness of non-hagiographical literary source material concerning the Byzantine provinces. And in any case, the assumptions that external foes could harry coastal regions and, up to the middle of the tenth century, that Muslim raiders could range quite easily deep into Anatolia were engrained in Byzantine strategic thinking. To higher-placed and reflective inhabitants of the provinces it will have been apparent that this state of affairs was virtually immutable, while the remainder had little choice but to resign themselves to their lot. There was not much that they could do out of their own resources to alter it, and the central government's suspiciousness concerning potential military revolts in border zones placed a dampener on local moves towards self-defence and self-reliance. But valid and important as these negative considerations are, they do not wholly explain how or why

³² NESBITT – WITA, *Confraternity*, 364–5, 369; HORDEN, *Confraternities*, 38. The need for further investigation of the interaction between rituals in society at large and imperial ceremonial was noted by M. McCORMICK, *Analyzing Byzantine ceremonies*. *JÖB* 35 (1985) 1–20, at 15–16.

³³ Ioannis Caminiatae *De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. G. BÖHLIG (*CFHB* 4). Berlin–New York 1973, 16–17.

³⁴ See M. ANGOLD, *The road to 1204: the Byzantine background to the Fourth Crusade*. *Journal of Medieval History* 25 (1999) 257–78, at 264–5, 270–2.

Byzantine society remained cohesive for so long, very often in default of material means of support or military protection. This has a great deal to do with the religious beliefs and expectations held in common across broad swathes of the population in many different locales. These values, and the diverse networks of mutual support entwined around them, fostered not just acquiescence in the status quo but even positive enthusiasm for the privileged, 'God-protected' status of the *polis basileuousa* – and also an appetite for its silks, textiles and other hall-marked manufactures³⁵.

A further aspect of the problem remains to be addressed. Byzantine attitudes towards the interaction between everyday matters and the unseen world were not what might be expected from a twenty-first century perspective. The papers dealing with the interrelationship between body and soul may help to explain why the disasters inflicted by nature and man could be tolerated and viewed positively at the same time as elaborate practical measures were taken to avert or alleviate them. Suffering might be accepted as sent from Above by way of chastisement and for the good of one's soul, yet remedial medicine was studied and practised. What might now seem to be arrantly inconsistent stances did not pose quite the same contradictions for the Byzantines of the earlier middle ages or subsequent generations.

There existed, at the intellectual level, a variety of theories about the interrelationship between the well-being of the body and the soul. On the one hand, following the example of early Christian and other eastern traditions, it could be held that bodily pain and deprivation was actually good for the soul. On the other, the body could be regarded as an expression of the state of the soul and remedial measures for the soul might bring about bodily health, viewed as a desirable condition in itself.

Such ideas about mind, soul and body were, admittedly, accessible in their entirety only to members of the highly educated elite, and one might reasonably question whether they had much to offer wider social circles and this was as much a feature of provincial society as it was of the metropolis. Individuals experienced much the same uncertainties as to physical health, wealth, security and provisioning as beset most pre-industrial societies, whether their populations lived in urban centres or small rural communities. What marks out Byzantium is that ordinary Byzantines had access to an unusually wide choice of what would now be termed 'support mechanisms', ranging from the clinical professionalism of surgeons and state-organized material welfare to the assistance provided by their families, confraternities and other networks for mutual support. Much as the latter associations encompassed a broad spectrum ranging from professional or commercial concerns to social and religious activities, so the means of gaining protection or assistance ranged from empirically based medical treatment to faith, prayer and ritual. The cults of miraculous icons were amenable to a fair degree of direction from monks and churchmen and the icons that were venerated in private homes probably generally conformed to convention. But there was no tightly policed boundary between the rites and prayers sanctioned by the ecclesiastical authorities and everyday practices and beliefs. 'Magic', in the sense of assumptions about the efficacy of unauthorized rites and formulae, prayers to persons and forces other than those systematically defined by the Church and belief in the inherent powers vested in particular objects, was integral to many Byzantines' continued well-being and hopes of relief in time of need. One person's 'holy protector' might be another's 'evil demon'³⁶ and, as L. Simeonova observes in "Magic and the warding-off of barbarians" (207–10), the dividing line between the magical practices tacitly sanctioned by the church and those it condemned was very thin.

It may well be that the 2,000 or so items in the Byzantine Museum in Athens described by D. Konstantios will provide fresh evidence of Byzantine intermingling of the mundane and practical with the supernatural behind closed doors (155–58). The artefacts that he has amassed provide an invaluable series of aperçus into the private lives of the Byzantines in their households or alone, supplementing what may be inferred about their membership of various sorts of association and communities. Inevitably, these objects quite often prove difficult to evaluate, for the interpretation of finds as being amulets is apt to be contentious. In fact it is only fairly recently that archaeologists and historians of Byzantine artworks have taken more account of the pos-

³⁵ See P. ALEXANDER, The strength of empire and capital as seen through Byzantine eyes. *Speculum* 37 (1962) 339–57, at 354–6, repr. in IDEM, *Religious and Political History and Thought in the Byzantine Empire*. London 1978, III.

³⁶ A. KAZHDAN, Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers, in: H. MAGUIRE (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*. Washington, D.C. 1995, 73–82.

sible talismanic and magical connotations of objects found³⁷. One should probably not expect these problems of identification and interpretation to be completely resolved.

Substances and objects were open to a variety of interpretations and ‘readings’ by the Byzantines themselves, some being more ‘politically’ or ‘canonically’ correct than others. B. Caseau demonstrates this ambiguousness very clearly in her paper on ‘Incense and Fragrances’ (75–92). Aromas were put to a variety of uses and myrrh, frankincense and other substances had multiple connotations and functions. Incense could be burnt at the end of a meal for purposes of recreation and pleasure, but incense-burning was also thought to expel foul vapours and banish disease, a sanitation measure in the tradition of Hippocrates. And, of course, incense was adopted by the Christian Church as a sacred property of religious worship. Caseau shows that there was profound uncertainty as to the status of ‘fragrances’, not only as to whether they ranked as sensual delight, disinfectant or an odour of sanctity, but also as to whether they were fundamentally Good or Bad Things. Fragrances, in so far as they were credited with powers of healing and other transforming capabilities, continued to be treated as magical substances. In enlisting them for sacred ends, Christian churchmen were, more or less literally, playing with fire. Not that they had the means to prescribe to individuals or households the values that they placed upon objects or potions or minutely to regulate the uses made of them. Coins provide an example of this. Although clearly designed to impress imperial authority and religious orthodoxy upon the beholder, they were vulnerable to subversion through being worn as amulets for apotropaic purposes or put to other unauthorized uses. The denunciations of clergymen such as John Chrysostom do not seem to have put an end to the practice, and the belief in the extraordinary protective powers of coins was still strong in Middle Byzantium³⁸. It has fairly been observed that they, together with the imitation-coins known as medallions, bells and Christograms, had ‘a propensity to pass through the permeable membrane that separated unofficial from official practices’³⁹. They had worth not only in commerce but also ‘in the invisible world of spirits and demons’. If coins, of all authority symbols, could be subsumed within unofficial belief systems, the same may be true of other, less obviously value-laden, objects in Konstantios’ museum, for all the authorities’ efforts to regularize the form and cult of Christian imagery in the era following Iconoclasm⁴⁰.

The papers in this collection may, therefore, through their heterogeneity bring us closer to understanding the complexity of Byzantine society itself. They show the outlines of a broad assortment of belief-complexes and structures for assuring mutual, imperial and supernatural aid. It was their coexistence that endowed Byzantium as an empire with its peculiar qualities of endurance and resilience. Time and again the political and military historian is left marvelling at the survival of the capital and its attendant idea of empire when no visible means of support were to hand. The spheres of ‘private’ and ‘public’ interests and of ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ beliefs, rites and practices were at least potentially discrete and that tensions between them were endemic can scarcely be denied. Yet a high degree of interaction between them and also of de facto coexistence was achieved: as with the material and heavenly forms of aid for the imperial order, a choice of support mechanisms was available to the individual. For example, when a member of a brotherhood developed testicular cancer at the age of sixty-two, he contemplated a surgical operation. At the same time he was indignant that this should be his ‘reward’ (*pleroma*) after many years of faithful service in the liturgical processions for John the Baptist and other saints. In the event, Saint Artemios heard his prayers and, happily, he was cured. The teller of this miracle-story shows no sense of incompatibility between recourse to surgery and the expectation of protection and wondrous cures from the saints; and service in collective liturgies was clearly expected to incur benefits for an individual: the two approaches were in competition rather than outright conflict⁴¹. The interweaving of self-help for the individual, public piety and belief in the blessings of the imperial order under God was supple and yet firm enough to bind a virtual archipelago of communities, regions and scattered enclaves together in one *basileia*. It may be that through the papers presented in this volume some of the less than obvious, yet not wholly invisible, qualities of Byzantium will begin to receive recognition.

³⁷ See J. RUSSELL, The Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period, in: MAGUIRE (ed.), *op.cit.*, 35–50, at 44.

³⁸ H. MAGUIRE, Magic and money in the early middle ages. *Speculum* 72 (1997) 1037–54, at 1040–4.

³⁹ MAGUIRE, Magic and money, 1039.

⁴⁰ H. MAGUIRE, Magic and the Christian Image, in: IDEM (ed.), *op. cit.*, 51–71, at 66–71.

⁴¹ A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, *Varia Graeca Sacra*. St Petersburg 1909, 29; ŠEVČENKO, *Servants of the Holy Icon*, 553.