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MIHAIL MITREA, Holiness on the Move: Mobility and Space in Byzantine Hagiography. London – New York: Routledge 2023, xvi + 255 pp.; 31 b/w ills. – ISBN 978-1-032-29079-9 (£120.00)[1]

• ROSEMARY MORRIS, York
(nikephoros_phokas@hotmail.com)

Do you sometimes feel left behind by new directions in Byzantine Studies? Do you wonder what younger scholars are focussing on? Have you managed to keep up with the "Spatial Turn"? If these questions strike a chord, then this is a book for you! It is also a book for you if you are in any way interested in Byzantine hagiography, especially in less familiar texts from less familiar places. This collection of essays, most ably edited by the Romanian scholar MIHAIL MITREA, arises from a research project which he led while a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at Newcastle University in the UK (2018–2020).[2] As part of the Project, a Workshop "Holiness on the Move: Travelling Saints in Byzantium" was held in 2019 and the present volume (rather more trendily re-titled!) contains contributions from the participants in that conference. The editor is to be congratulated on achieving publication so quickly and for a volume which has many virtues. The contributors are mainly younger scholars; many of them are from Eastern Europe and most of them do not have English as a first language. One would hardly guess this from the excellent English presented in all the contributions. The notes are full and informative and – a cause for celebration – extensive quotations from texts are given in the original Greek. In addition, each chapter is accompanied by a detailed Bibliography, efficiently divided into Primary and Secondary Sources, which really does help the reader to "get up to speed" with recent work. They are tremendously useful research tools in themselves, though somewhat overlong in the case of one contributor. One wonders how many readers of an English-language publication can approach a very long bibliography containing so many items in Serbian, Croatian and Bulgarian. My one major cavil with the presentation of the book is the quality of the illustrations. To be frank, they are too small, the quality is often bad, and some of them –

1. See Holiness-on-the-Move-Mobility-and-Space-in-Byzantine-Hagiography.
2. "Sacred Landscapes in Late Byzantium".

archaeological plans in Greek, for example – needed to be redrawn. Financial constraints (or the dictates of the publisher?) may be at the root of this, though the cost of the book is high, but it is a pity.

The book is divided into three sections: "Mobility and Space: Narratological Approaches"; "Monastic Mobility and Identity" and "Monastic Mobility; Experience and Representation", preceded by an Introduction from the Editor. This is an excellent *tour d'horizon* of recent work on aspects of Byzantine mobility, referencing projects in Vienna, KU Leuven and Royal Holloway, University of London as well as publications.[3] "Mobility" is clearly a fashionable topic in Byzantine Studies at the moment, so what does the Editor feel this volume have to offer? By focusing on hagiography, it aims to discuss the various ways in which mobility, which is interpreted in the widest sense (journeys both real and imagined; movement from open to enclosed spaces and even the significance of gesture are all examined) was both narrated and interpreted in saints' lives. As MITREA points out, Byzantine sanctity is closely associated with monasticism, thus the contributions also have much to tell us about the application of aspects of mobility to the spiritual development of those following the monastic life in its various forms and to the literary construction of holiness. The period covered is wide: from the edifying stories of the Desert Fathers, to a revisiting of the life of St John of Damascus in the early 14th century. The geographical coverage is extensive; we move from Constantinople and its hinterland, to Asia Minor, Greece, the Northern Balkans and Southern Italy. The wide-ranging nature of the contributions is one of the greatest assets of the volume.

The first section, "Mobility and Space: Narratological Approaches" is the one that will probably most interest those of a theoretical disposition. MARGARET MULLETT starts the ball rolling with "A Saint in Space: Mobility and Distance in the *Life* of Cyril Phileotes". Here, notions of "story space", "story worlds", "narrative universes" and "perceived" and "conceived" space are discussed with detailed reference to the *Life* by Nicholas Kataskepenos. The various stages in Cyril's life and travels are analysed using MIKHAIL BAKHTIN's notion of chronotopes – "the place where the knots of narrative are tied or untied" – and the work of EDWARD T. HALL

3. Vienna: "Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency in Byzantium"; "Enclosed and Secluded Places in Early and Middle Byzantine Hagiography", see language-text-and-script; Leuven: sacred-mobilities-in-byzantium-and-beyond; The volume edited by OLIVIER DELOUIS et al. Les mobilités monastiques en Orient et en Occident, Rome: Ecole française de Rome 2019, may be found on Open Access.

on proxemics: "man's use of space and perception of it", is used to analyse Cyril's spatial relationships with others. The reading of the text is extremely detailed, but one wonders whether this contribution is telling us more about the concerns of modern narratologists than about why Nicholas Kantaskepenos wrote as he did. What were his models? Do other contemporary hagiographies show similar tendencies? What, if any, was the Byzantine reception of this work? A more extensive Conclusion might perhaps have shed some light on these issues. We are on firmer ground with the second contribution. FLORIN LEONTE again focuses on a single text. His chapter, "Space, Narrative, and Compositional Structure: Constructing Authority in the *Life of Lazaros of Mount Galesion* (*BHG* 979)" has two aims: firstly, to present textual evidence about the construction of the image of Lazaros by his hagiographer Gregory Kellarites and, secondly, in doing so, to show "how space was experienced and conceptualised" in the Middle Byzantine period. There is a clear and cogent summary of the *Life* and its place in the hagiography of the eleventh century and modern works on concepts of space, especially ALEXEI LIDOV's coinage of the term *hierotopy*, are efficiently referenced. Gregory's aim, LEONTE maintains, was polemical: Lazaros' conflicts with local ecclesiastical grandees and rival monastic interests meant that it was vital that his spiritual authority and legitimacy be established. The process by which his hagiographer "homes in" on Lazaros' cell by narrowing the geographical focus of his narrative from the saint's empire-wide travels, to the foundation of his various establishments on Mount Galesion to, finally, his immediate social interactions with his disciples in his cell, convincingly illustrates the thesis that notions of space (province/village; inside/outside; lay/monastic) were all carefully and deliberately deployed. Lazaros was not only a saint for Galesion, but also for the Empire. In MIRCEA DULUȘ's contribution, "Boundaries of Holiness: Biography and Narrative Structure in John Xiphilinos' *Miracula* and *Passio* of St Eugenios of Trebizond", we are again concerned with hierotopy: "places become sacred as the past becomes localized in the present". In this particular case, the place to be "sanctified" is Trebizond, as DULUȘ argues that John Xiphilinos aimed to bring events – particularly miracles associated with St Eugenios' shrine – which supposedly took place in the Pontos, into the "the liturgical and cultural frame of Empire". Local saint made good, one might conclude. Interestingly, DULUȘ argues for a much later date for the composition of these works than has been previously suggested; for him John Xiphilinos was praising his native city's spiritual guardian at the end of his own life (probably after

1050) and from *outside* Trebizond, rather than as an inhabitant before he left for Constantinople in the 1030s. In the last chapter in the first section, MARKÉTA KULHÁNKOVÁ takes us back to the early Byzantine period (" 'I Went Aboard a Ship and Reached Byzantium:' The Motif of Travel in Edifying Stories"). Using material from the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, the *Lausiac History* and the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschos, KULHÁNKOVÁ demonstrates how two basic variants of the theme of travel are deployed: the journey as "frame" for a single story or a collection of stories, or the journey as a single motif within a single tale. Using the example of Daniel of Sketis' story of Eulogios the Stonecutter, she illustrates a number of important ways in which the motif of "travel" is used both in the literal and metaphorical sense in works where the spiritual journey is frequently of more significance that the physical one. Of particular interest is her deployment of MICHEL FOUCAULT's notion of *heterotopia*: a place where "function and order are different from everyday life"; miraculous things could happen in the desert, in ships, in tombs, in temples and in the humblest monastic cell.

In the second section, "Monastic Mobility and Identity", the aim is to show how hagiographers "employ monastic itineraries, spatial biographical information and the distribution of miracles to establish identity for their heroes." Here we have three really fascinating studies which deal with how Byzantine hagiographers located saintly figures both of their own times and of the distant past. LEV LUKHOVITSKIY ("The *Oration on St John of Damascus* by Constantine Akropolites (*BHG* 885) and its Source (*BHG* 884): A Spatial Reading") compares the late thirteenth-century *Oration* with its predecessor, known as the *Jerusalem Life*, probably written by the Patriarch John III of Antioch (996–1021). The central question for both hagiographers was how to deal with such a liminal figure. Where was John's homeland? Was he "one of our own" or "foreign"? The answers, as LUKHOVITSKIY demonstrates, changed over time. For the author of the *Jerusalem Life*, Damascus was a Hellenic/Roman enclave within an Arab kingdom which had no hard boundaries, so John could be identified as a Syrian Christian still in contact with Constantinople; for Akropolites, the Caliphate had long been a reality, it was distinct from "our domain" and thus John had to be reinvented as a Hellenic scholar who happened to live in Damascus in an exotic and alien environment. Here we can see a hagiographer taking account of contemporary political realities in his reframing of his subject's life. In contrast, JAMES MORTON's study ("Holiness Abroad: Greek Saints and Hagiography in Norman Italy") portrays the

insular world of Greek monastic hagiography in Southern Italy, where the presence of Norman rulers and settlers and Latin ecclesiastics barely merited a mention. Analysing six saints' lives dating from the late eleventh century to the first third of the thirteenth (with an excellent discussion of their manuscript tradition and preservation), he portrays a monastic world in which the long-established travel tropes of Greek hagiography – flight from Muslims; pilgrimages to the Holy Land, journeys to Constantinople to seek imperial patronage – were all still faithfully deployed. Journeys were still almost exclusively from west to east; until the disaster of 1204, the eyes of the Greek monks of Italy still turned towards the spiritual and political centre of Constantinople. If this contribution deals with the issue of what "being Byzantine" involved, the next chapter focuses on what "becoming Byzantine" might entail. In "Local Pilgrimage and Historical Identity in Slavonic Hagiography in Greek Translation. Two Accounts from the Archbishopric of Ohrid", GRIGORI SIMEONOV discusses the importance of mission in the religiously-motivated mobility of people and ideas. The two texts he uses – the *Long Life of St Clement of Ohrid* and the *Martyrion of the 15 Martyrs of Tiberioupolis* – both by Theophylact Hephaistos, Archbishop of Ohrid in the late eleventh century, demonstrate how Byzantine churchmen sought to create a history of Christian belief in Bulgaria and North Macedonia by emphasising the efficacy of long-established healing shrines and the miracles associated with them. The activity of Bulgarian rulers in establishing these sites and by acquiring relics for them is seen as fully supportive of Christianizing mission and the Church's encouragement of pilgrimage to these shrines allowed these aspects of Christian belief to be widely spread.

Part Three of the Collection ("Monastic Mobility, Experience and Representation") begins with a contribution which continues the theme of pilgrimage. GEORGIOS MAKRIS' chapter ("Pilgrimage in Thirteenth-century Byzantine Greece: the *Life* of Barnabas and Sophronios") is a welcome discussion of both textual and archaeological material. The *Life*, written by the monk Akakios of the Monastery of St Sabas in Palestine, purports to describe the travels of two fourth-century saints, but may, in fact, reflect a journey undertaken by the author himself. MAKRIS shows how details of the sites visited described in the *Life* dovetail with the physical remains which survive today and has much of interest to say about the practicalities of travel, the rituals of veneration, and what he terms the "landscape of pilgrimage" in this period. The last two papers are relatively short, but both deal with important aspects of mobility. PARASKEVI TOMA's

chapter ("Theodore the Stoudite on Exile") shows how Theodore varied his approach to the theme in his Letters and in his Catechisms; in the former he emphasised how exile was a consequence of political action and deprived him of the ability to live the ideal – communal – monastic life; in the latter, the emphasis on the spiritual connotations of exile – martyrdom, persecution and ill-treatment – reflected the realities of his own life. Context was all. The last contribution to the volume could well have been the first. In "The Metaphor of Road in Byzantine Hagiography", YULIA MANTOVA makes use of the indispensable *TLG* to investigate how the words *hodos* and a series of cognates are used in hagiographies of the fourth to twelfth centuries. Interestingly, she establishes that they are used far more in metaphorical instances ("life"; "speech", "method" or "means" and "human behaviour" can all be described in terms of "roads") than in non-metaphorical contexts. Were Byzantines happier to travel in their minds then, than in reality? MANTOVA suggests that it was only in the period from the eighth to the twelfth centuries that a "positive idea" of travel emerged. Be that as it may, this contribution neatly illustrates the metaphorical potential of one particular aspect of Byzantine mobility.

What were my general impressions of the volume? I must confess that I found some of the theoretical terminology challenging and the old debate about "jargon" which has been running in Byzantine Studies circles (and, of course, elsewhere!) for nearly forty years reared its ugly head yet once more.[4] At moments, I would have liked more explanation of *why* a particular theoretical approach is useful and *what* it might tell us about Byzantine audiences and their concerns rather than those of modern scholars. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on all of us to try to keep up and to recognise how new approaches and "turns" may drive our subject forward. This is a book full of new information, new insights and, most importantly, new voices. I learned a lot.

Keywords

Byzantium; hagiography; monasticism; mobility

4. See, for example an early salvo: JOHN HALDON, 'Jargon' vs. 'the facts'? Byzantine History-writing and Contemporary Debates. Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 9 (1985) pp. 95–132.