

Biography of a Landmark

Mediterranean Art Histories

STUDIES IN VISUAL CULTURES AND ARTISTIC TRANSFERS
FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE MODERN PERIOD

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Biography of a Landmark

*The Chora Monastery/Kariye
Camii in Constantinople/Istanbul from
Late Antiquity to the 21st Century*

Edited by

Manuela Studer-Karlen



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Robert G. Ousterhout (1950–2023)

Dedication and Acknowledgement

Just a few days before Robert G. Ousterhout passed away, he wrote to me: “I’m gratified that my last publication(s) return to the Chora, where everything began.”

With Bob we lose a highly respected scholar of Byzantine studies and the leading expert on Chora Church, who always opened up new frontiers and whose efficient and precise way of working set a great example for all of us. We are struck with profound sadness, but also with an incredible sense of gratitude. This book is dedicated to a great scholar and, above all, to a dear friend. And although Bob was not privileged to hold the printed version in his hands, we will always think of him when we hold this book.

In August 2020, following the November 2019 order by the Turkish Council of State, the status of the Kariye Museum in Istanbul was reverted to that of a mosque. The former monastic church of Saint Saviour in Chora thus entered a new phase of its long history. This book considers the Chora from a transcultural perspective by retracing its continuous transformations in form and function from Late Antiquity to the present day. Rather than looking at monuments as living remnants of a lost world, the main goal is to develop approaches for analysing more deeply the dynamics through which historical landmarks are repeatedly reshaped and thereby gradually invested with new meanings.

I offer my warmest thanks to Michele Bacci and Alessandra Ricci, with whom I was fortunate to organize the virtual conference “Biography of a Landmark. The Chora Monastery and Kariye Camii from Late Antiquity to the 21st Century” in Fribourg (27–28 April 2021). This volume would not have been possible without the committed participation of the speakers and, ultimately, the contributors, to whom I extend my warmest thanks. I wish to thank also Julia Oswald for her excellent copyediting of the texts, the *Mediterranean Art Histories* [MAH] editors, Hannah Baader, Michele Bacci, and Gerhard Wolf, for including this volume in the series, as well as Teddi Dols, the Brill Editor/Editor Middle East and Islamic Studies in charge of the series, and Anita Opdam, Production Editor. Moreover, I express my gratitude to the Swiss National Science Foundation for its generous financial support for this publication.

Manuela Studer-Karlen

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Notes on Contributors

Michele Bacci

is Professor of Medieval Art at the University of Fribourg and a member of the Academy of Europe. He is the author of numerous studies on artistic and cultural interactions in the medieval Mediterranean and beyond, as well as on the history of the religious practices associated with cult objects and holy sites. His books include *Il pennello dell'Evangelista* (1998), *Pro remedio animae* (2000), *Lo spazio dell'anima* (2005), *San Nicola il Grande Taumaturgo* (2009), *The Many Faces of Christ* (2014), and *The Mystic Cave. A History of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem* (2017). His new book, *Veneto-Byzantine Interactions in Icon Painting (1280–1450)* (in Greek), was published in 2021 by the Academy of Athens.

Glenn Bowman

initially trained in literary criticism with a focus on medieval pilgrimage before moving into social anthropology. In the early 1980s he lived for two years in Jerusalem's Old City, studying holy places and travelling with pilgrim groups. He subsequently became concerned with Palestinian identities under occupation, a topic entailing also examination of 'shared' holy places with attention to intercommunal relations. Cognate work followed in former Yugoslavia and on both sides of the Cypriot Divide. Although he continues his research in Palestine, he is retired and an Emeritus Professor in Socio-Historical Anthropology affiliated with the University of Kent, Canterbury.

Didier Clerc

studied classics at the University of Fribourg, where he obtained his PhD with a dissertation on Theodore Metochites's *Comparison of Demosthenes and Aristides*. His contributions focus not only on Metochites but also Lucian of Samosata, ancient Greek grammarians, and reception studies more broadly. He is currently a fellow of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences at the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* (Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Munich).

Robert G. Ousterhout

was Professor Emeritus in the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. He is the author most recently of *Visualizing Community: Art, Material Culture, and Settlement in Byzantine Cappadocia* (2017) and *Eastern Medieval Architecture: The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands* (2019), as well as co-editor of *Piroska and the Pantokrator* (2019), with

Marianne Sághy, and *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past* (2020), with Margaret Mullett. His fieldwork has concentrated on Byzantine architecture, monumental art, and urbanism in Constantinople, Thrace, Cappadocia, and Jerusalem. Since 2011 he has co-directed the “Cappadocia in Context” graduate seminar, an international summer field school through Koç University, Istanbul. He was awarded the 2021 Haskins Medal by the Medieval Academy of America for *Eastern Medieval Architecture*.

Nadia Podzemskaja

is a research fellow at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes, Paris). Her research intersects with philology, the history of art, and aesthetics. She has published widely on the theoretical writings of Wassily Kandinsky, including *Colore, Simbolo, Immagine. Origine della teoria di Kandinsky* (2000) and a complete annotated edition of *On the Spiritual in Art* in Russian and German (2020). Her work also concerns the reception in Russia of Leonardo da Vinci and the Italian Renaissance, the 1920s history of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences, Moscow, and the history of the Byzantine Library, Paris. She served as editor for the volumes *Leonardo in Russia* (2012), with Romano Nanni, and *Art is a Language – The Language of Art. GAKhN and Russian Aesthetic Theory of the 1920s* (2017), with Nikolai S. Plotnikov and Julija Jakimenko, as well as for the special journal issues “Art and Abstraction” (*Ligeia*, 2009) and “La Russie et l’Antiquité” (*Revue des études slaves*, 2016).

Athanasios Semoglou

was born in Thessaloniki, where he studied archaeology and art before pursuing his postgraduate work in Belgrade (Faculty of Philosophy) and Paris (Paris 1). He completed his doctoral dissertation at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, as a fellow of the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation. He is currently Professor of Byzantine Art and Archaeology in the Department of History and Archaeology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His research interests include Byzantine and post-Byzantine iconography, mainly of the transitional periods, and the Byzantine murals at Mount Athos.

Manuela Studer-Karlen

is Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) Professor at the University of Bern. Her research has been funded by fellowships from Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., the SNSF, and the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation, among others. Her first book dealt with representations of the deceased on early

Christian sarcophagi (2012). She is the recipient of the 2017 Franz Joseph II Liechtenstein Prize (University of Fribourg) for her habilitation work on Christ Anapeson, which was published in 2022. Her research centres on the history of visual-cultural processes in Late Antiquity, the interactions among text, image, and space in Byzantine churches, medieval Georgian art, and liturgy.

M. Baha Tanman

graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts of the School of Architecture, Istanbul, and received his PhD from Istanbul University's Department of Art History. He is currently Emeritus Lecturer in the same department, as well as Scientific Committee Head for the Suna and İnan Kıracı Foundation, Istanbul Research Institute. His research mainly concerns Turkish architecture from the period of the Anatolian emirates to the fall of the Ottoman Empire.