

**Book Review: M. CAMPAGNOLO - P. MAGDALINO - M. MARTINIANI-REBER - A.-L. REY (eds.), L'aniconisme dans l'art religieux byzantin, Actes du colloque de Genève (1-3 Octobre 2009), Musées d'art et d'histoire de Genève, La Pomme d'or, Geneva 2015**

*Maria LEONTSINI*

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.11041](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.11041)

---

Copyright © 2017, Maria LEONTSINI



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### To cite this article:

LEONTSINI, M. (2017). Book Review: M. CAMPAGNOLO - P. MAGDALINO - M. MARTINIANI-REBER - A.-L. REY (eds.), L'aniconisme dans l'art religieux byzantin, Actes du colloque de Genève (1-3 Octobre 2009), Musées d'art et d'histoire de Genève, La Pomme d'or, Geneva 2015. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 26(2), 509–513.  
<https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.11041>

M. CAMPAGNOLO – P. MAGDALINO – M. MARTINIANI-REBER – A.-L. REY (eds.), *L'aniconisme dans l'art religieux byzantin*, Actes du colloque de Genève (1-3 Octobre 2009), Musées d'art et d'histoire de Genève, La Pomme d'or, Geneva 2015, pp. xviii+416. ISBN 978-2-8306-0257-9 [Musées d'art]. 978-2-9700763-2-2 [La Pomme d'or Publishing]

This volume includes the communications of a colloquium held in 2009 at the Museum of History and Art and the University of Geneva, plus the paper of Klimis Aslanidis, entitled *Remarks on the architecture of the church of Hagia Kyriaki at Apeiranthos, Naxos* (pp. 223-229 and 337-349 with 21 figs), presented in the round table which took place after the colloquium, as pointed in the editors' forward (pp. xi-xii). This paper clarifies issues relating to the construction and dating of the monument and instigates broader reflections on architectural patterns that emerged during the transitional period between the seventh and ninth centuries. In the *Introduction* (pp. xiii-xvii) Paul Magdalino underlines the need to tackle afresh the question of Iconoclasm in the wake of chronological reappraisals of the aniconic mural paintings, assumed most likely to belong to a broader time frame that extends beyond the time limits of official Iconoclasm. Thus, he points out that this volume offers further stimulation for painstaking reviews of aniconic practices and the disputes regarding sacred images. He also notes that the volume enhances the discussion from different but complementary viewpoints, providing answers or raising new questions on issues that still remain unclear, such as the architectural setting of Naxos' iconoclastic frescoes, the ideology of Byzantine Iconoclasm, the use of aniconic motifs in different artistic and religious contexts, the reception of images in Cappadocia, Syria and Palestine and the implementation of aniconism in the periphery of Byzantium and in the Arab world.

The text of the opening lecture by Marie-France Auzépy, under the title *La signification religieuse de l'aniconisme Byzantine* (pp. 1-41 and 233-243 with 15

figs), identifies the Isaurian architectural and the iconographic model, along with the epigraphy, and the means that all this were represented in the well-known monuments of the Iconoclast era, such as Hagia Eirene in Constantinople, Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki and, mainly, the Koimesis of Theotokos in Nikaia (table p. 25), as well as the lesser-known rock cut church in Midye (Medeia, Salmydessos in Thrace). Also quite instructive for an understanding of ideas prevailing in that period is the author's quest for the place of Eucharist in worship and liturgy and the exaltation of Trinity as being formulated in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* attributed to patriarch Germanos I. In the next paper, by Philippe Borgeaud, entitled *Imitatio diabolica: démons et image* (pp. 43-48), images are examined from the point of view of the doctrine of dualism in Jewish tradition, also in the early Western theology, the Koran, and Bogomil legends. Silvia Naef, in her study on *Islam and Images: A Complex Relation* (pp. 48-57 and 245-248 with 4 figs), notes that the concept of iconophobia was an invention of the modern idea of orientalism and that, despite the rejection of iconicity as an idolatrous concept, the figurative tradition is evident in castles and palaces dating to the early days of Islam, as well as in the iconography of the illuminated manuscripts and the development of minor arts. The paper of Ioanna Rapti, under the title *Le statut des images dans l'art et le culte arméniens* (pp. 59-74 and 249-255 with 11 figs), examines the formation of attitudes on images in Armenia, conditioned by the absence of a Hellenic substratum while maintaining affinities with Semitic traditions. In her paper on *Textiles et décors peints aniconiques* (pp. 57-84 and 257-264 with 16 figs), Marielle Martiniani-Reber explores the aniconic adornment and motifs omnipresent in mosaic pavements before Iconoclasm, also common in fabrics, étoffes or silks. Furthermore, she compares their style with the decorative aniconic ornamentations of the churches of Naxos. Paul Magdalino's contribution, which bears the title *Le patriarche Jean le Grammairien et la théorie de l'aniconisme* (pp. 85-94), reassesses the profile of the last patriarch of Iconoclasm, a man of high literacy with philosophical and scientific interests, as shown in extant fragments of his works, who enjoyed the full confidence of the court. These spiritual pursuits justify the influence of his perceptions on aniconicity. The next paper, by Juan Signes Codoñer on *Theodore Studite and the Melkite Patriarchs on Icon Worship* (pp. 95-103), researches the concepts on the cult of icons among the Melkites re-examining the relevant evidence found in the letters of Theodore Studite sent to primates of the Eastern patriarchates and attempting to elucidate their - not always apparent - reactions with regard to the intellectual controversies in Constantinople. J. M. Featherstone, in his study under

the title *Icons and Cultural Identity* (pp. 105-113), reveals the established perceptions on icons formatted before and in the course of Iconoclasm and identified in imperial practices and religious views invoked by the patriarchs Germanos, Nikephoros and Photios, as arguments in favour of their iconophile views. Nano Chatzidakis' paper, entitled *Le sujet de la restitution du culte des images dans les icônes: variations du contenu dogmatique* (pp. 115-125, 265-270 with 16 figs), analyzes the development of the theme of the restoration of Orthodoxy in Cretan icons cultivated intensively by the intellectual elites of Constantinople shortly before their migration to the island in the 15th century, reinforcing and encouraging the later propagation of this topic. Catherine Jolivet-Lévy (*De l'aniconisme en Cappadoce: quelques réflexions à la lumière de découvertes récentes*, pp. 127-139, 271-284 with 27 figs) presents two new Cappadocian monuments with aniconic frescoes in Uçhisar and, whilst not denying the relation of aniconicity with the rise of heretical trends, draws attention to the chronological limits of aniconic patterns extended from the Early Christian era to the ninth-tenth centuries; furthermore she points to the coexistence of figurative and non-figurative traditions and the connections of the latter with the lore of folk art. Henry Maguire's article, entitled «*They worshipped the creature rather than the Creator*». *Animals in 8th century art and polemic* (pp. 141-147 and 285-289 with 9 figs), brings together two contradictory views observed in mosaics and in monumental painting. The deliberate erasures of the personifications of *Ktisis*, *Ananeosis*, *Euandria* and *Dynamis* from a house in Seleukeia Pieria (the first two having also appeared in churches by the sixth century) are related to the rejection of religious imagery by Philoxenos of Mabbug and Severos of Antioch. Conversely, the destruction of animal representations and motifs related to nature in known churches of Palestine in a similar manner was a response to the propagation of icons in the period, and foreshadowed the post-iconoclastic predilection for panels of opus sectile rather than of tesserae. In her contribution entitled *Les peintures iconoclastes d'Al Oda en Isaurie. Un exemple de la persistance iconodoule dans le décor iconoclaste* (pp. 149-158 and 291-299 with 10 figs), Nicole Thierry offers a conceptual analysis of the program of the Church of Al Oda which belonged to a monastic community situated two kilometres from the Early Byzantine monastery of Alahan. Inscriptions invoking Old Testament's biblical figures, the Virgin and Christ and the dedication of a *kentarchos*, dated between 815 and 842, are attributed to the persistence of ancient themes and the use of a cryptic form adapted to the iconoclastic vocabulary. The following paper by Maria Xenaki, bearing the title *Ornement et texte: le cas de l'ensemble funéraire de Karşıbecak à*

*Göreme, Cappadoce* (pp. 159-169 and 301-308 with 15 figs), presents the non-figurative ornamental and symbolic decoration of the iconographic program of a church in Göreme, serving funeral rites and dated after 863, when Byzantine military presence in the region was restored. The decorated surface was organized in thematic units around the main theme of the cross, associated with a series of liturgical inscriptions. Charalampos Pennas' article, entitled *Reassessing the non-iconic decoration in the Byzantine Cyclades* (pp. 170-174), draws attention to the spatial planning of the tower church of Christos Photodotis near the village of Danakos, in a nodal site and an ideal surveillance point on the east side of Naxos. The dimensions of the original monument, its non-iconic wall paintings and ceramic evidence from the surrounding area of Hagia Kyriaki Kallonis in Apeiranthos suggest a renewal of local society under imperial supervision that flourished from the seventh to the ninth century. Maria Campagnolo-Pothitou, in her study under the title «*Comme un relent d'iconoclasme*» *au début du XIIe siècle: le témoignage sigillographique* (pp. 175-191 and 309-311 with 4 figs), has published the aniconic seal that belonged to *sebastos* Georgios Magganes, a high official during Alexios I Komnenos' reign, closely related to Anna Komnene. The seal is compared to six other specimen bearing similar inscriptions, stating that it does not bear a holy image due to piety (ἐξ εὐλαβείας οὐ φέρειν θεῖον τύπον). These seals were connected with the doctrine of Eustratios of Nicaea (1050-1120), arguing that an icon was a representation of just the appearance, not the substance of men and animals, resuming the debate on iconicity and worship in the end of the Middle Byzantine period. In the next paper, entitled *L'archéologie des églises aniconiques de Naxos* (pp. 193-204 and 313-316 with 10 figs), Jim Crow and Sam Turner indicate that the number of churches in Naxos, mainly concentrated on the west side of the island, exceeded by far the normal density of churches prior to 900 in other areas of Greece and may be compared with the respective quantities of the cave dwelling churches of Cappadocia. They further observe that such an intensive activity, which certainly presents dating problems, developed during the Arab expansion in the Aegean Sea. Cypriot churches with aniconic paintings dated between the eighth and tenth centuries constitute the topic of the paper of Christodoulos A. Hadjichristodoulou, entitled *Aniconic Cyprus* (pp. 205-210 and 317-322 with 23 figs). The paper by Matteo Campagnolo, asking *Y a-t-il une monnaie iconoclaste?* (pp. 211-222 and 327-335 with 19 figs), makes a systematic review on the symbolic projection of the Cross, which had appeared on fifth century coins and was gradually replacing the Constantinian chrism. As the author states,

the Cross was already an established symbol in the period of Iconoclasm that was adopted progressively in iconography and in fact remained a symbolic image par excellence of iconoclast emperors that lasted beyond their era. The volume concludes with a bibliography (pp. 347-394) and index (pp. 395-416).

The book succeeds in placing the multiple aspects of image worship in a new context and scope, while reconsidering the aesthetic values of aniconic decoration dispersed in different cultural and geographical contexts within the limits of Byzantine territory as well as beyond it. The issue applies not only to Christian worship but more so to the other monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam. Of great significance is the re-examination of texts alongside a survey of religious performances and behavioural patterns vis-à-vis images traced in monuments or illustrated in later iconographic tradition. Coinage, seals, fabrics and sculptures are innovatively connected together contributing to a clarification of attitudes and beliefs and also proceed to helpful suggestions and comments relating to the criticisms of the cult of icons existed before Iconoclasm but continued also under different circumstances beyond this period.

MARIA LEONTSINI

Institute of Historical Research/NHRF

