

Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art

This book explores the range of images in Byzantine art known as donor portraits. It concentrates on the distinctive, supplicatory contact shown between ordinary, mortal figures and their holy, supernatural interlocutors. The topic is approached from a range of perspectives, including art history, theology, structuralist and post-structuralist anthropological theory, and contemporary symbol and metaphor theory. Rico Franses argues that the term “donor portraits” is inappropriate for the category of images to which it conventionally refers and proposes an alternative title: contact portraits. He contends that the most important feature of the scenes consists in the active role that they play within the belief systems of the supplicants. They are best conceived of not simply as passive expressions of stable, pre-existing ideas and concepts, but as dynamic proponents in a fraught, constantly shifting landscape. The book is important for all scholars and students of Byzantine art and religion.

RICO FRANCES is Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts and Art History, American University of Beirut, and Director of the University Art Galleries and Collections.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-41859-1 — Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art
Rico Franses
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art

The Vicissitudes of Contact between Human and
Divine

RICO FRANSES
American University of Beirut



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108418591

DOI: 10.1017/9781108290517

© Rico Franses 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Franses, Rico, author.

Title: Donor portraits in Byzantine art : the vicissitudes of contact between human and divine / Rico Franses, American University of Beirut.

Description: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018025219 | ISBN 9781108418591 (alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Portraits, Byzantine. | Benefactors in art. | Byzantine Empire – Religious life and customs.

Classification: LCC N7592 .F73 2018 | DDC 709.02/14–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018025219>

ISBN 978-1-108-41859-1 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

List of Illustrations [page vi]

Acknowledgments [xiii]

Introduction: Methodologies for the Study of Donor Portraits [1]

1 The History and Problematic of the Donor Portrait [17]

2 On Meaning in Portraits: The Knot of Intention and the Question of the Patron's Share [63]

3 Awaiting the End after the End: Sin, Absolution, and the Afterlife [87]

4 Exchange and Non-Exchange: The Gift between Human and Divine [152]

5 The Literal, the Symbolic, and the Contact Portrait: On Belief in the Interaction between Human and Divine [194]

Postscript: The Problem of Terminology Again: Donor Portraits and Contact Portraits [223]

Bibliography [228]

Index [245]

Illustrations

- 0.1 Theodore Metochites before Christ, mosaic in inner narthex, Kariye Camii, Istanbul, 1316–21. Picture: ICFA.KC.BIA.0018, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [*page 2*]
- 0.2 Leo before the Virgin, Leo Bible, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, Reg. gr. 1, fol. 2v, 930–40. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [3]
- 0.3 Constantine and Maria Akropolites in the lower left and right corners of revetted icon of Hodeghetria, State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow, late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Reproduced by permission of State Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow. [5]
- 0.4 Monk Manuel before Virgin and Child and Angels, painting in apse, Church of the Panhagia Mavriotissa, Kastoria, thirteenth century. Picture courtesy of Angeliki Strati. [6]
- 1.1 King Dragutin, Queen Katelina, and King Milutin, painting in inner narthex, Church of St. Achilleos, Arilje, Serbia, 1296. Picture: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. [19]
- 1.2 Despot Oliver, painting in narthex, Church of the Holy Archangels, Lesnovo, FYR Macedonia, 1341. Picture: Andrea Jemolo / Scala / Art Resource, NY. [20]
- 1.3 Coronation of John II Komnenos and his son Alexios, Gospels, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, Urb. gr. 2, fol. 19v, first half of the twelfth century. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [25]
- 1.4 Zoe and Constantine Monomachos before Christ, mosaic in south gallery of the Church of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, 1028–50. Picture: MS.BZ.004–03-01–02-022–084, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [29]

- 1.5 John Komnenos and Irene with the Virgin, mosaic in south gallery of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, 1118–34. Picture: MS.BZ.004–03-01–02-020–075, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [30]
- 1.6 Emperor Alexios Komnenos approaching Christ, *Panoplia Dogmatica*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, gr. 666–Synodal 387, fol. 2v, c. 1120. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [33]
- 1.7 Church Fathers, *Panoplia Dogmatica*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, gr. 666–Synodal 387, fol. 1v, c. 1120. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [34]
- 1.8 Emperor Alexios Komnenos, *Panoplia Dogmatica*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, gr. 666–Synodal 387, fol. 2r, c. 1120. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [35]
- 1.9 Emperors Constantine and Justinian with the Virgin, mosaic in southwest vestibule, Church of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, late tenth century. Picture: MS.BZ.004–03-01–02-023–002, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [37]
- 1.10 Bishop Ecclesius led to Christ by an angel, mosaic in apse of the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, consecrated 548. Picture courtesy of Jeffrey D. Walters / Getty. [40]
- 1.11 Young boy and man approaching S. Demetrios, mosaic on west wall, Church of Hagios Demetrios, Thessalonika, before 620. Picture from C. Bakirtzis, E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou, and C. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Mosaics of Thessaloniki, 4th–14th century* (Athens: Kapon Editions, 2012). [41]
- 1.12 Supplicant before St. Irene, icon, St Katherine’s Monastery, Sinai, eighth or ninth century. Picture courtesy of Father Justin, St. Katherine’s Monastery, Sinai. [42]
- 1.13 Supplicant George, painting, north wall of sanctuary, Church of Hagios Stephanos, Kastoria, 1338. Picture courtesy of Annemarie Weyl Carr. [43]
- 1.14 Supplicant before the Virgin, Lectionary, Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos, ms. A 103, fol. 3v, twelfth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art

- and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, Thessalonika. [45]
- 1.15 Monk Theophanes before the Virgin, The Gospel of Theophanes, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1960 (710–5), fol. 1v, c. 1125–50. Picture: National Gallery of Victoria. [46]
- 1.16 Worshiper approaching Shamash, Old Babylonian seal, the Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago, 1700–1530 BC. Picture courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. [48]
- 1.17 Supplicants approaching deity, impression of cylinder seal (Old Akkadian Worship Scenes), Old Akkadian, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, c. 2340–2200 BC. Picture: AN1930.100, Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. [48]
- 1.18 Worshiper, deities, and god, impression of cylinder seal (Old Akkadian Worship Scenes), Old Akkadian, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, c. 2350–2200 BC. Picture: AN1931.111, Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. [49]
- 1.19 Christ and St. John Chrysostom, Gospels, Iveron Monastery, Mount Athos, ms. 5, fol. 456v, thirteenth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, Thessalonika. [50]
- 1.20 Supplicant John led by the Virgin Mary, Gospels, Iveron Monastery, Mount Athos, ms. 5, fol. 457r, thirteenth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, Thessalonika. [51]
- 1.21 Hadrian sacrificing to Diana, sculpture, Arch of Constantine, Rome, after AD 130. Picture: Lucio Ruiz Pastor / Sebnun Photo / Getty. [52]
- 1.22 Huntsman offering a hare to Artemis, floor mosaic in Constantinian Villa, Antioch, mid-fourth century AD, now in Louvre Museum, Paris. DEA Picture Library / Getty. [53]
- 1.23 Worshipers bring a goat to an altar to sacrifice to Hygieia and Asklepios, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, shortly after 350 BC. Picture: V. von Eickstedt. Copyright © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Receipts Fund. [54]

- 1.24 King Jehu before Shalmanesser III, Black Obelisk of Shalmanesser III, British Museum, London, c. 740 BC. Picture: Werner Forman / Getty. [55]
- 1.25 Conquest and Clemency relief of Marcus Aurelius, Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome, AD 176–80. Picture: G. Nimatallah / Getty. [56]
- 1.26 George of Antioch before the Virgin, mosaic, originally probably in narthex, Church of the Martorana, Palermo, c. 1140. Picture: DEA / G. Dagli Orti / Getty. [58]
- 1.27 Basil before the Virgin, Lectionary, Greek Patriarchate, Jerusalem, Megale Panhagia 1, fol. 1v, 1061. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University. [59]
- 1.28 Emperor Justinian and entourage, mosaic in apse, Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, consecrated 548. Picture: Bettmann / Getty. [60]
- 1.29 Imperial procession, Ara Pacis Augustae, Rome, 13–19 BC. Picture: G. Nimatallah / Getty. [61]
- 2.1 Emperor before Christ, mosaic in narthex, Church of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, late ninth or early tenth century. Picture: MS. BZ.004–03-01–02-004–079, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [64]
- 3.1 Last Judgment, mosaic on west wall, Church of Sta. Maria Assunta, Torcello, twelfth century. Picture: Roberto Soncin Gerometta / Getty. [88]
- 3.2 Detail, Hell, Last Judgment, Church of Sta. Maria Assunta, Torcello, twelfth century. Picture: De Agostini / G. Sioen / Getty. [90]
- 3.3 Detail, Paradise, Last Judgment, Church of Sta. Maria Assunta, Torcello, twelfth century. Picture: Ivan Vdovin / Alamy Stock Photo. [91]
- 3.4 Last Judgment, Gospel, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, gr. 74, fol. 51v, eleventh century. Picture: Bibliothèque nationale de France. [94]
- 3.5 Last Judgment, Sacra Parallela, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, gr. 923, fol. 68v, ninth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and Bibliothèque nationale de France. [95]

- 3.6 Detail, Last Judgment, Church of Sta. Maria Assunta, Torcello, twelfth century. Picture: Ivan Vdovin / Alamy Stock Photo. [96]
- 3.7 Last Judgment, painting in eastern arch of the parekklesion, Kariye Camii, Istanbul, first quarter of the fourteenth century. Picture: ICFA.KC.BIA.1033, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [97]
- 3.8 Souls in the palm of God's hand, painting in western arch of the parekklesion, Kariye Camii, Istanbul, first quarter of the fourteenth century. Picture: ICFA.KC.BIA.1248, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [98]
- 3.9 Angel touches soul, detail, Last Judgment, Kariye Camii, Istanbul, first quarter of the fourteenth century. Picture: ICFA.KC.BIA.1043, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [100]
- 3.10 Monk Sabbas before Virgin and Child, psalter, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos, ms. 65, fol. 12v, twelfth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, Thessalonika. [101]
- 3.11 Monk Sabbas before Christ (upper); Monk Sabbas before fire (lower), psalter, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos, ms. 65, fol. 11r, twelfth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, Thessalonika. [102]
- 3.12 Death scene (upper); Judgment scene (lower), psalter, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos, ms. 65, fol. 11v, twelfth century. Picture courtesy of the Kurt Weitzmann Archive, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, and the Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, Thessalonika. [104]
- 3.13 Soul-weighing scene, detail, Last Judgment, Kariye Camii, Istanbul, first quarter of the fourteenth century. Picture: ICFA.KC.BIA.1009, Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC. [107]

- 3.14 Harrowing of Hell, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, lat. 9820, fol. 9r, tenth century. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [136]
- 3.15 Anastasis, mosaic in north bay, Katholikon, Nea Moni, Chios, mid-eleventh century. Picture: Leemage / Getty. [137]
- 3.16 Last Judgment, Topography of Kosmas Indicopleustes, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, gr. 699, fol. 89r, mid-ninth century. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [138]
- 3.17 Neophytos and angels, painting in sanctuary of Enkleistera, Paphos, Cyprus, late twelfth century. Picture: Hemis / Alamy Stock Photo. [139]
- 3.18 Angel pushes sinners into flames, psalter, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, gr. 752, fol. 28r, 1059. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [141]
- 3.19 Heavenly Ladder of John Klimakos, icon, St. Katherine's Monastery, Sinai, late twelfth century. Picture courtesy of Father Justin, St. Katherine's Monastery, Sinai. [146]
- 4.1 Makar and Constantine before St. Nikolas, Leo Bible, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, Reg. gr. 1, fol. 3r, 930–40. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [153]
- 4.2 Emperor, Archangel Michael, John Chrysostom, Homilies of John Chrysostom, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Coislin 79, fol. 2v, eleventh century. Picture: Bibliothèque nationale de France. [156]
- 4.3 Monk Sabbas before emperor, Homilies of John Chrysostom, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Coislin 79, fol. 2bis-r, eleventh century. Picture: Bibliothèque nationale de France. [158]
- 4.4 Emperor and courtiers, Homilies of John Chrysostom, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Coislin 79, fol. 2r, eleventh century. Picture: Bibliothèque nationale de France. [159]
- 4.5 Imperial coronation, Homilies of John Chrysostom, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Coislin 79, fol. 2bis-v, eleventh century. Picture: Bibliothèque nationale de France. [160]

- 4.6 Head of emperor, detail, Fig. 4.5, imperial coronation, Homilies of John Chrysostom, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Coislin 79, fol. 2bis-v. Picture after I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). [162]
- 4.7 Head of emperor, detail, Fig. 4.4, emperor and courtiers, Homilies of John Chrysostom, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Coislin 79, fol. 2r. Picture after Spatharakis, *Portrait*. [165]
- 4.8 Imperial coronation, psalter, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, Barb. gr. 372, fol. 5r, c. 1090–1100. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [183]
- 5.1 Empress Theodora and entourage, mosaic in apse, Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, consecrated 548. Picture: Granger Historical Picture Archive / Alamy Stock Photo. [196]
- 5.2 Virgin and Child, Typicon of the Convent of Our Lady of Certain Hope, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College gr. 35, fol. 10v, fourteenth century. Picture by permission of the Rector and Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford. [204]
- 5.3 Theodule and Euphrosyne, Typicon of the Convent of Our Lady of Certain Hope, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College gr. 35, fol. 11r, fourteenth century. Picture by permission of the Rector and Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford. [205]

Acknowledgments

I offer grateful thanks to the many teachers, professors, and colleagues who have exerted an influence on this book, either indirectly, by changing my way of thinking about the subject, or directly, by reading and commenting on earlier drafts, or, indeed, by doing both. These include George Galavaris†, Robin Cormack, Glenn Peers, Charles Barber, Liz James, Jas Elsner, Antony Eastmond, Antony Cutler, Margaret Mullett, and Robert Nelson. Thanks too to the rigorous but anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press, and to Father Joseph Munitiz who, a long time ago, shared with me his thoughts on the Byzantine afterlife, as well as his invaluable card index on the topic.

In the complicated task of gathering photographs and permissions, special thanks go to Maria Vassilaki and Vassiliki Dimitropoulou, who both went well beyond the call of duty in this regard. Dr. Dimitropoulou also provided assistance with Greek editing. Further help with photographs was provided by Alyson Williams, Reader Services Librarian at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, and Julia Gearhart of the Visual Resources Collection, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

Support for various aspects of the research and publication of the book has been provided by the Office of the Dean, Pratt Institute, New York, and by the Office of the Dean, American University of Beirut. Many thanks go to them as well.

Finally, I add my name to the long list of authors who have expressed their gratitude to Michael Sharp and the team at Cambridge University Press for the extraordinary work that they do in bringing books to fruition.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-41859-1 – Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art
Rico Franses
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
