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978-1-107-03496-9 - The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries

Paroma Chatterjee

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THE LIVING ICON IN BYZANTIUM AND ITALY

The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy is the first book to explore the emergence and function of a novel pictorial format in the Middle Ages, the *vita* icon, which displayed the magnified portrait of a saint framed by scenes from his or her life. While the East used the *vita* icon for depicting the most popular figures in the Orthodox calendar, the Latin West deployed it most vigorously in the service of Francis of Assisi. This book offers a compelling account of how this type of image embodied and challenged the prevailing structures of vision, representation, and sanctity in Byzantium and among the Franciscans in Italy between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Through the lens of this format, Paroma Chatterjee uncovers the complexities of the philosophical and theological issues that had long engaged both the medieval East and West, such as the fraught relations between words and images, relics and icons, a representation and its subject, and the very nature of holy presence.

Paroma Chatterjee is Assistant Professor, History of Art, at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research has been supported by a Dumbarton Oaks Junior Fellowship, a Samuel H. Kress Travel Fellowship, a Mellon dissertation writing fellowship, a Penn Humanities Forum post-doctoral fellowship, a post-doctoral fellowship at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America, and a Millard Meiss Publication Grant. Her work has appeared in, or is forthcoming from, the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, *Art History*, *Word & Image*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, *Oxford Art Journal*, and *RES: The Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics*.

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University of Michigan, Ann Arbor



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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/9781107034969

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First published 2014

Printed in the United States of America

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

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Chatterjee, Paroma, 1978–

The living icon in Byzantium and Italy : the vita image, eleventh to thirteenth centuries /

Paroma Chatterjee.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-03496-9 (hardback)

1. Vita icons – Byzantine Empire. 2. Vita icons – Italy. I. Title.

N8189.B9C53 2014

704.9'4863–dc23 2013030663

ISBN 978-1-107-03496-9 Hardback

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



Publication of this book has been aided by a grant from the Millard Meiss Publication Fund of the College Art Association.

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To my parents

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ARJUNA: Lord, show me your immutable self.

KRISHNA: Behold, then, my myriad forms, hundreds and
thousands, in many colors . . .

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 11

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the medievals, offering thanks for gifts received was *de rigueur*; for me, a medievalist who must by definition spend large amounts of time in that epoch, it is a distinct pleasure.

I owe a great deal – more than words can express – to Robert S. Nelson, whose rigor, generosity, and integrity have been fundamental to my development as a scholar. This book would have been inconceivable without his support at every step. Jaś Elsner read numerous drafts and listened to my rambling thoughts with far more patience than he should have; his ready wit, warmth, and honesty transformed a discussion of even the driest of details into an exciting journey of discovery. Wu Hung opened up a world of new ideas with his insights into the ways that Byzantine image theories intersect with Chinese Buddhist perceptions. I am deeply grateful to this intrepid trio of advisers and to the University of Chicago for having brought me to them.

I was fortunate to have received a Dumbarton Oaks Junior Fellowship, a Samuel H. Kress Travel Fellowship, and a Penn Humanities Forum fellowship, all of which afforded me the time and resources to carry out the research for this book. In addition, the Edward L. Ryerson and Mellon fellowships awarded by the University of Chicago, along with a semester at the Scuola Normale Superiore at Pisa, and the generous research funds granted by the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and a grant from the Institute for the Arts and Humanities were invaluable in enabling me to conduct field research at sites in Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy.

Among these, one of the most important sites is the Monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai; a magical place, not least because of the hospitality of the monks and Bedouins who live there. I have had the honor of visiting the monastery twice, and of seeing at first hand some of the icons that this book discusses. I am indebted to Archbishop Damianos for having received me at the monastery, to Father Justin for his time and generosity in sharing his knowledge with me and for allowing me to reproduce some of the images in this book, to Father Daniel and Father Porphyrios for opening up the archives and giving me access to the icons I needed to look at, and to Father Neilos for his company. I also thank Badri, Mousa, Fteh, and Hosni for having uncovered details about local customs for my personal interest. Raid lent his motorcycle for a ride through the desert at a critical moment, for which I am grateful. And many thanks to the camels – surely some of the most patient and hardy animals to tread this planet.

I had the opportunity to present parts of my research at various forums over the years. I am grateful for the suggestions of the participants and audience at the symposium, “Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai,” held at the J. Paul Getty Museum in 2007. I am also thankful for the comments I received for lectures given at the Department of Art History and the Center for Ancient Studies at the University of Pennsylvania; the Department of Art History at Temple University; the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Colloquium at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; the Triangle Medieval Studies Seminar held at Duke University; and the Medieval Guild at Columbia University.

The final revisions were done while I was a Fellow at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University. The intellectual vitality of the Academy was instrumental in ushering the book to completion. I thank David Freedberg for the myriad cultural possibilities he opened up as director of the Academy, and his insights into matters ranging from Art History to Neuroscience to the culinary delights and dangers of New York.

To my friends and colleagues I owe thanks for their good cheer and willingness to engage in vigorous – or subtle – debates with me about various things, nearly all of which (no matter how seemingly tangential) impinged on the progress of this book. They are: Glaire Anderson, Charles Barber, Ross Barrett, Fabio Barry, Elizabeth Bolman, Annemarie Weyl

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Carr, Joyce Cheng, Michael Cole, Danielle Coriale, Anthony Cutler, Igor Demchenko, Emily Dolan, Pika Ghosh, Darryl J. Gless, Marilyn E. Heldman, Cecily Hilsdale, Damon Horowitz, Melissa Hyde, Sergey Ivanov, Anthony Kaldellis, Apostolos Karpozilos, Dirk Krausmüller, Kristine Larison, Wei-Cheng Lin, Wei-ping Lin, Kathleen Lubey, Lia Markey, Robert Maxwell, Kristine Nielsen, Christina Normore, Maureen O'Brien, Julia Orell, Robert Ousterhout, Mary Pardo, Glenn Peers, Dawna Schuld, Eric Segal, Nancy P. Ševčenko, Mary Sheriff, Daniel Sherman, Fiona Somerset, Mary Sturgeon, Alice-Mary Talbot, John Tresch, Galina Tirnanic, Vessela Valiavitcharska-Marcum, Laura Veneskey, Alla Vronskaya, Lyneise Williams, and Ann Marie Yasin. In addition, I am indebted to Phil Sapirstein for having shown me, on a wonderful and sometimes hair-raising drive through Turkey, the ancient and medieval marvels of that country. I had the pleasure of getting to know Aditya Behl in the last year of his life; his ebullient spirit is a deeply cherished memory.

I thank Beatrice Rehl for her energy and acuity in steering this book toward publication, and Anastasia Graf and Brian MacDonald for their untiring help with the nitty-gritties of the final product. I am also grateful for a Millard Meiss Publication Fund grant awarded by the College Art Association and to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Department of the History of Art for providing the financial resources that enabled the manuscript and its icons literally to come to life.

To my parents, Pratip K. Chatterjee and Sunita Chatterjee, I am indebted in countless ways. Amala Pan cannot see this work, but her presence sustains me every day. My brother, Pinaki, has always pushed me toward better, more interesting worlds; I cannot imagine undertaking any project, least of all the authorship of a tome, without his constant support. To a certain person (who wishes to remain unnamed), I am thankful for pretty much everything in my life. And finally, to my little daughter, Preisha – who, in all honesty, did not really help with the writing of this book – I offer my deepest gratitude nonetheless, for everything, always.