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Sullivan, Denis, Elizabeth Fisher, and Stratis Papaioannou. *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot. The Medieval Mediterranean*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. xx, 473. \$243.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-21244-2. . .

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Anyone familiar with academic research in Byzantine Studies knows of the work of Alice-Mary Talbot. As a researcher, she has contributed, perhaps as much as anyone else, to present scholarly trajectories that emphasize the intersection of religious ideas and rituals, the texts that describe and informed them, and the Byzantine world that enabled and was transformed by them. She was executive editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, editor of *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (from 1996-2009), and co-director of the pioneering *Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database*. Her scholarly contributions alone are worthy of praise but Dr. Talbot also, of course, served as the Director of Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks from 1997-2009. Through that role, especially, she has enabled and influenced an entire generation of scholarship. If ever there was a Byzantine scholar worthy of a *Festschrift*, it is she.

The present volume, edited by Denis Sullivan, Elizabeth Fisher, and Stratis Papaioannou, brings together the research of twenty-five friends and associates of Dr. Talbot, each of whom has been inspired by her work. The volume is smartly organized according to three themes related its honoree's own scholarly interests in the social context of Byzantine religion: (1) "Women in Byzantium," (2) "Icons and Other Images," and (3) "Texts, Practices, Spaces." As a testament to her own publications and those she cultivated at Dumbarton Oaks, several of these essays include critical editions and/or translations of texts in a range of genres and styles. There are multiple plate images throughout, which exemplify a first-rate publication. Both the editors and the publisher are to be commended for this attractive volume.

The first section, "Women in Byzantium," includes essays by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Alexander Alexakis, Michel Kaplan, Maria Mavroudi, Stamatina McGrath, and Stratis Papaioannou. Drawing from Talbot, these essays acknowledge that most of what we know about Byzantine women derives from male authors, who could be deliberately sympathetic or hostile to their subjects. Through careful analysis, we are, nonetheless, able to discern a particular Byzantine ideology about women from these sources. But one of the reasons that the study of Byzantine women is so interesting is because there were educated and influential women who left literary records of their own ideas and actions, even if they relied upon male-dominated conventions to do so (Papaioannou). The essays presented here cover a range of topics, authors, and genres and demonstrate well the fertile ground of women's social and

religious history in the Byzantine period. For example, Ashbrook Harvey examines the ways that Jacob of Serug constructed his narratives of biblical women to suit the needs of female audiences and Papaioannou examines the literary conventions employed by Anna Komene in the construction of her will.

The second section, "Icons and Images," includes essays by Annemarie Weyl Carr, Paul Magdalino, Jaroslav Folda, Sharon Gerstel, Elizabeth Fisher, Henry Maguire, Cécile Morrisson and Simon Bendall, Brigitte Pitarakis, and Nancy Patterson Sevcenko. Here we see not only Talbot's influence (she pioneered the study of epigrams on visual images) but also the great range of resources that Byzantine historians of material culture are able to employ in their investigation of Byzantine life, politics, and religion. These essays include studies of icons of various sorts, coins, and lead flasks. Paul Magdalino offers an important essay on an otherwise understudied textual reference to an imperial image (now lost) that hung at the Chalke gate during the onset of the iconoclasm. Magdalino forces a re-evaluation of the earliest years of the controversy and confirms several scholarly warnings that we should not take the subsequent partisan accounts of the affair to be reliable history. Elizabeth Fisher offers a fascinating study of how the popular belief in the repetition of a miracle associated with an icon of the Virgin at the church of the Blachernae become an acceptable source for the adjudication of legal suits.

The final section, "Texts, Practices, Spaces," provides essays by Claudia Rapp, John Duffy, Arietta Papaconstantinou, John Nesbitt, Stéphanos Efthymiades, Michael Grünbart, Denis Sullivan, Agela Constantinides Hero, Paul Stephenson and Brooke Shilling, and Manolis Patedakis. In this section we find, perhaps, the most explicit evidence of the impact of Dr. Talbot's career. These essays demonstrate with great clarity the extent to which religion intersected with every aspect of Byzantine life and, just as importantly, how scholars can gain a deeper understanding of that intersection by examining hagiographic texts (and similar legendary "tales") with critical sophistication. A prime example is that offered by Stephenson and Shilling, which presents multiple ways that one might interpret the moral lesson of popular Byzantine tale. As such, this essay reveals the multi-valence of Byzantine texts and the religious concepts that underlie them.

It is rare that a volume of collected essays is so cohesive. It is even more rare that one is as important to its field as this one. Just like the Byzantine texts and images under investigation, this book will serve many needs and speak to its readers in different ways. At its most basic level, it offers an introduction to the many reasons that one might study Byzantine religion and the impact of religion on Byzantine society. To the more discerning student, it showcases the range of methods and sources that constitute Byzantine Studies and, in doing so, exemplifies why it is that Byzantine Studies (perhaps more than some other fields by political and chronological borders) is so interdisciplinary in its current form. But more than anything, this volume simply offers a stellar assortment of the world's leading Byzantinists and presents, more than any other volume that comes to mind, the new directions in Byzantine research.

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