

ALEXEI LIDOV, ed., *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. In Russian and English. Moscow: Indrik, 2006. Pp. 764; black-and-white figures.

A neologism in English, “hierotopy” represents here not only the theme of a volume of papers given at a conference in Moscow in 2004 but also an attempt at broadly defining a new vantage point from which to analyze the construction of sacred space in the Christian East (but by extension elsewhere, too). The editor of the volume, Alexei Lidov, was symposiarch and inventor of the term, and in many ways its chief champion among the impressive gathering of scholars. Lidov states that hierotopy’s coining in 2001 was “mainly destined to intellectually fix a special stratum of historical phenomena, which eluded attention of scholars because of the lack of a particular notion” (p. 7). He explains his conception of this method at some length in his introductory essay and establishes some of its basic outlines. Hierotopy is strongly linked to performativity, Lidov argues, in that the activation of particular sites (landscapes, buildings, objects, etc.) depended on dramatic, changeable, and spiritually intense environments. The need for a synthetic imagination in this model of study is indeed compelling because of the archaeological bias and material limitations of the field of East Christian art. To imagine an operating Hagia Sophia requires a special act normally hampered by our methods of work and by partial, reworked remains.

That open-ended approach can be seen certainly as a strength for a proposed new method, and Lidov is not interested in limiting any scholarly activity that touches on sacred spaces. In fact, he states that hierotopy is not a philosophical concept that needs a sophisticated theory; rather it is “a form of vision that helps to recognize the presence of a special stratum of cultural phenomena” (p. 48). In his wide-ranging introductory essay he evokes a number of intriguing possibilities that hierotopy opens up. For example, he discusses the spatial background of different forms in sacred buildings, like chalice and domed church, reliquary and shrine, by which the holy body is made fully immanent. He makes a good case, too, for the fully participatory mode necessary for viewers in the “spatial icon” as well as the reciprocal participation of such icons themselves, like the Tuesday performance of the Hodegetria icon in Constantinople (the subject of a separate essay here also by Lidov). In this sense, hierotopy studies those points at which the semiotic register of symbol, icon, and index coalesce, those special conditions when divinity irrupts in our world.

Lidov’s own position on hierotopy notwithstanding, the thirty essays of this volume approach issues arising from sacred space in the East Christian world variously, according to their scholarly traditions and chosen methods. They are in Russian or English, with résumés of good length in the other language. In his introductory essay Lidov makes a case for the cohesion of the papers, despite their outward heterogeneity. That cohesion comes from a general sympathy with Lidov’s inclusive approach; no distracting philosophical discussions or theoretical byroads hinder relatively clean expositions of different instances of landscape, buildings, and paintings in ritual settings of East Christendom. Within Lidov’s hierotopos, in the end, belong each of these offerings, for that place is capacious.

Landscape is a sacred reality returned to several times in the course of the papers, because terrain and features in that terrain, namely, ever-numinous sites like caves and summits, are natural grounds for encouraging hierotopy. Annemarie Weyl Carr, for example, examines a shrine of the Virgin at Kalopanagiotis on Cyprus for its imbricated stories of religious hopes and tensions, specifically and literally tied up in its trees. Peter Brown discusses the vertical play between mountain, desert, and town for Theodore of Sykeon in the seventh century in the creation of a hagiographical topography. He also playfully suggests another neologism, “chorotope,” based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s “chronotope,” for evoking ways in which place, like time, is constructed by the imagination. Landscape’s remaking in monastic imagination and life is also explored by Nikolas Bakirtzis in his essay on the monastery at Mount Menoikeion in Greek Macedonia and by Natalia Teteriatnikov

in her excellent demonstration of the rich meaning of the Holy Land in the decoration and use of the idiosyncratic shrine of St. Neophytos near Paphos. Caves are likewise the subject of a lucid treatment of the conjunction of caves with shrines by Slobodan Ćurčić. The natural world, then, in rocks and trees was manifold in the ways it was manipulated and imagined to make openings to the sacred.

Buildings are also evident means for creating hierotopy, and the scholars here explore issues of typology and iconography of architecture. Urban networks of hierotopy are also examined, both in Byzantium and in Russia. The life of buildings, when brought to vivid service of ritually realizing the divine, is perhaps where Lidov's hierotopy is most forcefully articulated. Nicoletta Isar's essay on the choreography of the Byzantine church traces ancient, Neoplatonic ideas of circular movement, dance, and cosmic harmonies. The building's human participants naturally are involved in this divine movement, but Isar also examines the component parts of the church, mainly at Hagia Sophia, and texts describing them, primarily ekphrasis of that church. In these texts Isar reveals a choreography engaged in by all the elements of the hierotopic enterprise—humans, furniture, columns—all toward a goal of inscribing God on earth. Light is also part of that totalizing experience, not toward lucidity and revelation, but in paradox and aporia, as in Paul the Silentiary's "vespral dawn." Light's physical qualities are also explored by Francesca dell'Acqua, in its multiple meanings and usages, including transformative, as in baptism's perfect "enlightenment."

All of these environments, built and natural, are places potentially hierotopic, and Lidov's neologism allowed thirty scholars to explore that potential. It may not take hold, but hierotopy as a term and concept will at least evolve, or perhaps morph, into something more concrete than was attempted here. With the appearance of *Thresholds of the Sacred*, edited by Sharon E. J. Gerstel (2006), the field of East Christianity now has some very stimulating work for developing new directions in ritual studies.

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RUTH MACRIDES, *George Akropolites: "The History."* Introduction, Translation and Commentary. (Oxford Studies in Byzantium.) Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xxi, 440; 2 black-and-white figures, 5 genealogical tables, and 2 maps.

George Akropolites (1217–82), a high official of the Byzantine empire-in-exile at Nikaia and then of the restored empire under Michael VIII, wrote the most important source for the history of the Balkans and western Asia Minor in the thirteenth century. This complicated period, inaugurated by the crusaders' conquest of Constantinople, has received comparatively less attention in modern times than others in Byzantine history; moreover, the trajectory of scholarly study seems to have moved backwards from a methodological point of view. A. Meliarakis wrote a massive survey of the states of Nikaia and Epeiros in 1898, before key documents had been properly edited, published, and studied. A later generation of scholars—Donald Nicol in the 1950s, Hélène Ahrweiler in the 1960s, and Michael Angold in the 1970s—broke this labor down into smaller parts but still wrote synthetic treatments based on all available sources. It is, oddly, only now that scholars are looking closely at the sources on which all is based. Günter Prinzing's first complete edition of Demetrios Chomatenos (*Ponemata Diaphora*, 2002) has changed many things about that prolific prelate (including his name). No doubt the same will be true of the long-awaited critical edition of Ioannes Apokaukos by Vasilis Katsaros. Teresa Shawcross is set to publish the first critical monograph on the *Chronicle of Morea* (*The Chronicle of Morea: Historiography in Crusader Greece* [Oxford, 2008]). And Dimiter Angelov has just published the first discussion of the political ideology of the exilic and postrestoration periods