Cecily Hennessy

Mary Magdalene and the Prostitute Saints: East and West, Marginalized and Demarginalized

In Western tradition, Mary Magdalene is often interpreted as a harlot, whereas in the Eastern Church, strictly speaking, she is not.[1] In Byzantium, it is argued that she maintains a singular character, one of virtue, not associated with sins of the flesh or repentance.[2] This raises questions about the nature of subcultures, such as prostitution, in Byzantium, and why Mary Magdalene might have been shielded from her Western associations in Eastern culture. This essay compares the depiction of Mary Magdalene in the East with that of female Byzantine saints who are associated with prostitution. It also explores disparate Eastern and Western identities, leading to further questions about the cultural context of prostitution in Byzantium in particular, including approaches to marriage, concubinage, and slavery. Further discussion inquires into the way Mary Magdalene is marginalised in early Christian literature and iconography, as if side-lined by both the male apostles and the Mother of God, and asks about the possible reasons for this.

Mary Magdalene is described in the Gospels of Luke and Mark as one who came from Magdala and formerly had seven demons (δαιμόνια) (Luke 8:2–3; Mark 16:9), though the nature of these demons is never explained. The texts imply that they are to do with evil spirits and diseases (πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν) (Luke 8:2). She was said to have been present at the Crucifixion, to have attended Jesus' tomb, and to have seen him resurrected and then spread shared that news with his male disciples (Matthew 27:56, 28:1; Mark 15:40–41, 47; John 19:25, 20.1).[3] She had a significant role as a companion, as a witness, and as an apostle to the apostles. These roles are indicated in numerous manuscript illuminations. For instance, in an eleventh-century manuscript, Florence, Laurenziana, Plut. 6.23, she appears in several scenes

1 Key works on Mary Magdalene include Victor Saxer, *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident des origines à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris, 1959); Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London, 1993); Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2000); on the early development of her identity in the West, see Victor Saxer, "Les origines du culte de Sainte Marie Madeleine en Occident," in *Marie Madeleine dans la mystique, les arts et les lettres*, Actes du Colloque International, Avignon, 20–22 juillet 1988 (Paris, 1989), 33–47.

2 See Victor Saxer, "Les saintes Marie Madeleine et Marie de Béthanie dans la tradition liturgique et homilétique orientale," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 32 (1958): 1–37; Vassiliki Foskolou, "Mary Magdalene between East and West: Cult and Image, Relics and Politics in the Late Thirteenth-Century Eastern Mediterranean," *DOP* 65/66 (2011–2012): 271–296, esp. 271.

3 Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 5–10; Jansen, *Making*, 21–23.

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from Matthew, including at the tomb (Matthew 28:1), in the *Chairete* scene in the garden, and then reporting to the disciples (Matthew 28:8–10), as well as in detailed scenes from John with the apostles at the tomb (John 20:1–9) (Figs. 1–3).[4]

In the West, at least from the time of Gregory I (d. 604), the identity of Mary Magdalene was assimilated with that of the sinful woman (ἁμαρτωλός) (Luke 7:37–38) who wiped Christ's feet with her hair at the Pharisee's house, as well as the woman who poured oil on Christ's head (Mark 14:3; Matthew 26:6). Gregory, in his 25th homily, identifies Mary Magdalene with the woman of Luke 7 and describes her as a sinner (*peccatrix*).[5] In his 33rd homily on this same text, he describes her oil as having been used for disgraceful acts.[6] There is nothing in the text to associate Luke's sinner with harlotry; this is an interpretation made by Gregory and picked up by other male theologians.

The Venerable Bede, Abbot of Jarrow (d. 735), in his commentary on Luke 7, assimilates Mary Magdelene with Mary of Bethany.[7] Mary of Bethany, sister to Martha and Lazarus, anointed and wiped Christ's feet with her hair. She is associated with faith and contemplation (Luke 10:39; John 12:3). The Magdalene is thus, in the West, three Marys in one: Christ's follower, a repentant sinner (seen as a harlot), and Mary of Bethany.[8] This compilation helped to correlate the various disparate Gospel accounts.

In contrast, among the early theologians in the East, John Chrysostom stands out as one who recognised the significance of her role. In his 88th homily on Matthew, he writes of the two Marys sitting at the sepulchre and declares, "Do you see women's courage? Do you see their affection? Do you see their noble spirit in money? Their noble spirit even unto death?"[9] The patriarch Photios (810–891), commenting on a now lost homily on the *myrrophoroi* by Modestos, Patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 634), extolled her virtues. Emphasising her purity, he stated that she was the first of the female disciples and died a virgin and a martyr in Ephesus, where she went with Saint John after the death of the Mother of God, to whom she had been a companion.[10]

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4 Florence, Laurenziana, Pluteus 6.23, including fols. 59r, 59v, 60v, 96r, 97r, 209v; see Tania Velmans, *Le Tétraévangile de la Laurentienne*, *Florence Laur. VI 23* (Paris, 1971), 33–34, 39, 51, figs. 121–124, 178–179, 299.

5 Gregory the Great, in *PL* 76, 189; Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, Cistercian Studies Series, trans. David Hurst (Kalamazoo, 1990), 187.

6 Gregory the Great, Hom. 33, in *PL* 76, 1239–1240: *illicitis actibus prius mulier intent unguentum sibi pro odore suae carnis adhibuit*; Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 269–270; Andrew Jotischky, "Gerard of Nazareth, Mary Magdalene and Latin Relations with the Greek Orthodox in the Crusader East in the Twelfth Century," *Levant* 29 (1997): 217–226, at 219; Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 95–96.

7 Bede Exp. Luc. 28, in *PL* 92, 423–424, "Expositio in Evangelium S. Lucae," chapter 28; on this, Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 109; Jotischky, "Gerard of Nazareth," 219.

8 In 1969, her identity with Mary of Bethany and Luke's sinner was denounced by the Roman Catholic Church under Pope Paul VI.

9 John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, trans. George Prevost (Oxford, 1851), vol. 3, 1095–1096.

10 Photios, *Bibliothèque*, trans. Réne Henry, vol. 8 (Paris, 1977), 118–119.

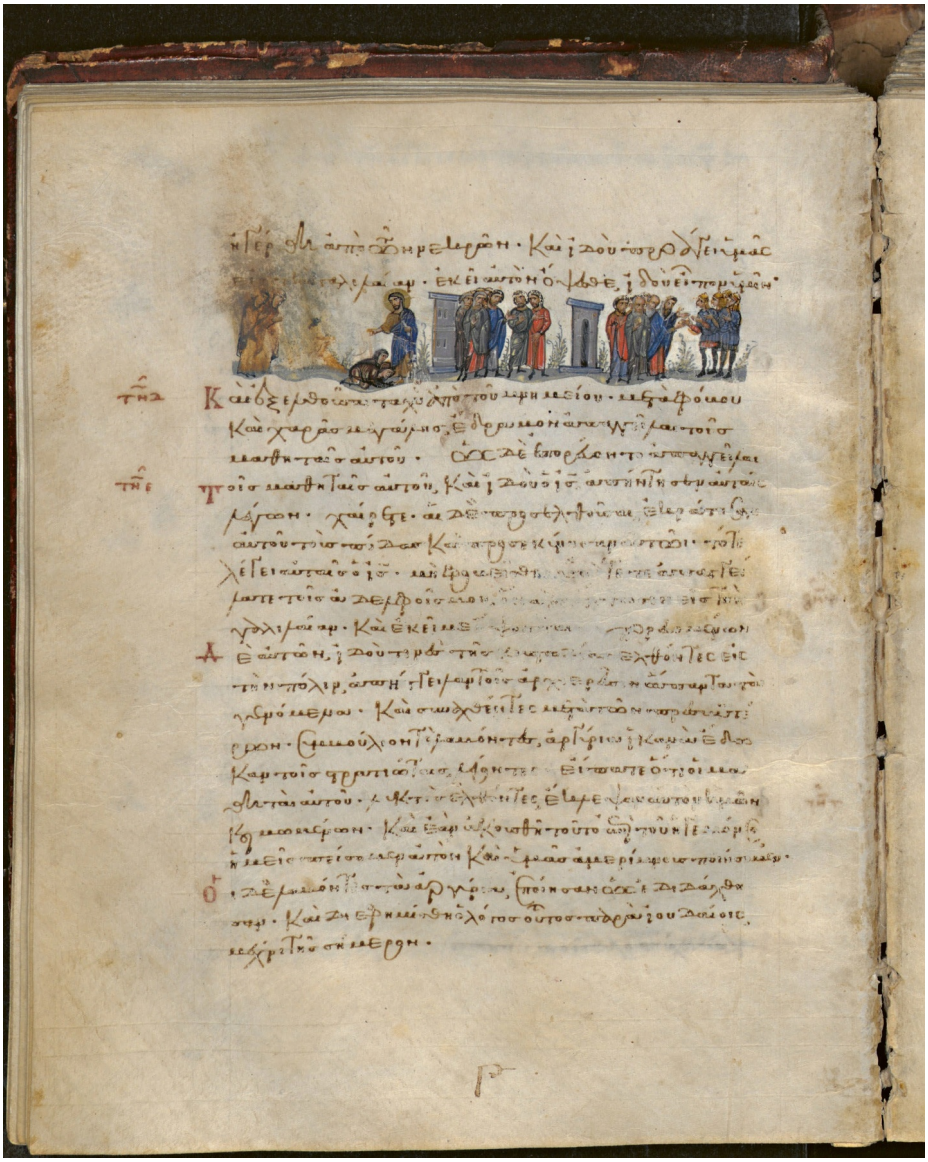

Fig. 1: Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Plut. 6.23, fol. 60v, Chairete and reporting to the disciples (Matthew 28.8–10). By permission of MiBACT. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

Fig. 2: Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Plut. 6.23, fol. 97r, Chairete and reporting to the disciples (Mark 16.9—10). By permission of MiBACT. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

Fig. 3: Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Plut. 6.23, fol. 209v, Mary Magdalene at the tomb and with the apostles at the tomb (John 20: 1–9). By permission of MiBACT. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

Such texts could be designed to contend with the Western version of her life and, particularly later, after the separation of the Churches, to undermine Western doctrine. This is evidenced in writings from the 12th century in Bethany, the centre of the cult site of Mary of Bethany (and by extension of Mary Magdalene for the Western Church), where there was a close rivalry between the Greek and Latin Churches.[11]

One text that has raised some discussion on the perceived identity of Mary Magdalene is the 9th-century Hymn of Kassia, which is sung on the morning of Wednesday in Holy week.[12] It is in the voice of the Blessed Sinner from Luke 7, who is also given the role of a myrrh-bearer to Christ's tomb. She does not describe herself as a prostitute but as one who "fell into many sins" and for whom darkness moves to "lust after sin."[13] While there is no direct reference to Mary Magdalene in it, the hymn is often associated with her.[14] A. Dyck compares the text with Romanos's tenth *kontakion* and refers also to Ephrem the Syrian's homily on the sinful woman. These, again, are referring to Luke's Sinner and not to Mary Magdalene.[15]

By tradition, Mary Magdalene's relics resided at Ephesus before being taken to Constantinople in about the year 900 by Leo VI to be enshrined in a splendid new monastic church which he had built.[16] It was located in the new area of the Great Palace on the eastern city wall overlooking the sea and was apparently intended for use by eunuchs.[17] The church seems to have survived until the end of Byzantine rule. It

11 On the writings of Gerard of Nazareth, who saw the orthodox tradition of Mary Magdalene as a threat to the episcopacy, see Jotischky, "Gerard of Nazareth."

12 Andrew R. Dyck, "On Cassia, Κύριε ἡ ἐν πολλαῖς . . ., " *Byz* 56 (1986): 63–76, at 63–64 for text and translation.

13 Dyck, "On Cassia," 63, line 1 and 7.

14 Dyck argues that Kassia identifies the sinner with Mary Magdalene: Dyck, "On Cassia," 66, with n. 9; in contrast, Tsironi states there is no evidence for this; see Niki Tsironi, "The Body and the Senses in the Work of Cassia the Hymnographer: Literary Trends in the Iconoclastic Period," *Symmeikta* 16 (2003): 139–157, at 142–143; also see Elisabeth C. Topping, "The Psalmist, St. Luke and Kassia the Nun," *Byzantine Studies* 9 (1982): 199–219; Foskolou, "Mary Magdalene," 283, with n. 74–75.

15 Romanos, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica, Cantica Genuina*, eds. Paul Mass and Constantine Athanasios Trypanis (Oxford, 1963), 73–80; for translation, see: St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakia on the Life of Christ*, trans. and intro. Ephrem Lash (San Francisco, CA, 1995), 75–84; Ephrem the Syrian, "Three Homilies," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd series, vol. 13, part 2 (Oxford, 1898), 336–341; also Marjorie Carpenter, trans. and annotated, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*, I: *On the Person of Christ* (Columbia, MO, 1970), 97–107; Dyck, "On Cassia," 64–65.

16 Saxer, "Les saintes Marie," 29; Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin: Première partie, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique, tome III, Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969), 298–300.

17 John Wortley, "Relics of 'The Friends of Jesus' at Constantinople," in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, eds. Jannic Durand and Bernard Flusin (Paris, 2004), 143–57, at 155; repr. in John Wortley, *Studies in the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, Variorum Collected Studies, Series 935 (Aldershot, 2009), with references; also Shaun Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (London, 2008), 73, 76; Shaun Tougher, *The reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People*, Medieval

was dedicated to Lazarus of Bethany, whose relics Leo brought at the same time from Cyprus.[18] This pairing of relics leads to some confusion. For instance, in the late 11th century, Ioannes Skylitzes states that the relics are those of Lazaros' sister, that is of Mary of Bethany.[19] Several Western pilgrims also confuse the two Marys.[20]

In the West, after the 11th century, Mary Magdalene's cult flourished in large part due to her role as a penitent harlot, a fallen and redeemed figure with whom believers could identify. The rising beatification of Mary Magdalene made her by far the most revered female saint in the 12th century and the most famous harlot in the West.[21] Her cult centre was at Vézelay, where her relics were claimed to have been found in 1058, later being moved to St. Maximim, where others were "miraculously" found in 1279.[22] From the 1280s, she was taken up by mendicants as a model of repentance and by abbesses and nuns as exemplary of the contemplative life.[23] However, she was also seen as a sinner, an example of lust and repeated vice, and a general example of women associated with sexual rapacity.[24] While *metanoia* and penance are part of the orthodox tradition, in the Catholic Church, particularly after the growth of the mendicant orders, penance becomes increasingly central, and Mary Magdalene serves as an ideal example of reform.[25]

Byzantium remained largely untouched by this Western development. This is not because Byzantine culture has steered away from the subject of reformed prostitutes. Of these, there are some celebrated examples, including the most well-known, Mary of Egypt. She, by her own confession, was not strictly speaking a prostitute, as she did not take money for her favours, but rather gave them for her own pleasure, "thus

Mediterranean, vol. 15 (Leiden, 1997), 201–202; Tougher refers to Mary as Lazarus' sister, see *Politics and People*, 201.

18 Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, 299.

19 John Wortley, ed. and trans., *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811–1057* (Cambridge, 2010), 175: "He built another church in the Topoi-quarter dedicated to Saint Lazarus. Here he brought and deposited the body of the saint and also that of his sister, Mary Magdalene"; Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. Hans Thurn, CFHB 5 (Berlin, 1973), 180–181.

20 George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 19 (Washington, D.C., 1984), 94, 164, 182, 379–381.

21 On her western identity as a prostitute, see Jansen, *Making*, 168–177.

22 The literature on this is vast; for prior to 1990, see Victor Saxer, "Bibliographie de Sainte Marie Madeleine 1945–1990," in *L'image de la Madeleine du XVe au XIXe siècle*, ed. Yves Giraud (Fribourg, 1996), 23–36; for summaries, see Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 98–100, 104–105, 111–133; Jansen, *Making*, 38–43.

23 On this see, for instance, Jansen, *Making*, 116–142.

24 Jansen, *Making*, 170; Haskins, *Magdalen*, 148–150.

25 On the sacrament of penance and penitential controversy, see for instance J. Dallen, F. X. Murphy, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C., 2003), 66–73; on penitence in Byzantium, see Miguel Arranz, S.J., *I Penitenziali Bizantini*, *Il Protokanonarion o Kanonarion Primitivo di Giovanni Monaco e Diacono e il Deuterokanonarion o "Secondo Kanonarion" di Basilio Monaco* (Rome, 1993); thank you to Derek Krueger for this reference.

turning my lust into a free gift."[26] Pelagia, through her profession as a mime actress, was associated with prostitution.[27] Her physical appearance was noted and deprecated by the bishop Nonnus, who questioned why men of the church could not embellish their souls in the way she embellished her body. After he had baptized her, she fled to the Mount of Olives, dressed in his *chiton*, and lived disguised as a male hermit. Yet, there are some keen distinctions between these two and Mary Magdalene. They both, according to their hagiographies, retreated to the wilderness after their reformation to become ascetics.[28] Similarly, after her repentance, the prostitute Porphyria retreated into a nunnery. Her story is told in the 6th-century *vita* of Saint John the Almsgiver. The author, Leontios of Neapolis, describes a monk in Tyre who was accosted by a prostitute who cried out, "Save me, Father, like Christ saved the harlot," this referring to Luke 7:37. The two retreated to live in chastity and on his death, she joined a nunnery.[29] Again, she was not part of mainstream society. Other prostitute saints include Pansemne and Taisia, who are not well-known.[30]

The development of the cult of Mary Magdalene in the West became in some ways dependent on the *vita* of Mary of Egypt. As Mary of Egypt spent thirty years in the desert, the Western Magdalene was similarly said to have spent thirty years in the wilderness, after a period of apostleship in France.[31] This is very different from the Byzantine life of Mary Magdalene, who in the Gospel narrative is present with the other women in Galilee serving Christ and, in some apocryphal accounts, stays a companion of the Virgin until her dormition.[32] Her only Eastern *vita* is from the 14th cen-

26 *PL* 87, 3709–3710; *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. Alice-Mary Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1996), 80.

27 For Mary Magdalene, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 162, no. 1162; for Mary of Egypt, 146, nos. 1042–1044 (her life was written down in the 6th century by Sophronios, the last Patriarch of Jerusalem before the Arab Conquest); for Pelagia, see 206, nos. 1478–1479.

28 For a discussion of their lives, see Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA, 1997), 77–84 (Pelagia), 84–94 (Mary of Egypt).

29 *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*, trans. Elizabeth Dawes, intro. and notes Norman H. Baynes (London, 1948), 252–253.

30 On the prostitute saints, see Despoina Ariantzi, "Byzantinische Prostituierte. Zwischen Marginalisierung und Reintegration in die Gesellschaft," *Byz* 91 (2021): 1–45, esp. 10–11; Stavroula Leontsini, *Die Prostitution im frühen Byzanz*, Dissertationen der Universität Wien 194 (Vienna, 1989), 46 (Taisia), 50–52 (Pelagia, Pansemne, Porphyria); thank you to Despoina Ariantzi for this reference; see also Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society* (London, 1992), 62.

31 See Haskins, *Magdalene*, 119–122.

32 For instance, "The Twentieth Discourse of Cyril of Jerusalem," in J. Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1993), 698, in which Mary is entrusted by the Mother of God with the care of the remaining apostles.

tury. It was written by the historian Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos under the title *Ermo in Sanctam et Apostolis aequalem unguentiferam Mariam Magdalenam*.[33]

While Mary Magdalene is not widely represented in Byzantine art, neither are the byzantine "prostitute" saints. In Rome, the Temple of Portunus (sometimes known as the Temple of Fortuna Virilis) was dedicated to her. The decoration, dated between 872 and 882, under Pope John VIII, reflects Byzantine work and includes a now fragmentary scene of Zosimus, the priest who found her in the wilderness, and Mary (Fig. 4).[34] The white-haired and bearded priest stands on the left, his hands raised, perhaps in surprise or respect. Between him and Mary is what seems to be a hut or a cave. Mary stands on the right, also with white hair. Her body is not shown, but the upper part of her torso seems naked. Other examples include a possibly 11th-century depiction on the south wall of the atrium at Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, showing both figures in bust portraits facing frontally with Zosimus holding the bread of the eucharist.[35]

Fig. 4: Rome, Temple of Portunus, Mary of Egypt and Zozimus. With permission of the Academia Belgica.

33 *PG* 147, 539–576.

34 Richard Krautheimer, *Rome, Profile of a City 312–1308* (Princeton, 1980), 128; Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Peintures médiévales dans le Temple de la Fortune Virile* (Brussels, 1959), 43, scene 18, pl. XIV; see 44, fn. 1, with further instances of Mary of Egypt.

35 Joseph Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert*, vol. 4.2 (Freiburg, 1916), pl. 227.2.

Mary of Egypt also appears in the *Theodore Psalter*, dated to 1066 (Fig. 5).[36] She is naked, and Zosimus stands with his eyes averted as he gives her a garment from the other side of a hill. The scene illustrates Psalm 54:8–9: "Lo, I have fled afar off, and lodged in the wilderness," which is quoted in the Life of Mary of Egypt.[37] The scene does not appear in the other marginal psalters with which this manuscript is associated.

Although not widely represented in Cappadocia, Mary of Egypt appears in the early 11th century Tokalı kilise, appropriately in the north apse (*prothesis*), where the eucharist is prepared. Zosimus, on the left, offers her the eucharist on a spoon.[38] To the left is a scene showing the weighing of a soul, with the judgment considered by an angel and a devil. To the right, in the central image of the apse is another eucharistic panel, the Hospitality of Abraham.[39] The large number of hermit saints in the region would make her inclusion in a panel of these theme logical. She also appears in a narthex near Kılıçlar kilise.[40] However, in the other churches in Cappadocia covered in Marcell Restle's comprehensive survey, no portrayals of Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt, Pelagia, or Porphyria survive.[41] Similarly, in the 11th-century *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas of Steiris, which features representations of over 150 saints, thirteen of whom are female, neither Mary Magdalene nor any of the former harlots are present.[42]

Moving into the 12th century, Mary of Egypt is depicted in a well-known scene in the Church of Panagia Phorbiotissa of Asinou, Cyprus, dated to 1105–1106. The painting is on the east wall adjacent to the north side of the apse with Zosimus in the mirror position on the south side of the apse.[43] The choice of iconography is thus due to the presence of the eucharist, which she is receiving. She is very skinny, her backbone protruding, and the visible parts of her body, her legs and the right side of her torso

36 London, British Library Ms. Add. 19352, fol. 68r; In Lafontaine, *Temple de la Fortune*, 44, n. 1.

37 *PG* 87, 3716; In *Theodore Psalter*, ed. Charles Barber, Electronic Facsimile (Champaign, IL, 2000), p. 4 of folio, 68r text.

38 Göreme chapel 7; Ann Wharton Epstein, *Tenth-century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 22 (Washington, D.C., 1986), 25, 68, 83, fig. 104; Marcell Restle, *Die byzantinische Wandmalerei in Kleinasien*, 3 vols. (Recklinghausen, 1967), here vol. 2, plan opposite p. 61.

39 Wharton, *Tenth-century*, fig. 105.

40 Guillaume de Jerphanion, *Les Églises Rupestres de Cappadoce* (Paris, 1936), vol. 1.1, 256 and plates, vol. 1, pl. 59.4, on Zozimus and Mary, receiving communion on a spoon, in a narthex above "Qeledjlar Kilissé" (north vault); in Lafontaine, *Temple de la Fortune*, 43.

41 Restle, *Wandmalerei*, vol. 1, list of apostles and saints at end of volume; see also Carolyn N. Connor, *Saints and Spectacle: Byzantine Mosaics in their Cultural Setting* (Oxford, 2016), appendix II, Comprehensive List of Saints in Cappadocian Frescoes, 155–159 (includes Kılıçlar, Ayvalı, Tokalı, Çavuşin, El Nazar).

42 Connor, *Saints and Spectacle*, 149–153.

43 *Asinou across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, eds. Annmarie Weyl Carr and Andréas Nicolaïdès (Washington, D.C., 2012), fig. 2.32, and see fig. 6.5 for location; Andreas Stylianou and Judith A. Stylianou, *Panagia Phorbiotissa Asinou* (Nicosia, 1973), 59–60, fig. 8.

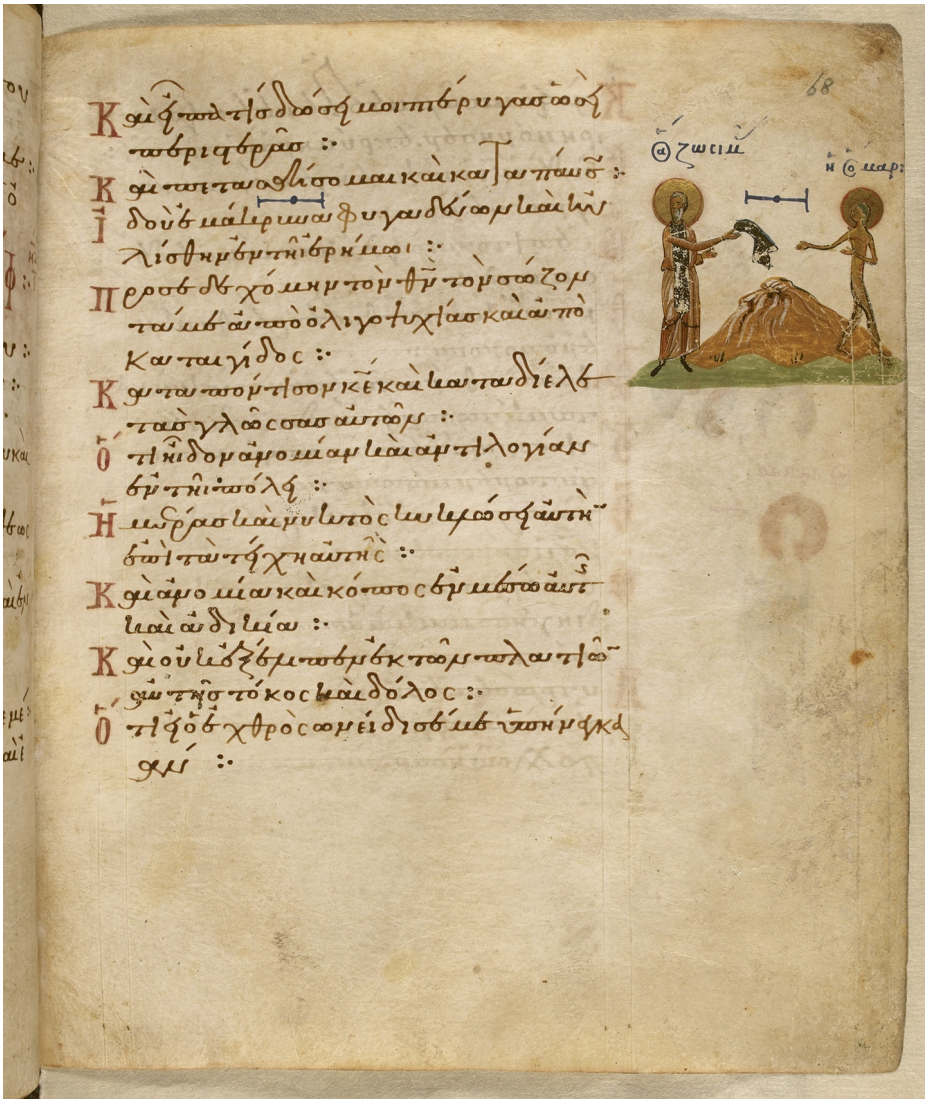

Fig. 5: London, British Library Ms. Add. 19352, *The Theodore Psalter*, fol. 68r, Mary of Egypt and Zozimus. © British Library Board.

and neck, are covered in hair, perhaps a feature of her starvation. Her garment is carelessly draped over her left shoulder and around her body and, although it is dark, it has a still-white border and a few decorative dots. Her hair is completely whitened, tousled, and looks as though it has been torn as she has a fringe and short wayward locks above the longer ones, while her face is deeply lined, her forehead furrowed, and she has heavy white eyebrows. She is a woman who has suffered.

Pelagia is shown in a miniature in the 11th-century so-called *Menologion of Basil II* (Fig. 6).[44] Neither Mary Magdalene nor Mary of Egypt are featured in the *Menologion*. Their feast days (22 July and 1 April) are outside the period covered. This volume, a *synaxarion*, dated to Basil's reign (976–1025), contains short biographies of the saints whose feast days occur between September and February, with 430 illuminations.[45] Pelagia is celebrated on October 8, along with her namesakes, Pelagia the Virgin (also from Antioch) and Pelagia of Tarsus, martyred under Diocletian. The artists signed their work, indicating that Pelagia of Antioch was painted by Pantoleon and the two other Pelagias by Michael of Blachernae.[46] Pelagia of Antioch is depicted twice, as an entertainer and, after her baptism, as a nun. In the first portrayal, she is dressed in a sumptuous brown robe with a broad gold border at the hem and a blue cape decorated with gold medallions and gold edging, fastened in the front with two gold clasps. Her hair appears to be covered—though it may just be heavily laced with headbands—and the headdress is studded with pearls; she wears a pearl necklace at her throat. There is no sign of impropriety in her appearance, but only of luxury. She stands before Nonnus, the bishop, who is speaking to her. As a nun, she has her head completed covered in a black *maphorion*, worn over a brown gown. Her shoes, formerly red, are now black. She is standing in front of a church.

Pelagia as a nun also appears in a late Byzantine painted diptych originally owned by Maria Angelina Doukaina Palaiologina and her husband, Thomas Preljubović, the despot of Ioannina (r. 1366/7–1384) (Fig. 7).[47] The Mother of God with the Christ Child and Christ appear as centre pieces of each panel, surrounded by fourteen saints. Each saint has a framed space for a relic. Pelagia, placed at the bottom left of the left panel, is dressed in a dark cape with a cross hanging from her neck and a heavy, lighter brown headdress. Two other female saints are shown: Barbara, just above Pelagia, dressed in a sumptuous red robe, and Anna, on the top row above the Mother of God, also dressed in red. The icon is studded with 939 (15 lost) pearls and 67 (245 lost) gemstones.[48] It is surmised that the diptych was copied from a painted icon in the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Meteora, which has the same iconography, including slots for relics, but only the left panel with the Mother of God survives, with Pelagia again shown in the bottom left corner.[49] This was given by the same Maria to

44 Vatican, cod. gr. 1613, fol. 98; https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613 (last accessed 12 May 2025).

45 Facsimile: *Il Menologio di Basilio II (Cod. Vaticano Greco 1613)*, I, Testo; II, Tavole (Vatican, 1907); Ihor Ševčenko, "The Illuminators of the Menologium of Basil II," *DOP* 16 (1962): 243, 245–276, at 245.

46 *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, 206, nos. 1477 (named the Virgin), 1480 (of Tarsus); *Il Menologio di Basilio II*, vol. 1, 27, no. 96, named here, Pelagia of Tarsus; no. 97, Pelagia of Antioch (named the virgin); no. 98, Pelagia the penitent (named Pelagia of Antioch), in vol. 2, 96–98.

47 *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York, 2004), no. 24c, 52–53, entry by Annemarie Weyl-Carr and Anastasio Martinez Sáez, *El Diptico Bizantino de la Catedral de Cuenca* (Cuenca, 2004) (no page nos.).

48 *Faith and Power*, ed. Evans, 52.

49 *Faith and Power*, ed. Evans, no. 24b, 51–52.

Fig. 6: Vatican, cod. Gr. 1613, fol. 98, Saint Pelagia with Bishop Nonnus and as a nun. © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Fig. 7: Diocesan Museum, Cuenca, Diptych, detail showing Saint Pelagia (photo, Cecily Hennessy).

her brother Ioasaph, who was abbot of the monastery. It has been suggested that the jewelled icon was made in Meteora or Constantinople (perhaps more likely), the painted one in Meteora or Ioannina.[50] The rationale for the choice of the saints is not evident and may have been dependent on available relics.

This survey of the Byzantine prostitute saints indicates that although they are represented in Byzantine art, such representation is not extensive. Their cults are relatively minor and do not compare with those of Saints Anne, Barbara, Thekla, or Catherine. Of the harlot saints, none is known to have had a church dedicated to her in Constantinople.[51]

Discussions of how the iconography of Mary Magdalene developed in Byzantium after the 11th century, the period when she was clearly defined as a reformed harlot in the West, and the influence of Western art carries with it several assumptions. It is commonly held that she was singled out from the other *myrrophoroi* in Byzantine works due to Western influence, especially in Crucifixion and Lamentation scenes, where she is shown in emphatic grief.[52] It has been suggested that this, particularly in the late 13th century, is due to the spread of mendicant orders.[53] An example of this type of depiction is a 13th-century icon from St. Catherine's monastery, Mount Sinai, showing the Crucifixion with the Mother of God on the left, supported by two women, and a fourth woman behind, wearing a red *maphorion* over a low-necked dress, her

50 *Faith and Power*, ed. Evans, 51–52.

51 Raymond Janin, "Les églises et monastères de Constantinople byzantine," *RÉB* 9 (1951): 143–153, at 153 for list of church dedications.

52 For instance, Alexander Kazhdan, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York, 1991), entry on "Mary Magdalene," vol. 2, 1310; Foskolou, "Mary Magdalene," 175.

53 Foskolou, "Mary Magdalene," 279–280.

hair loose and arms raised at the sides of her halo (Fig. 8).[54] The figure in red is interpreted as Mary Magdalene.[55] She appears as if appended to the composition and, as with many of these so-called "Crusader icons," could have been painted by an Eastern or Western artist, or by a collaboration of the two, in the Levant, in Cilicia, or possibly even in Sinai.[56] Contrary to common belief, red is not a colour associated in either East or West with prostitution.[57] In the Medieval Period in the West it was often associated with *caritas*, but was often used in Byzantine painting for the dress of one or more of the Holy Women, including that of Mary Magdalene.[58] This dates from the early period when Mary Magdalene appears in red in the upper left image in the 6th-century *Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary Box* in the Vatican and in a rare depiction from the south aisle of the cathedral in Faras, Nubia, dated to the 10th or 11th century where she has a dark red robe and brighter red maphorion in the *Chairete* scene (Figs. 9–10).[59]

Although it is said that this emotional pose of Mary Magdalene is not found previously in Byzantine art, it may well derive from Byzantine traditions.[60] The depiction of a mourning woman expressing demonstrative grief is a custom found in Eastern art throughout the early and middle Byzantine periods. This is a tradition inherited from Antiquity, as indicated in the death of Dido in the early 5th century *Vatican Vergil* and in the deaths of Deborah and of Jacob in the 6th-century *Vienna Genesis*.[61] In

54 *Faith and Power*, ed. Evans, 367–368, cat. No. 224.

55 Foskolou, "Mary Magdalene," 274; Anne Derbes and Amy Neff, "Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere," in Evans, ed., *Faith and Power*, 449–461, esp. 460–461.

56 Much has been written on this, as summarised in *Faith and Power*, ed. Evans, 368; see also Anne Derbes, "Siena and the Levant in the Later Dugento," *Gesta* 28 (1989): 190–204, esp. n. 11–12; thank you to Anne Derbes for notes to her talk at the Courtauld Institute, 23 October 2019, "Revisiting Siena and the Levant."

57 On the dress of prostitutes in the West, see for instance Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1996), 20, 31, 33–34, 84; Roberts, *Whores*, 9, 42, 43, 79–80, 148; on the history of the colour red, see Michel Pastoureau, *Rouge: Histoire d'une couleur* (Paris, 2016); following tradition, he identifies Mary Magdalene's red cloak with prostitution but gives no evidence for this and only gives as a reference the Whore of Babylon figure from Revelation 16; see Pastoureau, *Rouge*, 81, 83, and 200, n. 40 with no specific references. Jacques Rossiaud mentions red arm bands worn by prostitutes in 13th-century France; see Jacques Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford, 1988), 78, but this is not prevalent elsewhere.

58 For the West, see Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, "*Ave charitate plena*: Variations on the Theme of Charity in the Arena Chapel," *Speculum* 76 (2001): 599–637; on the Virgin and *caritas* associated with a red rose, see 609, on the Virgin's red dalmatic type garment, see 613–615, 623; thank you to Anne Derbes for directing me to this article.

59 Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary Box, Vatican cat. 61883.2.1–2. For the Faras painting, see Kazimierz Michalowski, *Faras Gallery* (Warsaw, 2014), 158–159.

60 Evans, ed., *Faith and Power*, 368.

61 Vatican, cod. lat. 3225 (*Vatican Vergil*), fol. 41r; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, cod. theol. gr. 31 (*Vienna Genesis*), fols. 26 and 31; Henry Maguire, "The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art," *DOP* 31 (1977): 123–174, at 159–160, figs. 2, 5 and 54.

Fig. 8: St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Icon of Crucifixion; by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photograph: Courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.

Fig. 9: Vatican, Cat. 61883.2.1–2, Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary Box, inner face of lid; Photo © Governorate of the Vatican City State - Directorate of the Vatican Museums. All rights reserved.

Fig. 10: National Museum, Warsaw, wall painting from cathedral, Faras, Nubia, Chairete (photo, Cecily Hennessy).

all three examples, the mourning women have loose hair, open clothes, and raised arms. Examples from Byzantium may be found in the 11th-century Vatican, cod. gr. 1156 and Parma, Bibliotheca Palatina, cod. 5, and in the 12th-century *Gelati Gospel*, Tbilisi, cod. 908.[62] It is this mourning figure that is adopted in Western depictions of Mary Magdalene and is seen in the woman in the icon in Sinai, with a low dress, loose hair, and raised arms. These characteristics are not indicative of harlotry, but rather of grief.

62 Vatican, cod. gr. 1156, fol. 194v; Parma, Bibliotheca Palatina, cod. 5, fol. 90v; Tbilisi, Georgian Academy of Sciences, Institut Rukopisej, cod. Q908, fol. 85v, in Ioannes Spatharakis, "The Influence of the Lithos in the Development of the Iconography of the Threnos," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, eds. Doula Mouriki, Christopher Frederick Moss, and Katherine Kiefer (Princeton, 1995), 435–441, at 437, 439, figs. 3–4; Maguire, "Sorrow," 144, 146; also Kurt Weitzmann, "The Origin of the Threnos," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York, 1961), 466–489, figs. 1–17, at 486 and fig. 16; repr. in K. Weitzmann, *Byzantine Book Illumination and Ivories* (London, 1980), study no. IX.

Regarding a cultural distinction between prostitution in Byzantium and in the West, in the West it was not unusual for harlotry to be segregated, with prostitutes required to operate in certain areas, either outside the city or in specified districts.[63] They could be grouped with others who were separated, such as Jews and lepers.[64] However, prostitution was not only tolerated, but in some sense promoted. It was regulated, brought in taxes, and was deemed useful. It is argued, for instance, by Augustine that, without prostitution, society would dissolve into chaos "through unsatisfied lust" and that it is better for a man to have unnatural sex with a prostitute than with his wife.[65] Prostitution grew extensively in the increased urbanisation after the 11th century and then was reigned in from the 12th century by both Church and secular authorities, largely unsuccessfully.[66] This, in France, led to the ghettoization of prostitutes in the 13th century and, in several areas of Europe, the wearing of distinctive dress to distinguish them.[67] Numerous continental towns had official brothels owned by the municipal authorities.[68] This occurred similarly in England, in port cities, but also in Southwark, in the jurisdiction of the bishop of Winchester.[69]

This close co-existence of prostitution and the Church may be indicated through iconography. Prostitutes are shown in central religious sites, such as at Notre Dame's south transept portal and Amiens cathedral's west façade, as a way of encouraging prostitutes into the Church.[70] Following the rise of Mary Magdalene's cult there was a greater drive to reform them.[71] One could also argue that it led to more compassion for them, a factor also present in the development of the cults of Mary of Egypt and of Pelagia.

In the West, prostitution was associated not only with sexual services for payment but also with lust and public display.[72] This is also the case in Byzantium, and dancers, actresses, and other performers were, at least in the early period, associated with prostitutes. *Porneia* encompasses not only prostitution but also sex outside of

63 Noted by Jansen, *Making*, 174–175; Karras, *Common Women*, 15–16, 18–19, 84; also see Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, 9.

64 Jansen, *Making*, 176–177.

65 Augustine, *De Ordine*, 2.4.12, ed. Pius Knöll, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 63 (Vienna, 1922): "Banish prostitutes . . . and you reduce society to chaos through unsatisfied lust"; Augustine, *De bono coniugali,* 11.12, ed. Joseph Zycha, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 41 (Prague, 1900).

66 Roberts, *Whores*, 66–78.

67 Roberts, *Whores*, 78–81; Karras, *Common Women*, 20–21; Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, 57, 64, 78.

68 Karras, *Common Women*, 32–35.

69 Karras, *Common Women*, 35–47.

70 Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge* (London, 1992), 140–141.

71 Jansen, *Making*, 177–182; on this see James A. Brundage, "Prostitution in the Medieval Canon Law," *Signs* 4 (1976): 925–945, at 927.

72 Jansen, *Making*, 168.

marriage or adultery.[73] However, prostitution generally refers to an individual selling his or her body or being under the control of someone else who sells it. Similarly, a slave is owned and controlled by a master or mistress. In the West, slavery was largely focused on trade with Muslim areas and was not an integrated part of society, even though slave markets persisted in certain areas such as Venice. It gradually waned in practice and by the 12th century had evolved into serfdom.[74] Slavery was more prevalent in Byzantium, and therefore some women, men, and children living and working within society there were owned and subject to another's will. Slavery was "not perceived as a harmful phenomenon," and men of the church as well as monasteries owned slaves.[75] Slave markets were a common feature in towns. Proxenetism, the sale of a child for the purposes of prostitution, as well as selling children into slavery, clearly occurred, as laws were passed against such practices.[76] Canon law prohibited prostituting female slaves, but again the practice persisted.[77] It may be that this integration of slavery into Byzantine society (speaking broadly) influenced the perception and acceptance of prostitution.

Another complex figure in terms of status is the concubine. Canon Law in the 7th century made punishable the act of a man abandoning his wife for another woman.[78] Leo VI made it so in secular law in the 890s and again in 907, yet it continued to be practiced.[79] This created a grey area between what was and what was not culturally tolerated. Mati Meyer has argued that the depiction of Levite's concubine (Judges 19–20) in books with disparate audiences illustrates this dichotomy.[80] An 11th-century codex from Mount Athos, Esphigmenou, cod. 14 shows in detail the rape and dismem-

73 Youval Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (London, 2009), 249, n. 36.

74 Seymour Drescher and Stanley L. Engerman, *A Historical Guide to World Slavery* (Oxford, 1998), 197–200, 271–272.

75 Rotman, *Slavery*, 135.

76 Nov. Just 14, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, vol. 3: *Novellae*, eds. Rudolf Schoell und Guilelmus Kroll (Berlin, 1895; repr. 1972); for translation, see David Miller and Peter Sarris, *The Novels of Justinian: A Complete Annotated English Translation* (Cambridge, 2018), 181–184; Evelyne Patlagean *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e–7e siècles* (Paris, 1977), 154; in Rotman, *Slavery*, 175 and 263, n. 294.

77 Rotman, *Slavery*, 136 and 249, n. 37: Canon law of 14 titles, *Nomocanon 14 titulorum*; J. B. Pitra, *Juris Ecclesiastici Graecorum Historia et Monumenta*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1864–1868), 625–626; also, a Canon attributed to the patriarch Nikephoros (but which may be later) says a master who prostitutes a slave must marry off the slave or risk excommunication; Rotman, *Slavery*, 136 and 249, n. 38; *Juris Ecclesiastici*, vol. 2, 344, Canon 182.

78 Council in Trullo of 692, Canon 87; see Karl Joseph von Héfélé and Henri Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. 3.1 (Paris, 1909), 573.

79 Pierre Noailles and Alphonse Dain, *Les Novelles de Léon VI le Sage, Texte et* traduction, Nouvelle Collection de Textes et Documents (Paris, 1944), Novel 91, 298–301; Joëlle Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e-7e siècle). I. Le droit impérial* (Paris, 1990), 200–201.

80 Mati Meyer, "The Levite's Concubine: Imaging the Marginal Woman in Byzantine Society," *Studies in Iconography* 27 (2006): 45–76, here 45–56, 57.

berment of the ill-fated concubine, making vivid allusions to promiscuity by her dress and the horrors of her ordeal (Fig. 11).[81] Similarly, a copy of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzos, Taphou cod. 14, shows a particularly graphic scene with the Levite standing with his sword raised ready to cut a concubine into pieces.[82] Mati Meyer attributes these manuscripts, both dated 1060–1080, to monastic usage and compares them with copies of the *Octateuchs* made, she argues, for imperial use in the 11th to 13th centuries.[83] In, for instance, Vatican, cod. gr. 747, only the dead concubine is depicted and not the details of her rape and dismemberment.[84] Meyer's argument is that the manuscripts made in a monastic setting and for monastic use show vividly the deserved punishments for a misguided life, while the manuscripts made for imperial use do not. This is because the emperors have concubines and mistresses, a customary habit at court, seemingly practiced by Michael III, Leo VI, and Constantine IX Monomachos. Therefore, the perils of concubinage were not to be highlighted in their books.[85] Indeed, two of the Octateuch manuscripts were made in the final years of Monomachos' reign (d. 1055). This ambivalence is another piece in the complex puzzle of attitudes towards women outside of conventional relationships, with concubinage, slavery, and prostitution evidently widespread in Byzantine life. It may not be surprising that there was a reluctance to link harlotry with a key figure in the Gospels, even if she is reformed.

While Mary Magdalene, in the Christological narrative, has an important and trusted role in the events of Christ's life, she, to some degree, also became marginalized. She is not a significant saint in Byzantium, she had no church dedicated to her in Constantinople, and she rarely appears in imagery except within a narrative context.[86] It is relevant here to explore some reasons why this might be the case.

In early traditions she faced marginalization from the male apostles. In a male dominated society, the assumed servile nature of women was perceived as the natural

81 Athos, Esphigmenou, cod. 14, fol. 415r, 415v, 416r; S. M. Pelekanidis, P. C. Christou, Ch. Tsioumis, and S. N. Kadas, *The Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts, II. The Monasteries of Iveron, St. Panteleimon, Esphigmenou, and Chilindari* (Athens, 1975), 382, figs. 401–403; Meyer, "Concubinage," figs. 10–12.

82 Jerusalem, Taphou, 14, fol. 110v; Meyer, "Concubinage," fig. 7.

83 Meyer, "Concubinage," 57; for a discussion of the monastic origins of Taphou 14 and Mount Athos, Esphigmenou, cod. 14, see Meyer, 72, n. 34. For comparison, the Octoteuch manuscripts are Vatican, cod. gr. 747 (1070), Smyrna (1150), Vatican, cod. gr. 746 (1150), and Athos, Vatopedi, cod. 602 (1280).

84 Vatican, cod. gr. 747, fol. 253v.

85 Meyer, "Concubinage," esp. 62–63.

86 However, her feast day may be considered a medium and not a minor feast; it is listed so in the foundation *typikon* of the Black Mountain, a monastery just north of Antioch; see *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, eds. John Philip Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero and Giles Constable, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 35 (Washington, D.C., 2000), vol. 1, 415.

Fig. 11: Athos, Esphigmenou, cod. 14, fol. 416r, The dismemberment of the concubine's corpse.

order.[87] Arguments have been put forward that Mary Magdelene's role as the first witness to Jesus' resurrection has been suppressed. For instance, Ann Graham Brock argues that Luke's Gospel enhances Peter's role at the cost of Mary Magdalene's.[88] It is certainly the case that the majority of early representations of the Resurrection afford a prominent role to the women. However, an ivory in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, dated to c. 400, showing the women at the tomb, also depicts an Ascension witnessed by Peter and a James (commonly interpreted as the Lord's brother) (Fig. 12). It is likely that this depicts details from the 2nd-century Egyptian *Apocryphon of James*, also known as the *Letter of James*, in which the men are given instructions by Christ prior to his Ascension.[89] This story may be conflated here with the apocry-

87 For instance, Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy," *New Blackfriars* 66 (1985): 324–355.

88 Ann Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the first apostle: the struggle for authority*, Harvard Theological Studies 51 (Cambridge, MA, 2003), esp. 12–13, 19–40, and, in non-canonical texts, 73–104.

89 Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 673–681; David R. Cartlidge and J. Keith Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London, 2001), 133, 222, fig. 4.36; Herbert L. Kessler, "The Christian Realm," in *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century: Catalogue of the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977, through February 12, 1978*, ed. Kurt

phal *Gospel of Peter*, as this text mentions that two soldiers were keeping guard (seen by the tomb) and that Christ ascended directly from the tomb.[90] Thus the male apostles are witness to both the Resurrection and the Ascension.

Fig. 12: Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Ivory Panel with Resurrection (women at the tomb) and Ascension; Relief: Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Christi, Inv.-Nr. MA 157. Foto Nr. D27841 © Bayerisches Nationalmuseum München.

A second source of marginalization is her relationship with the Mother of God. In various apocryphal and patristic texts from as early as the 4th century, the Mother of God takes over or joins Mary in her role as the first witness of Christ's Resurrection, both at the empty tomb and in the scene where the risen Christ appears to her, a part not given to the Mother of God in the Gospel text.[91] The precedence of her role is central, at the cost of demoting Mary Magdalene. Illustrations of both women at the tomb date from the early period, such as in the 6th century Sancta Sanctorum reliquary box in the Vatican, where the Mother of God is with Mary Magdalene in the upper left scene. She is identifiable from her depiction in the Nativity, Crucifixion, and Ascension (Fig. 9).[92] The pairing also occurs in later manuscripts, as in Athos, Dionysiou 587, folio 170v, illustrating John 20:1–10, in which Mary Magdalene tells Peter and John about the empty tomb and John then looks into it (Fig. 13).[93] In the Gospels of Mark

Weitzmann (New York, 1979), 454, 455, fig. 67; Herbert L. Kessler, "Scenes from the Acts of the Apostles on Some Early Christian Ivories," *Gesta* 18 (1979): 109–119, at 110.

90 Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 150–158, at 156–157, v. 34–42.

91 On this, see Ciro Giannelli, "Témoignages patristiques grecs en faveur d'une apparition du Christ Ressucité à la Vierge Marie," *RÉB* 11 (1953): 106–119; James D. Breckenridge, "'Et Prima Vidit': The Iconography of the Appearance of Christ to his Mother," *The Art Bulletin* 39 (1957): 9–32, esp. 11–14, and in early art, 14–15; Kurt Weitzmann, "Eine vorikonoklastische Ikone des Sinai mit der Darstellung des Chairete," in *Tortulae: Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten*, ed. Walter Nikolaus Schumacher, Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte, Suppl. H. 30 (Vienna, 1966), 317–325, pls. 80–83, at 319–320.

92 *Sancta Sanctorum Reliquary Box*, Vatican, Cat. 61883.2.1–2.

93 Athos, Dionysiou, cod. 587, fol.170v; see *Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts. 1. The Protaton and the monasteries of Dionysiou, Koutloumousiou, Xeropotamou and Gregoriou*, Treasures of Mount Athos: Illuminated Manuscripts 1 (Athens, 1974), 446, fig. 275.

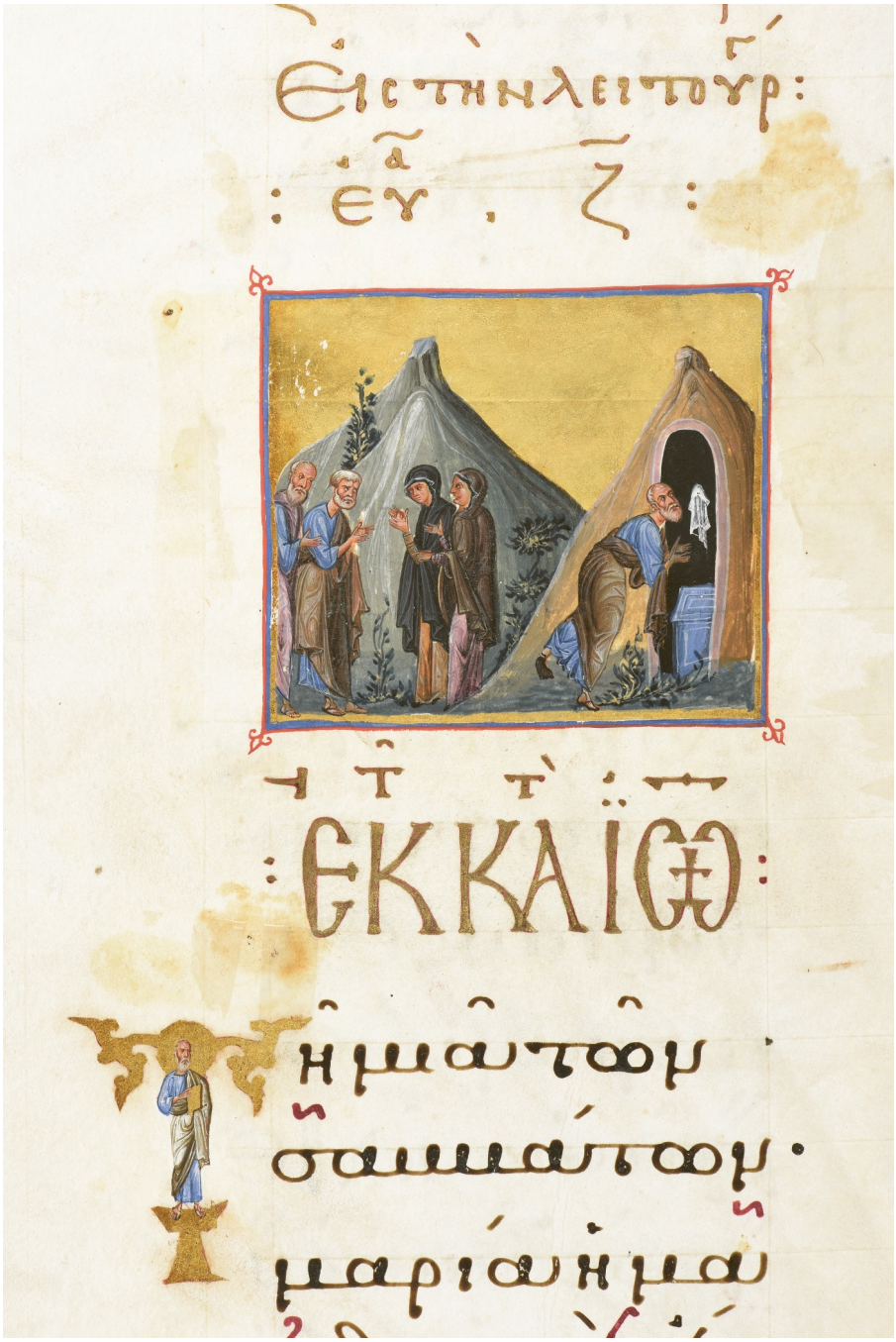

Fig. 13: Athos, Dionysiou, cod. 587, folio 170v, Mary Magdalene tells Saints Peter and John about the empty tomb, Saint John looks into the empty tomb. By kind permission of Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos.

and John, Mary Magdalene is the sole first witness of the resurrected Christ in the scene known as the *Chairete* (Mark 16:9–10, John 20:17), although in the Gospel of Mark this is almost certainly not in the original text. In Matthew two women are present, the Magdalene and 'the other Mary' (Mathew 28:8–10). The Mother of God and Mary Magdalene are both shown in the probably 6th-century *Rabbula Gospels*, the Mother of God indicated by a halo, and in the 9th-century Paris gr. 510, where the blue gown worn by the woman kneeling on the right is the same as that of the Mother of God in both the Crucifixion and Deposition in the registers above.[94] In the development of Orthodox theology, the Church Fathers made the Mother of God "a model of behaviour."[95] Amongst women, she takes precedence. She had 118 churches dedicated to her in Constantinople, and Mary Magdalene had none. Her popularity also perhaps overshadowed the roles of other female saints: Anne, Euphemia, Barbara, Anastasia, and Thekla had respectively six, five, four, four, and either three or four churches dedicated to them.[96]

Thus Mary Magdalene in Byzantium remains a paradox. She never gains the rich emotional identity of Luke's sinner or the West's reformed harlot. However, in imagery, she is a persistent presence at the cross, the tomb and the garden in scenes of Christ's passion. Singled out from the other *myrrophores*, she is an example of loyalty and of purity and, significantly, in some representations, a leader of men.

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94 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Pluteus 1, 56, fol. 13a; in Breckenridge, "'Et Prima Vidit'," 14 and Fig. 1; Paris, cod. gr. 510, fol. 30v; see Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1999, 2008), 299–302, Fig. 7; Brubaker refers to this as Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of James, see p. 299.

95 Niki Tsironi, "George of Nicomedia: Convention and Originality in the Homily on Good Friday," *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 332–336, at 332.

96 Janin, "Les églises et monastères," 153.

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