

# Byzantine Dress: A Guide

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## Chapter 1

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### Byzantine Identity and Dress

Maria G. Parani

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# 1 Byzantine Identity and Dress<sup>1</sup>

*Maria G. Parani*

## Introduction

The fragmentary but endlessly fascinating Byzantine manuscript *Vat. gr.* 1851, variously dated to the late twelfth, the late thirteenth, or the mid-fourteenth century, contains a poem and a set of illustrations narrating the arrival to Constantinople of a foreign bride for the son of the emperor and the ceremonies organized for her welcome and integration into the Byzantine court.<sup>2</sup> According to the poem, in expectation of her arrival, the emperor instructed one of his closest relatives among the court ladies to meet the young bride-to-be and to help her change into a ‘ῥωμαϊκόν, δεσποινικόν ἱμάτιν’ (= Roman/Byzantine,<sup>3</sup> female imperial gown) and put on all other adornment appropriate to Byzantine imperial women (ἀγούστια); only thus adorned could she be publicly presented for the veneration of all.<sup>4</sup> This transformation, in a rare instance of direct correlation between text and image in a Byzantine context, is visualized in a full-page miniature on folio 3v of the manuscript (Fig. 1.1).<sup>5</sup> Here, the miniaturist offers us a glimpse of what a Byzantine female imperial gown was expected to look like at the time of the creation of the manuscript. The materials evoked, its design, colors, decoration, and overall luxuriant magnificence, as befitting the imperial rank of the bearer, all serve to differentiate the Byzantine gown from the original, plain (or, maybe simplified?), non-Byzantine attire of the foreign princess. The use of the adjective ‘ῥωμαϊκόν’ in the text concurrently with the depicted elaborate dress of the princess in the miniature demonstrates the awareness of the creators of the manuscript of Byzantine dress as distinctive and distinct from the dress of the foreign other. It also showcases their—and their circle’s—recognition of the power of dress to impart and communicate a Byzantine identity, as an essential step toward having this identity acknowledged by other Byzantines. This acknowledgment by others is what would finally establish the Byzantine projected identity and help situate the bride-to-be in her new, Byzantine social circle.<sup>6</sup>

This example of the foreign-princess-turned-into-a-Byzantine-*augusta* seen through Byzantine eyes serves to introduce the concept of identity as an awareness of a set of self-ascribed characteristics (values, beliefs, cultural practices) that help individuals define themselves in relation to others by establishing connections to those who are thought to share these same characteristics, while differentiating themselves from those who, again in their own perception, do not.<sup>7</sup> This same example likewise illustrates how this identity—whether individual or collective—may be constructed and communicated through the use of external signs or ‘identity markers,’ as commonly called in scholarly literature, of which dress is, arguably, the most eloquent and effective in



*Figure 1.1* Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms gr. 1851, fol. 3v, full-page miniature: the reception of the foreign princess by the Byzantine emperor's female relatives and her assumption of Byzantine dress (variably dated to the twelfth, the thirteenth, and the fourteenth century) (Photo: © 2023 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana).

terms of immediate sensorial and ideational impact.<sup>8</sup> I should note that 'dress' here, and throughout this chapter, is understood in the broadest sense of the term, as referring not only to items of clothing, jewelry, and accessories worn on the body or carried by an individual but also to any form of intentional body modification affecting a person's appearance.<sup>9</sup>

Questions regarding the processes of the creation, maintenance, and renegotiation of identity in the face of changing historical conditions have been very much in the forefront of the work of Byzantinists in recent decades, be they historians, art historians, or archaeologists. While some have dedicated their energies to identifying and exploring the pillars of an overarching Byzantine identity and their permutations over the empire's millennial existence, others have focused on interrogating the very nature of this identity—cultural, ethnic/national, elite, or other—and the agents of its construction and communication. Increasingly, however, more and more scholars are also drawn to the exploration of specific Byzantine group identities, as defined by age, familial ties, gender, locality, ethnic origins, social class, occupation, and religious beliefs.<sup>10</sup> As one would expect, in many of these discussions, dress, both as an embodied practice and as a non-verbal communication code, features prominently as a primary external marker of identity.<sup>11</sup> When it comes to the exploration of the identity of groups that are rarely represented if at all in the Byzantine written and visual records, the painstaking, contextual examination of dress-related archaeological materials, such as jewelry and dress accessories, is demonstrated to be invaluable.<sup>12</sup>

Themes related to how dress was employed in Byzantium to constitute and communicate individual and group identities are also being explored in other chapters of the present *Guide*.<sup>13</sup> Here, however, I propose to take a look at the wider picture and attempt to seek an answer to the question what it was that made the dress we are studying in this volume 'Byzantine,' other than that self-identified Byzantines were wearing it and that their contemporary non-Byzantines recognized it as such (or, at least, as different from their own). Given that the dress in question changed over time, can one identify specific traits that cut across temporal and other social internal divisions which made it constitutive and distinctive of a Byzantine identity? Rather than looking at the typological development of Byzantine dress over time and identifying what may be deemed as its characteristic features,<sup>14</sup> what I will attempt to do is to delve into the potential cultural meanings of these features that made them appropriate or desirable for the Byzantines to use in order to construct, maintain, and communicate a Byzantine identity, itself a constantly renegotiated temporal and contextual confluence of cultural values, beliefs, customs, and practices. Toward this goal I propose to discuss features of dress that are associated with (a) the articulation and presentation of the human body, (b) the construction and display of similarity and difference, and (c) the adherence to tradition, on the one hand, and the incorporation of change on the other, as all these three aspects are fundamental to the constitution and projection of identity. The discussion will focus primarily on secular dress, with only incidental references to military, ecclesiastic, and monastic attire. Furthermore, it will be biased toward the dress of the groups that are better represented in our sources, which admittedly tend to be those in the upper reaches of Byzantine society. Considering, however, that in Byzantium as in strongly stratified societies in general, the phenomenon of 'trickle-down fashion' was also observed, with members of the poorer classes imitating the sartorial practices of their wealthier contemporaries, the observations offered here may have had a wider application than we can ascertain at present.<sup>15</sup> Be this as it may, while this analysis adopts an interdisciplinary, diachronic approach, it claims to be neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Rather, I consider this to be mostly a methodological experiment, undertaken in the hope that it will help advance our understanding of Byzantine dress as a non-verbal communication system and as an identity construction technique, as well as contribute to the wider discussion of the complexities of Byzantine identity.

## The Body

‘The ubiquitous nature of dress would seem to point to the fact that dress and adornment is one of the means by which bodies are made social and given meaning and identity.’<sup>16</sup> Put differently, the socially engaged body is a dressed body, and this was very much the case in the Greco-Roman world, as well as in Byzantium.<sup>17</sup> Through dress, the body was made presentable and acceptable within the context of social interaction, facilitating as it did the communication of aspects of an individual’s identity as well as their current state of mind and emotions. Dress shaped, covered, concealed, or revealed the body but also facilitated or restricted movement, enabling or imposing specific postures and gestures. The choices and actions involved in dressing the body, though deeply personal, were nonetheless culturally informed not only by the available technologies of dress, aesthetics, and current concepts of beauty but also by concerns about propriety, modesty, and morality, themselves inextricably entangled with religious beliefs and prevalent norms related to established gender roles and social rank. With this in mind, looking at how Byzantines chose to articulate and present their dressed bodies seems to me to provide an ideal starting point for our exploration of how dress was harnessed to communicate a Byzantine identity and what some of this identity’s constituent features may have been, at least as embodied literally in the flesh.

Even a superficial survey of the available evidence indicates that the Byzantine body was a fully covered body, and this observation holds true across gender and most other social divisions.<sup>18</sup> Nudity or partial nudity, though acceptable as a marker of extreme asceticism, which in any case placed its practitioners at the very margins of society, on the whole had negative associations. These ranged from immorality and licentiousness to abject poverty, vulnerability, shame, humiliation, extreme emotional distress, and physical violence and violation.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in daily contexts, when the personal, social, and financial circumstances of an individual allowed, the body was fully covered, with only the hands, face, and—most commonly in the case of men—the neck remaining uncovered. Full coverage, however, did not mean that the shape and physique of the body beneath the dress was completely obscured. The use of specific clothing styles, trimmings, jewelry, and accessories helped reveal the shape of the body and draw attention to specific zones deemed significant in the embodiment and performance of specific social roles.

The full coverage of the male body, already in place by the fourth century, constituted a departure from earlier Roman sartorial traditions, which left the arms, legs, and feet exposed, as overt signals of manliness and, also, *romanitas*: a Roman man was able to withstand the cold, without needing to cover his arms and legs in the manner that various barbarians, especially the soft and decadent Persians, were wont to do.<sup>20</sup> By the sixth century, if we are to judge by the mosaic panel of Justinian at San Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 1.2), where the emperor himself is shown wearing these sartorial units, the long-sleeved tunic and the tight-fitting trousers with the integrated feet (a type of hose), rather than ‘exotic’ imports, had become constitutive elements of Roman male dress, appropriate to be worn by the Roman emperor himself. Mary Harlow has argued that their successful naturalization into the wardrobe of late antique Romans should be associated with the increased presence and rising influence of barbarians in the imperial army and administration.<sup>21</sup> In a progressively Christianized empire, their incorporation into male dress may have also been facilitated by Christian ideas about modesty and morality, strongly colored by a suspicion of nudity and partial nudity, both male and female, as leading into sexual temptation.<sup>22</sup> Still, the long sleeves, being narrow, allowed the form



Figure 1.2 Ravenna, San Vitale, bema, north wall, mosaic panel: Emperor Justinian I (AD 527–565), surrounded by clergy, court officials, and bodyguards (church dedicated in AD 547) (Photo: 2023©Photo Scala, Florence).

of the arms to be discernible, which was emphasized even further by the decorative elements, such as bands of round or square panels, adorning the sleeves. Likewise, while the tight-fitting trousers now covered legs and feet, they still revealed their shape under the loose, normally knee-length tunics worn by the men over their trousers. The shape of the male body was further accentuated by the belt, which secured the tunic at the waist and stopped the garment from flapping around when the man moved, ensuring a dignified appearance and unrestricted movement.<sup>23</sup> Even though the male body was thus now covered from neck to toe, its physique and lines were still acknowledged and put on display through this style of dress and the ornamentation of the tunic. The emphasis on the arms, waist, and legs, though now articulated in different terms, still conveyed an otherwise traditional image of physical prowess and readiness for action that were regarded as characteristic of the Roman (lay)man.<sup>24</sup>

When in public, the late antique male body was regularly obscured by a sleeveless mantle. This could be worn over the head, as in the case of the *paenula*, draped around the body, as in the case of the traditional *toga* still worn by members of the senatorial class in specific contexts, or fastened at the right shoulder with a fibula, as in the case of the *chlamys*, a type of mantle that had originally formed part of Roman military dress, but which had now become

## 8 Byzantine Dress: A Guide

part of court dress, worn by the emperor and military and civilian officials alike.<sup>25</sup> While the *toga*, with its complicated drapery, was not designed to be worn in contexts that demanded energetic action which could cause the garment to become disarrayed to the shame and ridicule of the wearer, the *paenula* and the *chlamys* could be easily lifted and thrown over the shoulders to allow the use of both hands when the need arose. However, in situations not demanding such action, the heavy *chlamys*, just like the *toga*, enfolding the male body as it did, imposed an upright posture, a slow, deliberate rhythm on movement, and minimal gestures. The men in their *chlamys*, as in their togas, must have cut impressive figures, endowed with grave dignity, which in itself intimated a high level of self-discipline and self-control, both important manly attributes in the Byzantine construction of gender.<sup>26</sup>

The full coverage of the male body became even more pronounced after the seventh century, with the basic sartorial unit of the male wardrobe, the tunic, becoming ankle-length. Furthermore, while it continued to be worn regularly under a sleeveless mantle, by the ninth century it also appears worn under a slightly shorter outer tunic. By the eleventh century, the long inner tunic, with long narrow sleeves and a tall, cylindrical neck, was worn under an ample outer garment, with long, wide sleeves, and V-shaped neck with lapels. At the same time, Byzantine men began to wear hats more regularly (Fig. 1.3).<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, in terms of self-ascribed markers of identity, while there is



Figure 1.3 Göreme, Karanlık kilise, narthex, vault, west, mural painting: Christ blessing the Apostles prior to the Ascension, detail: John Entalmatikos in supplication at Christ's feet (mid-eleventh century) (Photo: courtesy of Catherine Jolivet-Lévy).



evidence to suggest that some Byzantine men also wore shorter garments over trousers, with relevant references multiplying during the twelfth century,<sup>28</sup> none of those who could afford to have their portraits painted on the walls of Middle Byzantine churches or in the pages of manuscripts chose to have themselves represented in anything else but long garments that covered their body from neck to toe. The fact that what was accepted, in certain quarters at least, as appropriate and traditional male ‘Roman attire’ (ῥωμαϊκὴ στολή) covered the body completely is also implied by the complaints of a late twelfth-century Byzantine writer aggrieved by a friend, who had apparently abandoned Roman traditions for ‘short and low-cut foreign and Latin garments, that covered neither the knees nor the hands.’<sup>29</sup>

While the belt, still an essential component of Middle Byzantine male attire, drew attention to the waist, the bodiness and physicality of the male body were no longer displayed as they had been in the previous period. The impression of physical strength was now conveyed rather discretely, with the emphasis on the arms by means of the decorative bands adorning the sleeves of the tunic and, one could argue, by the manner in which the man was able to bear the weight of his superimposed garments, maintaining a proper and well-groomed appearance at all times. Any overt signs that could evoke military prowess, such as the carrying of weapons, are completely absent from daily secular male dress in times of peace, a practice that echoes earlier Roman customs.<sup>30</sup> When a sword does appear in some male portraits, it is a symbol of rank in court hierarchy, rather than any indication of a military ethos.<sup>31</sup> While military skills and courage in the battle field were among the characteristics that should distinguish the Byzantine (lay) man, they—also judging by the dress—did not constitute a defining feature of medieval Byzantine male identity, which was shaped by Roman civic ideals and within the context of a Christian state that, by and large, considered war as a necessary evil and the last resort for the restoration of peace and securing prosperity.<sup>32</sup> This aspect of Byzantine lay dress was also noted by outsiders, including a Western observer who, at the close of the eleventh century, commented that the heavy garments of Byzantine men were not suited for battle.<sup>33</sup> Indeed the long, superimposed layers of clothing, topped by the hats, must have been quite restrictive. Yet, the restraint they imposed on movement and gesture apparently was deemed desirable, both for effect—to impress with one’s dignity and stateliness—and as an external signal of self-control, which always remained a fundamental constitutive element of Byzantine masculinity. Not least, this mode of dress also intimated that the bearer was of high enough status and wealth that he did not need to engage directly in active physical labor in times of peace, something which, perhaps, also fitted well with notions of Byzantine (male) superiority.

Such ideas, associated with status display, might go some way to explain how a feature that—outside ceremonial contexts—in earlier centuries was considered as a distinctive element of female dress—the full length of the garments—came to become integrated into the medieval Byzantine male wardrobe. Besides, already by the late sixth century, there was another element of male dress that became the primary signifier of manliness, which distinguished Byzantine men not only from women, but also eunuchs: the beard. In addition to the ubiquitous testimony of portraiture, that the beard came to be recognized as the identifier of the Byzantine man irrespective of social class, even beyond the Empire’s borders, is confirmed by the decision of the Venetian doge, at a time of political tension with Byzantium in the late eleventh century, to order Venetian men to shave their beards so as not to resemble the ‘Greeks,’ i.e., the Byzantines.<sup>34</sup> The beard retained its importance as the distinctive feature of the Byzantine man down to the end of the Byzantine

era. Furthermore, especially from the twelfth century onward, within the context of the antagonistic relations with the Latins, the beard also became emblematic of the Byzantine men's adherence to Orthodoxy, which was one of the fundamental pillars of Byzantine identity.<sup>35</sup>

The Byzantine male body remained fully covered during the Late Byzantine period as well (thirteenth to fifteenth century).<sup>36</sup> If we are to judge from a rare visual witness to the dress of the lower social strata, in the form of a mural depicting the weekly procession of the icon of the Hodegetria in Constantinople in the late thirteenth century at Arta in Greece, this held true even for the members of the poorer classes, who may not have worn full-length garments, but still wore tunics that came down below the knees, over a pair of trousers. This tunic with the long narrow sleeves, secured at the waist with a belt, allowed the wearer greater freedom of movement, especially when it came to the use of the arms and the legs, necessary for engaging in physical labor.<sup>37</sup> As for the more 'visible' upper-class males, again based on written descriptions and the evidence of portraiture, while the style of their dress changed, with a move toward what we today would identify as oriental-looking caftans, their bodies remained covered from head to toe under their garments. It should perhaps be noted here that from late Byzantine written sources, we learn of men who had adopted—one assumes, more revealing—foreign, especially western, fashions. As in the previous period, however, men in areas still under the political control of the Empire did not choose to be represented in such styles when they commissioned their portraits in monumental or miniature painting.<sup>38</sup>

Looking at these portraits, when the body is not obscured by a heavy mantle, one can, nonetheless, observe an emphasis on the shoulders, arms, torso, and the waist, as a number of these men opted for caftans with a tight fit on the upper part of the male body (Fig. 1.4). This kind of molding the arms, shoulders, and torso, projecting an image of physical fitness and strength, is already occasionally observed in the twelfth century, even in the context of the much more traditional male imperial dress.<sup>39</sup> At that earlier period, such an emphasis on the body and its implied prowess may perhaps be partly associated with the ideals of a military aristocracy, with the two soldier-emperors John II (r. 1118–1143) and Manuel I (r. 1143–1180) Komnenoi being the prime exponents.<sup>40</sup> The study of the construction of (upper class) masculinity in the Late Byzantine period has not advanced far enough to allow us to postulate whether comparable ideas about military prowess may have also informed this Late Byzantine sartorial trend which lay emphasis on the male body's physicality; they would not have been out of place at a time when a beleaguered Empire was constantly called upon to fight for its survival. Alternatively, one cannot exclude the possibility that this was the decorous and respectable Byzantine response to the more form-revealing contemporary fashions of the West, which were certainly well-known both in the cities and the countryside of the Empire. Indeed, elegance and aesthetic considerations appear to have been important in the construction of the public image of Late Byzantine men of means. This is indicated especially by the delicate handkerchief, tucked prominently in their belt. Still, given a handkerchief's practical function, i.e., to swipe bodily fluids, such as sweat and tears, and clean the face and hands, one wonders whether it did not also contribute to convey the impression of a man in control of his body, who was able to behave properly in public, exhibiting the expected self-constraint.<sup>41</sup> In the Byzantine construction of gender, self-constraint and the avoidance of indecorous public displays of intense sentiment were what distinguished men from women.



Figure 1.4 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms gr. 2144, fol. IIr, full-page miniature: the *megas doux* Alexios Apokaukos (AD 1341–1345) (Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France ).

## 12 *Byzantine Dress: A Guide*

The conception, then, of what made a Byzantine man and the social expectations that sprang from this informed the way the (lay) male body was shaped and made social through dress, imposing a number of restrictions on individual choices especially of the male members of the upper echelons of Byzantine society, who conformed to and promoted these norms or simply wished to avoid censure by doing so. Restriction, as evidenced through dress, is not a notion that is often associated in scholarly literature with (elite) men in a patriarchal society like the Byzantine one. On the contrary, the concepts of constraints and control are most commonly affixed to the treatment of the dressed female body in Byzantium.

In Byzantium, the female body was a 'site of tension,' where conflicting conceptions and expectations were enmeshed.<sup>42</sup> Because of its perceived inherent weaknesses and its potential to incite carnal desires in men, the female body needed to be protected, confined, and controlled. Still, as a reflection of the social status of the family to which the woman belonged, it was often necessary to be put on display both for the male and the female gaze. Not least, given that for a lay Byzantine woman the accepted primary social role was to become a wife and mother, her body needed to be made attractive for the pleasure of a prospective or actual husband, while maintaining the chastity and respectability that made the woman suited to this role. These ambivalences and contradictions were reified in Byzantine female dress, which both concealed and revealed the female body, enabling it to act in society.<sup>43</sup>

Just like the male body, the Byzantine female body was fully covered; however, both the way this was achieved and the visual effect were different, given the divergent social roles that men and women were expected to fulfill. By the fourth century the Roman non-tailored draped ankle-length female tunic had been replaced by a full-length, long-sleeved tunic woven to shape on the loom. Still, the underlying notion, i.e., that respectable women with a chaste and moral character needed to have their body fully covered, especially when they appeared in public, persevered into late antique times as well, when it was further compounded by Christian morals.<sup>44</sup> Even so, while some Christian Fathers frowned upon the use of long tight sleeves that would reveal the shape of the arms, even while covering them, or upon the use of belts that shaped the ample tunic drawing attention to the body beneath it,<sup>45</sup> their criticism was not enough to change current practice. In the fourth and fifth centuries, women, especially upper-class women, often wore an outer tunic with ample sleeves, sometimes long, sometimes short, over an under tunic, with long, narrow sleeves (Fig. 1.5), introducing a dynamic tension between concealment and revelation, between modesty and sexual appeal that lay at the fundament of Byzantine feminine identity. Likewise, the belt that cinched the female tunic, not at the waist, but under the breasts, drew attention to this erogenous zone of the female body, but also to its potential to bring forth and nurture life, motherhood through marriage being the only acceptable outlet for the virtuous woman's sexuality. For lower-class women, who had to engage in manual labor to make a living, the belt also served the practical function of securing the broad sleeves of the outer tunic, to allow greater mobility. This was also the reason behind their slightly shorter tunics, reaching just above the ankles. Though their modesty was still maintained, the necessity of manual labor introduced a greater degree of bodily exposure in their dress that would have been considered indecent in that of an upper-class woman.

By the sixth century, the sleeves of the outer female tunic had become narrower, but not necessarily tight-fitting. The breasts, arms, as well as the neck were further emphasized



Figure 1.5 Monza, Museo e Tesoro del Duomo, relief ivory diptych of Stilicho, left (back) panel: Serena and her son Eucherius (ca AD 395) (Photo: ©Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza/photo Raffaello Brà).

by the woven ornamentation of the garment and by means of jewelry, while elegant gestures—as seen in art, at least—drew the gaze to the hands and wrists, bedecked with rings and bracelets. The neck was also accentuated by the fact that marriageable or married women had their hair gathered up, in conformity with current ideas about morality and respectability. The high-rising hairstyles drew the gaze to the head and face, which was framed by earrings. Cosmetics and perfumes could be used to complete the appearance of the woman, an appearance constructed to appeal to more than one senses.

When appearing in public, the woman was enveloped in the *palla*, a mantle in the form a long rectangular cloth panel that could be draped around the torso in a variety of ways and, when needed, also used to cover the head. Though paradoxical, the cover of a mantle is what allowed the woman, throughout the Byzantine period, to actually be seen and move in the public sphere. Thus screened, the woman was protected from harmful, lustful, or envious looks, by men, but also by other women. At the same time,

others, especially men, were protected by the temptation the woman might pose. As with any draped garment, the *palla* was restrictive, since any energetic movement ran the risk of disarranging it. Especially when draped around the shoulders and upper body, it did not allow large, open gestures, which a respectable woman needed to avoid in any case. The closed posture and limited gesturing imposed by the dress endowed the woman with dignity and implied restraint, something toward which every woman was supposed to strive, given the weak and highly emotional nature that defined her gender according to the Byzantine social construction of it.

In the period that followed, the style of mantle changed, with the draped *palla* abandoned in favor of sleeveless mantles reaching down to the calves or ankles and fastened at the neck with a brooch (Fig. 1.6). While the *palla*, depending on how snugly it encircled the body, allowed its overall form to be discernible, the prevalent Middle Byzantine mantle types concealed behind their vertical folds the curving lines of breast, waist, and hips. When the woman stood motionless in public, her body would have been screened as if behind a curtain. If necessary, the woman could have thrown back her mantle for greater freedom of movement, but this seems unlikely especially in contexts where decorous behavior was paramount, such as attending service in church. The mantle kept the arms close to the body, and only the hands and part of the forearms would be visible through the mantle's vertical opening when the woman made a gesture. As in the case of Middle Byzantine men then, the bodies of Middle Byzantine women became more fully covered, but, again like their male counterparts, they continued to command the gaze through other means, such as impressive headdresses and their colorful garments, made of patterned fabrics with embroidered or woven trimmings, at least for those who could afford them. Indeed, some of the extravagant styles especially of the eleventh and the twelfth century would have made little sense unless the women who adopted them were visible outside the privacy of their home by men and other women.<sup>46</sup>

The now tailored dresses worn under the mantles retained their full length, but had acquired a tall cylindrical neck as well, which was visible above the neckline of the mantle. They could be worn belted at the waist or without a belt. However, the most eye-catching development in their design was the change in the shape of the sleeves, which by the eleventh century had become triangular, reaching real extravagance during the twelfth when their shape became like a trumpet, with very broad ends. The visual evidence suggests that this style of dress was not limited to the affluent alone, yet the most elaborate examples were worn by upper-class Byzantine women, including the empress. This type of sleeve was not in the least practical, forcing the woman to hold her hands demurely folded before her at the elbows, in order to avoid having the end of the sleeves trailing on the ground. Dresses with broad sleeves existed in the previous period as well. Now, however, the undergarment worn beneath the dress had equally broad sleeves, meaning that the woman needed to be extremely careful with her gestures in order to avoid exposing more of her arms above the wrists.<sup>47</sup> Thus, this style of dress, while fully covering the woman's body from neck to toe, incorporated intentionally the potential of revelation. As a result, it demanded of the Byzantine woman, and especially the upper-class Byzantine woman, an impressive level of body discipline, but at the same time it enhanced the expressiveness of her hand-gestures, both as a means of projecting her inner self-command and of heightening her allure. Like the social roles the Byzantine woman needed to conform to in order to maintain her respectability, this style of dress was restrictive, but at the same time allowed her a degree of control over her body and, through that, over the impressions she wished to convey about her identity and status. It encapsulated the



*Figure 1.6* Kastoria, Holy Anargyroi, north aisle, south wall, lower register, mural painting. Family donor portrait, detail: Anna Radene (Photo: ©Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/ Archaeological Receipts Fund – Ephorate of Antiquities at Kastoria/ Byzantine Church of Aghioi Anargyroi).

conflicting social expectations that constituted the female gender in Byzantium, but also made apparent the Byzantine woman's agency, however circumscribed, in owning these expectations to establish her place in Byzantine society.

The high neck and long impressive sleeves remained a feature of female dress in the Late Byzantine period as well, though now these elements appear associated with an exceedingly long dress that was gathered up with a hidden belt or string at mid-thigh or above the knees, creating an overfold that gave the impression of a full blouse falling over a skirt (Fig. 1.7). This type of dress altered the shape of the female body, obscuring its form under the straight lines of the upper part that ignored the waist completely. Thus, judging by artistic representations, it could be worn without a mantle, since the form of the female body was entirely concealed by the dress alone. Constantinopolitan upper-class women continued to wear this dress over an undergarment with equally broad sleeves, while women in the provinces or former provinces of the Empire, who had adopted a variation of this style, wore it over a tight-sleeved undergarment, suggesting a difference in mores between city and countryside and/or a different lifestyle that required greater freedom of movement by female village women.<sup>48</sup> The continuity in the form of the sleeves and the tall neck, as well as obscuring the female form behind a cover of straight-falling fabric imply that these features were considered expressive of a 'Byzantine' female identity, an impression that is strengthened when one realizes that this is the style of dress worn by wives of Byzantine court officials when portrayed next to their husbands dressed in their state official Byzantine court dress (Fig. 1.7).

Having said this, judging by the visual and archaeological evidence, some Late Byzantine women opted for more figure-hugging dresses, sometimes with low necklines, that evidence an awareness of contemporary western European styles. As opposed to the men, some of these women were actually portrayed in these 'non-Byzantine' fashions on the walls of Byzantine churches.<sup>49</sup> As far as I know, the male authors who complained about Late Byzantine men adopting foreign sartorial practices, perceiving this as a threat to Byzantine identity, do not comment about Late Byzantine women wearing foreign styles. Perhaps, to the eyes of these male authors, women's fashion choices were irrelevant to the sustaining and projection of a Byzantine identity, or at least the Byzantine identity of their state that they apparently perceived as residing exclusively in men. What the women thought, we do not know. Not being constrained by the same social and ideological restrictions as the men, perhaps these women could exercise and display their choices more freely, since these choices could be 'excused' (in the eyes of potential male critics) as female vanity, which nonetheless could also be expressive of the status and connections of these women—and their families.<sup>50</sup>

However, foreign styles did not necessarily imply a rejection of Byzantine identity on the part of the women who adopted them. The incorporation of foreign elements into Byzantine material culture, which were then reinterpreted to the point of becoming constitutive and expressive of a Byzantine identity is, as we have seen, neither an outlandish nor an unknown practice.<sup>51</sup> We do not have textual evidence to help us discern whether these female styles were perceived as 'foreign' or whether they had become naturalized as Byzantine. The fact that the women wear these garments and headdresses in traditional Byzantine contexts, i.e., on the walls of Greek-Orthodox churches, accompanied by the members of their family and identified by inscriptions listing their family names, intimates that probably to them there was no apparent contradiction between their chosen dress and a projected Byzantine identity. Thus, rather than seeing these different styles as a symptom of a weakening of Byzantine identity at a time of internal crisis of the state or, even, as a





Figure 1.7 Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Lincoln College Typikon*, fol. 3r, full-page miniature: The *megas konostablos* John Komnenos Doukas Synadenos and his wife Eirene Laskarina Komnene Doukaina Palaiologina (AD 1327–1342) (Photo: By the permission of the Rector and Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford; Lincoln College, cod. gr. 35, fol. 3r).

desire to challenge it, what we might be faced with here are Byzantine women who exercised their choice to express this identity on and through their bodies in different terms, in response to the changing historical conditions of their time. Be this as it may, these women in their figure-hugging dresses and their wimples, at the very least, warn us against viewing Byzantine female identity as monolithic and against expecting it to be expressed through dress only in one way and not in another. Identity, including ethnic and cultural identity, neither implies nor requires uniformity, especially not when we are discussing the identity of an empire, the stratified and highly hierarchical social structure of which was very much based on the construction and display of difference, as well as similarity.

### Similarity and Difference

Beyond their overarching Byzantine identity, each self-ascribed Byzantine had a number of other identities, personal as well as collective, which together constituted their individual sense of self. These multiple identities were defined by age, gender, familial ties, place of origin, class, financial status, profession, religious beliefs, as well as by personal preferences and tastes. Furthermore, they were associated with the embodiment and performance of specific social roles which varied and developed throughout the individual's life course. Within the context of social interaction, these identities and roles could be communicated through dress, which could help locate an individual in society in relation to—similar to some and different from—others. Situating individuals in their 'proper place' was of the utmost importance in a hierarchical society like the Byzantine one, where the stability of the social structure was interconnected with the stability of the state itself.<sup>52</sup> In the following section and in accordance with my overarching aim, rather than presenting an overview of Byzantine dress that was associated with specific identities as defined by age, gender, profession, and so on, what I hope to explore is how similarity and difference was constructed and maintained through dress in Byzantium, basing my observations on examples taken from different periods and spheres of social activity. Once again, the focus is on tracing general attitudes and trends that may be defined as 'Byzantine' or, at least, as prevalent in the Empire, not on discussing dress typologies.

In Byzantium, then, the same individual could move and act in several social spheres. Social expectations and personal choices demanded that, in each situation, the individual behave accordingly, including adopting the proper dress which brought to the fore the aspect of their self that was appropriate to that particular context, while subsuming or obscuring others without, however, entirely eliding them. A Byzantine, Greek-Orthodox priest, to mention one example, when he donned his liturgical vestments in church, became and was recognized as the officiant of the liturgy. Regardless of whether he was young or old, bearded or eunuch, married or celibate, local or from another province, the types of vestments he wore were the same as those of his colleagues all over the empire and shared the same symbolism, making him part of the wider community of the celebrants and clearly distinguishing him from his flock. Still, even within this community, there was room for differentiation: the quality of the vestments, their figural decoration, as well as their age and condition, alluded to an individual priest's other identities and participation in other social groups defined by education, financial status, and social class and connections.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, to mention a second example, the official dress and insignia of bearded and eunuch imperial dignitaries and functionaries, worn by them while executing their duties or when participating in imperial ceremonial, identified them as members of the machinery of state and court, while differentiating them from those not in office and not of the court. In

the world of court politics, official dress helped integrate individuals into court hierarchy, irrespective of whether they were of humble origins or noble, whether they were career men or had simply purchased their commission, whether they were Constantinopolitan, Paphlagonian, or from any other province, or, even, whether they were born or naturalized Byzantines. Indeed, it seems that official dress, carefully regulated by the central authority, was intentionally employed to mask such differences among dignitaries and office-holders, by prioritizing service to the Byzantine emperor and state as the preeminent element of their identity and by cultivating and projecting a sense of belonging to a cohesive privileged group, that would help diffuse—or, at least, attempt to control—the potentially destabilizing aspirations and allegiances that could (and often did) stem from these other identities of imperial dignitaries and officials. Still, these other identities could neither be ignored nor stifled, but found outlet in the jockeying for advancement at court, and differences in rank were notably displayed through variations in the types, combinations, materials, colors, and decoration of the dress and insignia of courtiers and officials.<sup>54</sup>

If dress, then, was employed to construct and communicate aspects of the self associated with a number of subaltern Byzantine identities, not least by helping to integrate or relate an individual with one group and differentiate or dissociate them from another, this was done using (sartorial) terms and mechanisms that were culturally informed and, hence, appropriate to and understandable in their Byzantine context; otherwise, the communication of similarity and difference would fail. We assume this, yet we do not always know how it was actually achieved, given the gaps and biases of the extant evidence. For example, we more or less know how dress was employed to communicate the difference between men and women. However, we do not really know how early in terms of age this difference began to be articulated through dress and by what means.<sup>55</sup> Nor do we know if and how exactly the dress of a young boy differed from that of an adolescent, and that of an adolescent from that of an adult man or an elderly one.<sup>56</sup> We are equally ignorant of whether a widower dressed differently from a married or a single man, especially after the period of mourning. The presence or absence of a beard was a clear distinguishing feature between youth and maturity, but were there any other elements of dress that articulated these differences?<sup>57</sup> The presence or absence of an engagement ring would convey marital status, but beyond that was there nothing else? In extant family portraits, boys and youths often appear dressed as miniature adults, but how representative is this impression of uniformity of the realities of daily life? Similar questions may be asked when it comes to women, though, in the latter case, more work has been done to explore the modes of the expression of differences between girls, adolescents, and adult women, as well as between married women and widows through dress. Particular attention has been given to the treatment of the hair and the headdress,<sup>58</sup> but adornment, especially jewelry, both in terms of types and quantities worn, may have also played a significant role in distinguishing married from unmarried women, or the elderly from the young.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, color-coding, including the brightness and the sobriety of colors used for the various components of the dress, may have communicated information regarding age and the marital status of both men and women, though more work needs to be done if we are to decode its subtle nuances.<sup>60</sup>

Our understanding of Byzantine regional identities as constructed and communicated through dress remains likewise vague, though in this case more evidence is becoming gradually available through the publication of detailed visual and archaeological data, especially from funerary contexts, from different parts of the empire.<sup>61</sup> As far as Late Antiquity is concerned, artistic representations in a variety of media and from different parts of the Empire create an impression of uniformity in terms of the basic units of dress and standard

accessories, both male and female, which contributes to the projection of a common Byzantine identity shared by all the Empire's subjects. Nonetheless, painstakingly detailed studies of the typologies of metal dress accessories and jewelry from different parts of the Empire demonstrate that regional differentiation in dress did exist and that such items could have had a role to play in the construction and display of local/provincial identities.<sup>62</sup> However, whether these items would have been recognized in other parts of the Empire, especially those not in close contact with the region in question, as denoting a specific local identity beyond something 'familiar, yet different,' is a different question to which we do not have the answer. If we are to judge on the basis of Diocletian's *Price Edict* (AD 301),<sup>63</sup> some local products relating to dress could become known and available throughout the Empire. However, in such cases origin functioned primarily as a kind of commercial brand; claiming that the items in question participated in the construction, display, and recognizability of regional identities would be a risky proposition.

As for the Middle and Late Byzantine periods, there is evidence to suggest that similar styles of dress were worn in different parts of the Empire, but the visual evidence now largely concerns those who were affluent enough to have their portraits painted on the walls of churches or manuscript folios.<sup>64</sup> Given the mobility of products and people within the Empire and the prestige of Constantinople and the imperial court—with which some of these provincial men and women had connections, advertised in the titles and family names accompanying their portraits—to observe the wide diffusion of styles that were worn in the capital is not that surprising, especially among the upper echelons of society. What is far more difficult to trace is the impact that sartorial practices in the provinces may have had in shaping these styles to begin with, as well as the role of 'borderland elites,' to use Jennifer Ball's turn of phrase, as potential mediators for the introduction of foreign styles into mainstream Byzantine practices.<sup>65</sup> This notwithstanding, styles that were worn in the capital were also worn in the provinces, where sometimes they continued in use after they had gone out of fashion in Constantinople. It would be easy to attribute this to the assumed conservatism, which, until recently, used to be facilely ascribed to the material culture and art of the Byzantine provinces.<sup>66</sup> However, this was not necessarily the case. Apropos her study of the dress a deceased lady portrayed in the church of Hagioi Anargyroi at Kato Sangri, Naxos (thirteenth century), Dora Konstantellou has observed that women at Naxos continued to wear tall hats even after such elements had gone out of fashion as elements of female aristocratic dress in Constantinople. Konstantellou remarks that for the women of Naxos, wearing a hat may have been an indicator of (high) social and economic status, rather than a sign of 'provincialism.'<sup>67</sup> Thus, elements that may have originally imitated styles coming from the capital, once introduced into regional dress, could have acquired a local significance that ensured their continuous use and relevance for the expression of a local identity, irrespective of developments in the capital and other parts of the Empire.

Thus, though we still have a long way to go when it comes to tracing Byzantine regional identities through dress and the dynamics and mechanisms of their construction and display, the extant evidence suggests that such differentiation did exist. Furthermore, my own impression, based primarily on the visual material of donor portraits, is that elements that might be identified as local or regional are more readily observed in female rather than male dress, and especially in female headdresses, which demonstrate great variety from one region to the next.<sup>68</sup> More in-depth investigation, that would also take into account the archaeological evidence, is needed to verify whether there was indeed a difference in the expression of male and female Byzantine local/regional identities through dress and, if yes,

why this may have been so. We have already mentioned above how the state's 'Byzantine' identity seems to have been primarily associated with male dress. Was it, then, that (upper class) provincial men, because of the more public roles they were expected to fulfill, chose to downplay local elements in their dress, at least in certain contexts, in favor of more mainstream, 'Byzantine' attire, leaving the women in their family to act as the vehicles for the expression of their local identity, which was closely interwoven with ties of kinship more firmly within the women's purview? Only future research will show.

Despite such important gaps in our knowledge, enough evidence has survived to help us trace how similarity and difference could be communicated through dress in Byzantium. Detailed descriptions of official dress in ceremonial handbooks shed light on how this was achieved in the context of the Byzantine court, but from that we can extrapolate—and there is certainly sufficient evidence to support this—that comparable modes could be and were employed in other contexts as well.<sup>69</sup> Thus, beyond the grooming of the body and the styling of hair and beard, the types of dress units employed,<sup>70</sup> their combinations, and the manner in which they were worn or held, the materials and the techniques used in their manufacture and decoration, their colors and their decorative patterns could and were employed to articulate individual and collective identities. And not only that. The novelty or the exotic character of some designs or patterns, and the more traditional character of others could also communicate aspects of the self-perception of individuals and groups and to differentiate them from others. Even the condition and the age of the dress units employed could be meaningful, always depending on context: for the poor, old, hand-me-down clothes were an index of their indigence; for the emperor and the court, old imperial garments and insignia were a material statement of the venerability of the state and a mode of legitimization; for private individuals, heirlooms in the form of garments and jewelry were a depository of family memory and identity.

However, simply constructing and communicating difference through dress was not enough; processes and mechanisms were also necessary to maintain it, especially given the propensity of those aspiring to a different (as a rule, higher) status than their own to imitate the dress that was associated with it. If the difference was not maintained, then the defining connections and distinctions between individuals and groups would become blurred, with all the potential destabilizing effects that this would have on the social structure and, particularly, a strongly hierarchical one like the Byzantine. As a consequence, Byzantine society developed a number of social and legal mechanisms to ensure that people dressed according to their station. Still, as we shall see, this system of control was not as rigid in all its components as it may sound, a situation that is reflective of the character of the society that engendered it.

It should perhaps be pointed out here that imitation was not a problem when it came to certain type of dress. For instance, dress units of a functional character that were associated with specific professional identities, such as the leather corselet of the charioteer or the crook of a shepherd, would not be imitated or adopted by those not of the group, so in such cases, there was no danger of confusion. Likewise, dress units that were associated with the disempowered in Byzantine society, for example, the poor or women, would not as a rule be adopted by those in a better or stronger position, unless they wished to espouse humility or to disguise themselves short-term whether for fun or to hide.

By contrast, it was dress units that were associated with the expression of prestige, status, and power that were far more likely to be desired and imitated by those who wished to claim some of that authority for themselves, to acquire a greater degree of self-determination, or to improve their social standing. An extreme case in point were

the women who cut off their hair and assumed male dress in order to escape the control of their families and pursue their chosen path of a life dedicated to God. In a patriarchal society like Byzantium, for a woman to adopt male dress and to cut her hair short like a man, even in the name of piety, was an act toward empowerment which went against the established order that wanted her under the control of her male relations or the male clergy, and this was why it was frowned upon by both the ecclesiastical authorities and the State, which took steps to stop this practice.<sup>71</sup>

As one would expect, it was organized secular and religious institutions, like the imperial establishment, the army, the Church, and the monastery, whose effectiveness and authority, actual and spiritual, was based on being distinct from the rest of society and whose regular operation relied on a clearly stratified internal structure, that had stricter dress-codes in place. These were recorded in regulatory texts, where often the power dynamics and the philosophy that animated these institutions were reified in the symbolism with which individual dress units were invested. Each institution was responsible for ensuring that its members adhered to these dress codes; when it did not, this was considered symptomatic of more fundamental problems in its operation.<sup>72</sup>

These secular and religious institutions could also take steps to stop ‘outsiders’ from imitating their distinctive dress for the purpose of safeguarding both their authority and their dignity. Better known are the laws associated with the control of garments and precious materials the use of which was regarded as an imperial prerogative.<sup>73</sup> However, as Roland Delmaire has observed in relation to late antique legislation, these imperial laws simply forbade certain practices that were deemed as an infringement of imperial privileges or as undermining the expression of a Byzantine identity in contexts where this was important for the public image of the State; they did not attempt to impose any rules as to how the subjects of the Empire should dress as they pursued their daily lives.<sup>74</sup> This is why it is worth drawing attention to one social group, whose dress the late antique imperial establishment attempted to control: female performers, who were women of low status making their living through the use of their bodies. While other women were allowed to wear patterned silks embellished with gold, garments partly dyed with murex purple, and jewelry encrusted with precious stones—i.e., materials associated with the imperial dignity that were not forbidden to women, since they posed no political threat—female mimes and actresses were not; they could only wear other patterned silks and jewelry made of gold. It appears, then, that the imperial establishment wished to preserve its dignity from being tarnished by the association of its distinctive symbols with what were considered as women of ill repute. At the same time, however, this legislation ensured that there would be no confusion between respectable, upper-class women (the only other women who could afford these items) with these low-class, disreputable women, whose lifestyle challenged the morals of society and posed a threat to the fundamental institution of the family.<sup>75</sup>

Apart from these very specific legislative restrictions, there were no sumptuary laws in Byzantium that would stop Byzantines from availing themselves of luxurious items of dress and jewelry and imitating the sartorial practices of their ‘betters,’ if their means allowed it and their ambitions demanded it. Still, as one might expect, there were other, social mechanisms of control. Within the context of the family, children were educated in the social roles that they were expected to fulfill according to their ascribed gender as well as in the proper behavior that went with these roles, including dressing appropriately. Furthermore, the desire to be accepted as part of a group, combined with fear of social censure and ridicule, could act as a disincentive to non-conforming with established sartorial practices, at least for the majority.<sup>76</sup>

However, outside organized institutions, in Byzantium there were no enforced discriminating dress codes that would actually oblige individuals to be dressed in a specific way or stop them from adopting dress units and practices ‘above their station,’ something which was in agreement with the social mobility that was very much a feature of Byzantine society. Imitation by the socially ambitious could also function as a motive for change in sartorial practices, as the groups who found their dress imitated by those they considered ‘other’ (and inferior) might look for other means to articulate and maintain the difference on which their self-perception relied. But how did change work, especially in Byzantium, where innovation and overt departure from tradition was formally frowned upon? Not least, given the importance of dress as an identity marker, did change in Byzantine dress imply a concomitant change in Byzantine identity?

### Continuity and Change

While, in temporal terms, the discussion of similarity and difference looks at the construction and expression of identity through dress primarily from a synchronic point of view, the exploration of continuity and change approaches the issue from a diachronic angle, particularly pertinent in the case of the millennial Byzantine Empire. When we look at portraits of self-identified Byzantines from different periods, we immediately note dramatic differences in dress styles. Still, we call this dress—and study it as—‘Byzantine,’ while the subjects of the portraits, we assume, regarded it as expressive of their Byzantine identity; otherwise, I assume, they would not have chosen to be represented in it for posterity. Even if the depicted dress prioritizes other aspects of these individuals’ identity—the state official, the soldier, the priest, the matron, the nun, the widow, the Constantinopolitan, the Naxian, the Cappadocian—these aspects are expressed in sartorial terms that were meaningful and intelligible in a Byzantine cultural context. When we examine these different styles, not only through images, but also through texts and archaeological evidence, we recognize some elements of continuity: the full coverage of the body, the preference (especially among the affluent) of garments that imposed stateliness and self-restraint in posture and gesture, the layering of dress units (for those who could afford it), and a predilection for ornamentation and variety, expressed in the combination of materials, techniques, and, above all, colors in a single ensemble. Yet, the manner in which these characteristics were manifested differs significantly from the fourth to the fifteenth century. As the technologies of dress evolved, as the market realities affecting the availability of materials fluctuated, as aesthetic tastes shifted and mentalities were adjusted and reshaped, and as Byzantine society developed—all within the broader framework of changing historical and cultural conditions—so did dress change in response. But, can this change be taken to mean that Byzantine identity, projected through the dress, had also changed? While identity and, especially, ethnic or cultural identity can be complex, ambiguous, and fluid, it is not ‘infinitely malleable.’<sup>77</sup> In the case of Byzantine identity, numerous studies intimate that its three foundational pillars—*romanitas*, Hellenism, and Christianity—remained stable throughout the Empire’s existence. At the same time, these same studies draw attention to the permutations in their definition over time and the fluctuations in their relevant importance from one period to the next.<sup>78</sup> As the self-perception of the Byzantines evolved and their identity was renegotiated in response to changing historical conditions, internal tensions, and external pressures, so did the identity markers—including dress—change, in order to continue to articulate and communicate Byzantine identity in its current iteration in contemporary terms that were

relevant to the people's experiences and expectations. When it comes to Byzantine dress, the continuity of certain characteristics as those mentioned above seems to confirm Sam Lucy's observation that the elements participating in the conveyance of ethnic and cultural identity, even when they signaled an apparent departure from earlier forms, needed to 'be plausible to their intended audience' and 'to resonate with people's usual practices and experiences;' they were neither arbitrarily selected nor randomly adopted by the society to whose self-definition they contributed.<sup>79</sup>

These processes of renegotiation of identity resulting in and expressed through a change in dress codes have been painstakingly traced, for example, by Harlow in her excellent discussion of how the preeminent symbol of civic male *romanitas* that had been the *toga*, came to be replaced by other garments of ultimate barbarian extraction and of military character as signifiers of male Roman/Byzantine identity during Late Antiquity.<sup>80</sup> As Harlow demonstrates, the changing realities of the period, which involved the ascendancy of barbarians in the imperial government, the conflation of the civic and the military hierarchies as all service to the State came to be regarded as a form of *militia*, the rise of a new elite that was defined precisely by this service to Emperor and State, rather by descent from the old Roman aristocratic families, and, not least, the growing impact of Christianity, whose thinkers regarded the *toga* as a symbol of the old order that needed to be abandoned, all these led to a reconfiguration of what it meant to be a (male) Roman/Byzantine at the time. This reconfiguration eventually led to the abandonment of the *toga* from all contexts, but for certain ceremonial ones, where displaying a continuity with the past and particularly the Roman senatorial past was deemed ideologically expedient, especially within the context of the establishment of the new imperial capital, Constantinople, as the 'New Rome.' One hopes to see more studies like that of Harlow exploring other significant stages in the development of Byzantine dress in relation to identity, especially during transitional periods that may have sparked a 'crisis' in Roman/Byzantine identity and its renegotiation.

However, when examining changes in Byzantine dress codes, apart from looking at the circumstances that led to the abandonment of old, traditional forms and the adoption of new ones, often inspired by foreign sartorial traditions, one should also consider what made these new dress units 'eligible' for selection and adoption as signifiers of identity in a Byzantine context. As with the case of the barbarian garments, of which the Romans had been aware long before they came to supplant the *toga* as signifiers of *romanitas*, familiarity with such forms through prolonged contact was not enough. While some foreign styles could have been adopted short-term for their 'exotic' value, in order to express individuality or to differentiate one group from another,<sup>81</sup> they would not be naturalized into the Byzantine dress system unless their continuous usage in Byzantine social contexts resulted in their being divested of their exotic/foreign attribute, their name changed or, at least, hellenized, and their being invested with new meanings irrespective and distinct from their origins that made them relevant to their new environment.<sup>82</sup> Rarity, preciousness, elegance, and a reputation for technological excellence would have contributed to making certain items desired. Likewise, serving as signifiers of status, power, authority, and an elite lifestyle in their culture of origin may have facilitated the process.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, such symbolism was not sufficient, if other historical and social conditions did not obtain. From the twelfth century onward, for instance, the Byzantines became quite familiar with Western, especially Italian and French, upper-class dress. However, Byzantine men, as we have seen, did not adopt elements of Western dress as symbols of status, at least not in the construction of their public image as they wished it



preserved through portraiture.<sup>84</sup> Why was this the case? Were these elements of Western dress deemed too divergent in respect to Byzantine practice and the Byzantine value-system and mores to allow for their adoption? Or, did the Byzantines find the Westerners, with their competing Latin Christian faith and their Roman imperial aspirations, too threatening to their own sense of identity and, hence, wished to remain clearly distinct from them, including in terms of dress? This issue certainly deserves a more detailed re-evaluation, especially as our understanding of the dynamics of relations between Byzantium and the West is becoming more nuanced under the light of recent scholarship.<sup>85</sup>

Though changes in dress styles in Byzantium were slow to happen and, I assume, even slower to register in our sources so that we can identify them today, they did happen as a result of people's culturally informed choices within the progression of historical time.<sup>86</sup> When it comes to the social meanings attributed to the new elements, these were neither deliberately ascribed nor perceived with the explicitness and clarity that our modern analyses like to invest them with. Rather, the generation and appreciation of meanings, including those related to the communication of identity, were contextual within the framework of human socialization. As far as I can tell, only in contexts where continuity with the past was deemed important for the self-definition and continued existence of a group were attempts made to codify change and to invent traditions that would mask the new under a guise of venerable antiquity or renewal.<sup>87</sup> Such an approach is associated primarily with institutions like the Byzantine imperial court and the Church, whose authority and influence, both within the borders of the Empire and beyond, relied heavily on the legitimizing power of the past. These also happened to be the two institutions with which the communication of the 'official' Byzantine identity of the Empire was primarily associated, and thus changes in dress that could be potentially damaging to the official narrative of uninterrupted continuity with the past needed to be mitigated against. Inventing traditions, as just mentioned, was one way of going about it. Another was the ascription of political-ideological and spiritual symbolism to specific items of dress and insignia that transcended time. This symbolism, which was actually recorded in ceremonial handbooks, liturgical commentaries, and collections of monastic rules, could safeguard the dress units in question against overt change and ensure their continuous use, provided that the institutions they were associated with continued to exist and to uphold, maintain, and transmit it. Present-day Greek Orthodox ecclesiastic and monastic dress is a testament to the effectiveness of this strategy.

## Epilogue

At the conclusion of this exploration, one is forced to admit that the answer to the question of what made Byzantine dress 'Byzantine' remains rather ill-defined, not surprising given its dazzling multiformity and the multiplicity of functions it served throughout the Byzantine millennium. All one can trace are certain general trends and attitudes that are culturally circumscribed and which express the tensions that characterized Byzantine society, balancing between social mobility and control, and innovation and tradition. These trends and attitudes appear not to have been confined to the dress of the imperial court, with which we tend to associate the communication of Byzantine identity, confusing to a great extent the narrower concept of state ideology with the far wider and infinitely more complex concept of Byzantine ethnic and cultural identity. Rather, they can be observed outside the court as well, in the provinces of the Empire, where the majority of its subjects lived. Whether the people outside the imperial establishment were actively aware of their dress as 'Byzantine' rather than as the dress that expressed their local or their personal identity, especially when their

Byzantine identity was not challenged through contact with a foreign other, we cannot really tell. Still, they appear to have participated in the creation, maintenance, and transmission of those trends and attitudes that give Byzantine dress its distinctness, though the nature, the processes, and the degree of this participation remain to be defined. Speaking of the participation of different groups in the construction and projection of Byzantine identity through dress, another observation that emerges from the foregoing discussion is the difference in which Byzantine identity was embodied and communicated by men and by women. Because of their divergent social roles and the hierarchical relation between women and men, the context of this communication, its intended recipients, and the aspects of Byzantine identity that were being communicated through male and female dress appear to have been gender specific. Future discussions of Byzantine identity and dress will hopefully expand on the gender differential, not least by also taking into consideration other social categories that were not considered here. All in all, the study of the dynamic relationship between Byzantine identity and dress has still a long way to go. However, as our theoretical and methodological arsenal continues to evolve through the advances in Identity and Dress Studies, in general, and Byzantine Identity and Byzantine Dress Studies in particular, and as more and more evidence is becoming available through the publication of archaeological and visual materials from the Byzantine provinces, we can expand and refine the questions we ask, moving away from a traditional positivist approach interested primarily in developing typologies, tracing ‘influences,’ and explaining both through direct correlations with historical events, toward a more integrated approach that does justice to the social and ideological complexities of the issue.

## Notes

- 1 The chapter was written while the author was a member of the project ‘Network for Medieval Arts and Rituals’ (NetMAR) that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 951875. The opinions expressed in this chapter reflect only the author’s view and in no way reflect the European Commission’s opinions. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.
- 2 For an overview of the scholarly discussion on the manuscript, see C. Hennessy, ‘The Vatican Epithalamion,’ in *A Companion to Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts*, ed. V. Tsamakda, Brill’s Companions to the Byzantine World 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 177–82. The manuscript has been digitized and is available online at [http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1851](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1851).
- 3 Those we call Byzantines self-identified as Romans and regarded their state as the continuation of the Roman Empire. On the issue of Byzantium’s Roman identity, see, among others, A. Kaldellis, ‘From Rome to New Rome, from Empire to Nation State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium’s Roman Identity,’ in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, eds. L. Grig, G. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 387–404; A. Kaldellis, ‘The Social Scope of Roman Identity in Byzantium: An Evidence-Based Approach,’ *Byzantina Symmeikta* 27 (2017): 173–210. Though today the use of the term ‘Byzantine’ to describe anything pertaining to the Eastern Roman Empire is being strongly contested by certain scholars, it remains established in current scholarly discourse and, as such, it is also employed here. However, this is not done for practical reasons alone: though a modern construct with an ideological load, the term ‘Byzantine’ does have its uses as an heuristic aid since, to my mind, it invites attention to what is different and new in the late antique and medieval iterations of the Roman Empire, especially relevant in an investigation of cultural phenomena, such as the relationship of dress and identity, over a period of a thousand years.
- 4 I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 223–24 (Poem, fol. 3r, lines 15–17).
- 5 For a discussion of the importance of this miniature in the narrative, see C. Hilsdale, ‘Constructing a Byzantine Augusta: A Greek Book for a French Bride,’ *The Art Bulletin* 87 (2005): 458–83, at 467–70.

- 6 A very brief and palatable introduction to ‘identity as the socially situated self’ can be found in S. J. Lennon, K. P. Johnson, and N. A. Rudd, *Social Psychology of Dress* (New York: Fairchild Books, 2017), 235–37.
- 7 Here, and in what follows, my understanding was greatly influenced by the seminal work of Fredrik Barth; see especially his ‘Introduction’ to the collective volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, ed. F. Barth (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998), 9–38.
- 8 The sociological and anthropological scholarly literature on identity, its definition, negotiation, and communication is huge. Equally extensive is the exploration of the relationship between dress and identity by social scientists. The following references, which contain useful summaries of earlier discussions and detailed bibliographies, can serve as a starting point for those who wish to explore this connection further: M. E. Roach-Higgins, J. B. Eicher, and K. K. P. Johnson (eds.), *Dress and Identity* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1995); J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); J. B. Eicher and S. L. Evenson, *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture, and Society*, 4th ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2015); Lennon, Johnson, and Rudd, *Social Psychology of Dress*, 235–62. Such sociological and anthropological discussions have also greatly informed the study of identity and its articulation through art and material culture in past societies, as evidenced by a constantly expanding corpus of related literature; see, selectively: M. Diaz-Andreu and S. Lucy (eds.), *Archaeology of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2005); T. Insoll (ed.), *The Archaeology of Identities: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); W. Pohl and M. Mehofer (eds.), *Archaeology of Identity = Archäologie der Identität*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 17 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010). More specifically, for dress and identity in antique and medieval contexts, see, among others: M. Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles: Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 184 (Leuven, Paris and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009), esp. 161–70; R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 68–113; M. M. Lee (ed.), *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); S.-R. Marzel and G. D. Stiebel (eds.), *Dress and Ideology: Fashioning Identity from Antiquity to the Present* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015); M. Cifarelli (ed.), *Fashioned Selves: Dress and Identity in Antiquity* (Havertown: Oxbow Books, 2019).
- 9 In this, I follow M. E. Roach-Higgins and J. B. Eicher, ‘Dress and Identity,’ *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 10/4 (1992): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9201000401>.
- 10 For a very informative overview of Byzantine identity studies, see K. Durak and I. Jevtić, ‘Identity and the Other in Byzantine Studies: An Introduction,’ in *Identity and the Other in Byzantium: Papers from the Fourth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, İstanbul 23-25 June 2016*, eds K. Durak, I. Jevtić (Istanbul: GABAM, 2019), 3–22. For the current state of the question, see also M. E. Stewart, D. A. Parnell, and C. Whately (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium* (London: Routledge, 2022).
- 11 E.g., M. Harlow, ‘Clothes maketh the Man: Power Dressing and Elite Masculinity in the Later Roman World,’ in *Gender in the Early Medieval World, East and West, 300–900*, eds L. Brubaker, J.M.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004a), 44–69; E. V. Swift, ‘Dress Accessories, Culture and Identity in the Late Roman Period,’ *Antiquité Tardive* 12 (2004): 217–22; F. Curta, ‘Female Dress and “Slavic” Bow Fibulae in Greece,’ *Hesperia* 74/1 (2005): 101–46; M. G. Parani, ‘Cultural Identity and Dress: The Case of Late Byzantine Ceremonial Costume,’ *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 57 (2007a): 95–134; Ch. Messis, ‘Lectures sexuées de l’altérité. Les Latins et identité romaine menacée pendant les derniers siècles de Byzance,’ *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 61 (2011): 151–70; K. Upson-Saia, C. Daniel-Hughes, A. J. Batten (eds.), *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); L. Safran, *The Medieval Salento: Art and Identity in Southern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 58–90; P. Kalamara, ‘Αναζητώντας στις φορεσιές την ταυτότητα των “αδυνάτων” και των “μέσων” της βυζαντινής κοινωνίας,’ in *Byzantium without Glamour: The Humble Objects and Their Use in the Everyday Life of the Byzantines*, eds A. G. Yangaki, A. Panopoulou (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2018), 253–79; A. Kaldellis, ‘Ethnicity and Clothing in Byzantium,’ in *Identity and the Other in Byzantium* (n. 10), 41–52; B. Küllerich, ‘Gender and Fashion,’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Sexuality in Byzantium*, eds M. Meyer, Ch. Messis (London: Routledge, 2024), 443–60.

- 12 See, e.g., the articles by S. Metaxas, 'Unheard Voices of Early Byzantine Girls: On the Custom of Adorning Secular Girls with Earrings, as seen through the Evidence of Burials' and F. Evangelatou-Notara and K. Mavrommati, 'Not Even a Band on my Finger? Rings of non-Elite Women,' in *Secular Byzantine Women: Art, Archaeology, and Ethnography of Female Material Culture from Late Roman to Post-Byzantine Times*, ed. S. Germanidou (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 32–43, 45–61.
- 13 See the contributions by Jennifer Ball, Timothy Dawson, Cristina Stancioiu, Arielle Winnick, and Warren Woodfin.
- 14 Other than the present *Guide*, for general surveys of Byzantine dress, see: P. Kalamara, *Le système vestimentaire à Byzance du IVe jusqu'à la fin du XIe siècle* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1997); M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th-15th centuries)*, The Medieval Mediterranean 41 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003); J. Ball, *Byzantine Dress: Representations of Secular Dress in Eighth- to Twelfth-Century Painting* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); M. G. Parani, 'Fabrics and Clothing,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, R. Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 407–20; T. Dawson, *By the Emperor's Hand: Military Dress and Court Regalia in the Later Romano-Byzantine Empire* (Barnsley: Frontline, 2015); A. Walker, 'Bodily Adornment and Modification in Byzantium,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Art and Architecture*, ed. E. C. Schwartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 99–115.
- 15 One has in mind, for instance, the comments of Odo of Deuil, who, in the 1140s, observed how the garments of the poorer inhabitants of Constantinople imitated in cheaper materials the garments of the rich, or extant copper-alloy jewelry that copies examples made of gold and silver in form and decoration: Odo of Deuil, *De professione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. V. Gingerick-Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 27; H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture in the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), nos 119–21, 123 (cross-shaped enkolpia of bronze, gold, and silver). On the phenomenon of 'trickle-down fashion,' which is associated especially with 'imperial sociocultural systems,' see Eicher and Evenson, *The Visible Self*, 226.
- 16 Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 7.
- 17 For the Greco-Roman world, see G. Davies and L. Llewellyn-Jones, 'The Body,' in *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in Antiquity*, ed. M. Harlow (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 49–69.
- 18 Due to space restrictions, the discussion here is limited to the dressed male and female body. For a recent discussion of eunuch bodies, see M. Meyer and L. Webb, 'Fleshing Out the Sexed and Gendered Body in Art,' in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Sexuality in Byzantium* (n. 11), 306–30, at 311–12. It could perhaps be noted here, that eunuch dress in Byzantium was male-gendered, with the notable exception of the beard, see M. G. Parani, 'Look like an Angel: The Attire of Eunuchs and Its Significance within the Context of Middle Byzantine Court Ceremonial,' in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean. Comparative Perspectives*, eds A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou, M. G. Parani, The Medieval Mediterranean 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 433–63.
- 19 On attitudes toward nudity in Byzantine culture and art, see E. D. Maguire and H. Maguire, *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 97–134; G. Stafford, 'Privilege, Pleasure, Performance: Reading Female Nudity in Late Antique Art,' in *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium* (n. 10), 333–62. See, also, Meyer and Webb, 'Fleshing Out,' 316–18.
- 20 Davies and Llewellyn-Jones, 'The Body,' 59–60, associate Roman attitudes toward non-Roman sleeved garments and trousers with a 'distaste for what might be perceived as "modification of body shape".'
- 21 Harlow, 'Clothes maketh the Man,' 54, 58, 63–66.
- 22 See Stafford, 'Privilege, Pleasure, Performance,' 354 n. 8, for references to some relevant patristic sources.
- 23 It should perhaps be mentioned that this approach to articulating the male body concerned the dress of laymen. Ecclesiastical dress at the time, as seen for instance in the Ravenna panel (Fig. 1.2), did not reveal the physique of the male body beneath the loose vestments of the clergy, as an emphasis on the physicality of the body was not important for the construction

- of the identity of the clergyman. As also pointed out to me by Jennifer Ball (pers. comm.), considering that belts could also have been used for the suspension of knives or tools especially by male members of the working classes, their absence from clerical dress could also be related to the fact that clergymen did not actually need to carry implements suspended from a belt in the execution of their duties.
- 24 On the importance that a physical strong body still retained in the construction of late antique lay masculinity, see M. Stewart, 'The Soldier's Life: Early Byzantine Masculinity and the Manliness of War,' *Byzantina Symmeikta* 26 (2016): 11–44.
  - 25 On these and other types of mantles, see Davies and Llewellyn-Jones, 'The Body,' 62–63. More specifically, on the *chlamys*, see Harlow, 'Clothes maketh the Man,' 59–62; M. G. Parani, 'Defining Personal Space: Dress and Accessories in Late Antiquity,' in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use. Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, eds L. Lavan, E. Swift, T. Putzeys (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007b), 497–529, at 500–4. On the question of the *toga* being replaced during Late Antiquity as the 'national' dress of the Romans, see below.
  - 26 The scholarly literature on Byzantine gender is continuously expanding. See, selectively, L. Brubaker, 'The Age of Justinian: Gender and Society,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 427–47; L. Neville, *Byzantine Gender* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019); Meyer and Messis (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Gender* (n. 11).
  - 27 Parani, *Reconstructing*, 52–57, 67–69.
  - 28 Parani, *Reconstructing*, 57.
  - 29 J. Darrouzès, 'Un recueil épistolaire du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Académie Roumaine cod. gr. 508,' *Revue des études byzantines* 30 (1972): 199–229, at 225; J. Shepard, 'Knowledge of the West in Byzantine Sources, c.900–c.1200,' in *A Companion to Byzantium and the West, 900–1204*, eds N. Drocourt, S. Kolditz (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 31–84, at 40.
  - 30 See, Harlow, 'Clothes maketh the man,' 60.
  - 31 See, e.g., the portrait of protospatharios Constantine, in *Vat. Reg. gr. 1 (Bible of Leo sakellarios)*, fol. 3r (first half of 10th century), available at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Reg.gr.1.pt.B](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.gr.1.pt.B).
  - 32 On Byzantine attitudes toward war, see, e.g., J. Haldon, "'Blood and Ink": Some Observations on Byzantine Attitudes towards Warfare and Diplomacy,' in *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, eds J. Shepard, S. Franklin (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), 281–94; Y. Stouraitis, 'State War Ethic and Popular Views on Warfare,' in *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca. 300–1204*, ed. Y. Stouraitis (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 59–91.
  - 33 William of Apulia, *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, I, line 228: 'Vestituque graves, non armis asserit aptos.' The author does not specify what made the garments 'heavy,' i.e., whether it was the actual fabrics, perhaps embellished with metal threads, or the superimposed layers of sartorial units. For a discussion of this passage, within the framework of the Latin author's construction of the Byzantine male other as cowardly and effeminate, see E. Tounta, 'Political and Cultural Encounters between Byzantium and the Normans, 11th–12th Centuries,' in *A Companion to Byzantium and the West* (n. 29), 247–69, at 256.
  - 34 N. Drocourt, 'Au nez et à la barbe de l'ambassadeur. Cheveux, poils et pilosité dans les contacts diplomatiques entre Byzance et l'Occident (VIe–XIIe s.),' in *Byzanz und das Abendland IV: Studia Byzantino-Occidentalia*, ed. E. Juhász (Budapest: Eötvös-József-Collegium, 2016), 108–34, at 126 n. 72.
  - 35 See Messis, 'Lectures sexuées,' 164–70; S. Tougher, 'Bearding Byzantium: Masculinity, Eunuchs and the Byzantine Life Course,' in *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society*, eds B. Neil, L. Garland (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 153–66; Drocourt, 'Au nez et à la barbe.'
  - 36 On Late Byzantine dress, especially on developments observed in the thirteenth century, see P. Kalamara, 'Slow Paces of Change in Byzantine Material Culture: Dress in the Thirteenth Century,' in *Πάντα ῥεῖ: Change in Thirteenth-century Byzantine Architecture, Art, and Material Culture*, eds J. P. Albani, I. Christoforaki, BYZANTIOΣ: Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 20 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 319–54.
  - 37 M. G. Parani, "'The Joy of the Most Holy Mother of God the Hodegetria the One in Constantinople": Revisiting the Famous Representation at the Blacherna Monastery, Arta,' in *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed.

### 30 *Byzantine Dress: A Guide*

- S. E. J. Gerstel, *Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages 11* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 113–45, at 130, fig. 13. On the length of the male tunic as an indicator of social class, see also Kalamara, ‘Αναζητώντας στις φορεσιές,’ 271–73.
- 38 See, Parani, ‘Cultural Identity’; Kaldellis, ‘Ethnicity and Clothing,’ 51–52.
- 39 See, for example, the tunic of John II Komnenos in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS *Urb. gr. 2*, fol. 19v (1122–1142). MS digitized and available at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Urb.gr.2U](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Urb.gr.2U).
- 40 F. Spingou, ‘The Supreme Power of the Armour and the Veneration of the Emperor’s Body in Twelfth-Century Byzantium,’ in *Premodern Rulership and Contemporary Political Power. The King’s Body never Dies*, eds. K. Mroziewicz, A. Sroczynski (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 47–71.
- 41 M. G. Parani, ‘Optional Extras or Necessary Elements? Middle and Late Byzantine Male Dress Accessories,’ in *Δασκάλα. Απόδοση τιμής στη Καθηγήτρια Μάριη Παναγιωτίδη-Κεσσογλου*, eds Pl. Petridis, V. Foskolou (Athens: Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών - Σαριπόλειο Ίδρυμα, 2015), 407–35, at 424–25.
- 42 See L. M. Meskell, ‘Writing the Body in Archaeology,’ in *Reading the Body. Representations and Remains in the Archaeological Record*, ed. A. E. Rautman, Regendering the Past series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 11–21, at 21.
- 43 See F. Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 15–18.
- 44 For Roman female dress, see K. Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman: Self-presentation and Society* (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 2008), esp. 93–95. For late antique female dress, see M. Harlow, ‘Female Dress, Third-Sixth Century: The Messages in the Media?,’ *Antiquité Tardive* 12 (2004b): 203–15; Parani, ‘Defining Personal Space,’ 519–21.
- 45 Harlow, ‘Female Dress,’ 214.
- 46 On Middle Byzantine female dress, see Parani, *Reconstructing*, 72–74; Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, 49–52, 66–7, 72–4; T. Dawson, ‘Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure: The Parameters of Women’s Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000–1200,’ in *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience, 800–1200*, ed. L. Garland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 41–75.
- 47 See Dawson, ‘Propriety,’ 61. With this in mind, it is shocking (to Byzantinists) to note that the sleeves of empress Maria of Alania in her famous portrait in Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, *Coislin* 79, fol. 2bisv (1074–1081), are actually shown pulled slightly back to reveal part of her slender forearms above the wrist. The fact that this was a manuscript destined to be given as a gift to the emperor, Maria’s husband, and not for the public eye, could excuse the miniaturist for exposing part of the empress’s arms, but it does not explain why he would (or was asked to) do so and whether it was meant as a compliment or a critique. For a recent discussion of Maria’s portrait, though not of this specific aspect of it, with the earlier bibliography on the manuscript, see M. Meyer, ‘The Rhetoric of Aphrodite in the Byzantine Illuminated Book,’ *Studies in Iconography* 41 (2020): 30–66, at 47–50.
- 48 On Late Byzantine female dress, see Parani, *Reconstructing*, 74–80; M. G. Parani, ‘Encounters in the Realm of Dress: Attitudes towards Western Styles in the Greek East,’ in *Renaissance Encounters: Greek East – Latin West*, eds M. S. Brownlee, D. Gondicas, Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts 8 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 259–97, esp. 275–85; Dawson, *By the Emperor’s Hand*, 108–09; Kalamara, ‘Slow Paces.’
- 49 Parani, ‘Encounters.’
- 50 Parani, ‘Encounters,’ 275–84.
- 51 E.g., for the use of Islamicizing material culture elements in the construction of an elite Byzantine identity, see A. Walker, ‘Courtly Objects, Courtly Identities: Middle Byzantine Luxury Arts and the Material Culture of Elite Leisure,’ in *Identity and the Other* (n. 10), 295–312. See, also, Kaldellis, ‘Ethnicity,’ 44–45. In dress studies, the process of ‘selective borrowing’ of elements of dress from another culture and their full integration into one’s own, where they acquire new meanings irrespective of their origins, is called ‘cultural authentication,’ see Eicher and Evenson, *The Visible Self*, 232–34.
- 52 See also the contribution of Jennifer Ball on ‘Uniformity and Distinction’ in the present volume.
- 53 On Byzantine liturgical dress, see the contribution of Warren Woodfin in the present volume.
- 54 On Byzantine ceremonial dress, see the contribution of Timothy Dawson in the present volume.

- 55 On archaeological evidence that in the Early Byzantine period infant girls were distinguished from boys through the piercing of both ears and the wearing of simple loop earrings, see Metaxas, ‘Unheard Voices.’
- 56 As far as I know, there was nothing comparable to the *toga praetexta*, the distinguishing garment of Roman boys, in Byzantium. On the *toga praetexta* see J. Sebesta, ‘The *toga praetexta* of Roman Children and Praetextate Garments,’ in *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World*, eds L. Cleland, M. Harlow, L. Llewellyn-Jones (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 113–20.
- 57 A prayer for a man’s first shave, a rite of passage to adulthood, is included in some medieval Byzantine *euchologia*, books of prayers for various public and private occasions used by the clergy, see G. Radle, ‘The Veiling of Women in Byzantium: Liturgy, Hair, and Identity in a Medieval Rite of Passage,’ *Speculum* 94 (2019): 1070–115, at 1076. On the near invisibility of Byzantine adolescents, male and female, in our records, see L. Brubaker, ‘Images of Byzantine Adolescents,’ in *Coming of Age in Byzantium: Adolescence and Society*, ed. D. Ariantzi (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 141–74.
- 58 See Radle, ‘Veiling,’ with relevant bibliography. See, also, G. Stafford, ‘Veiling and Head-Covering in Late Antiquity: Between Ideology, Aesthetics and Practicality,’ *Past & Present* 263 (2024): 3–46.
- 59 See, for example, Evangelatou-Notara and Mavrommati, ‘Not Even a Band on My Finger?’ See also the contribution of Giorgos Makris in the present volume. From beyond Byzantium, there is archaeological evidence, mostly from burials, to suggest that female ‘age identities’ could be expressed through jewelry and dress accessories, see, e.g., Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*, 4.
- 60 The fact that color-coding was an important marker of difference in Byzantium is made abundantly clear by descriptions of official and imperial dress, see n. 54, above. Beyond the pale of the court, the extant material is less forthcoming, though there is evidence to suggest that widows may have been distinguished from other women, at least during the period of mourning, by their somber garments and abstinence from jewelry, Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν βίος καὶ πολιτισμός*, 6 vols (Athens: Παπαζήσης, 1948–1957), 4:218–21, 226; Parani, ‘Defining Personal Space,’ 521.
- 61 For a discussion of provincial identities in Byzantium, see now A. Kaldellis, ‘Provincial Identities in Byzantium,’ in *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium* (n. 10), 248–61.
- 62 E.g., E. Swift, *Regionality in Dress Accessories in the Late Roman West*, Monographies instrumentum 11 (Montagnac: Éditions Monique Mergoïl, 2000).
- 63 F. Morelli, ‘Tessuti e indumenti nel contesto economico tardoantico: i prezzi,’ *Antiquité Tardive* 12 (2004): 55–78, at 75 and Table 1.
- 64 See, Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, 57–74, esp. 71.
- 65 See previous note.
- 66 See A. Eastmond, ‘Art and the Periphery,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (n. 14), 770–76.
- 67 Th. Konstantellou, ‘The Funerary Representation of a Lady in the Church of Agioi Anargyroi Outside Kato Sagri on Naxos (First Half of the 13th Century?),’ in *Art and Archaeology in Byzantium and Beyond, Essays in Honour of Sophia Kalopissi-Verti and Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou*, ed. D. Mourelatos, BAR International Series 3046 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2022), 43–54, at 47–48.
- 68 For example, while the caftan worn by John Tzimiskes at the church of Panagia Bellas in the vicinity of Arta, Greece (1295/6), is similar to those worn by men in other parts of the Empire at the time, the headdress of his wife, Anna, is not similar to those worn by women in the capital or elsewhere in Byzantine lands, see Kalamara, ‘Slow Paces,’ 324–26.
- 69 See references to dress studies throughout this chapter and throughout this *Guide*.
- 70 Items worn on or attached to the body, as well as handheld items, see above, n. 9.
- 71 Ph. Schaff and H. Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series, 14: The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 97–98, 99 (Church Council of Gangra, Turkey, ca AD 341, canons 13, 17); *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.2.27 (AD 429–437).
- 72 See, for example, the comments of the fourteenth-century historian Nikephoros Gregoras on the state prevalent in the Late Byzantine imperial court, due to the emperor’s indifference for court protocol, including dress: Parani, ‘Cultural Identity,’ 124–25.

## 32 *Byzantine Dress: A Guide*

- 73 For the importance of murex purple and silk in the construction and projection of imperial authority and identity, see A. Muthesius, 'Imperial Identity: Byzantine Silks, Art, Autocracy, Theocracy, and the Image of *Basileia*,' in *The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium* (n. 10), 80–103, with detailed earlier bibliography.
- 74 R. Delmaire, 'Le vêtement dans les sources juridiques du Bas-Empire,' *Antiquité Tardive* 12 (2004): 195–202, at 194.
- 75 V. Malineau, 'Les éléments du costume de théâtre dans l'antiquité tardive,' in *Costume et société dans l'Antiquité et le haut Moyen Age*, eds F. Chausson, H. Inglebert (Paris: Picard, 2003), 153–68, at 167–68; Parani, 'Defining Personal Space,' 523–24.
- 76 This is not to say that groups and individuals did not flout accepted dress norms in order to assert their individuality or in order to challenge the establishment, but these are presented in extant sources as exceptions, rather than the norm, see, e.g., Parani, 'Defining Personal Space,' 516.
- 77 This statement and, in general, my understanding of the processes of change in material culture in relation to the expression of identity have been informed by S. Lucy, 'Ethnic and Cultural Identities,' in *Archaeology of Identity*, eds M. Diaz-Andreu, S. Lucy (London: Routledge, 2005), 86–109, esp. 95–97.
- 78 See, C. Rapp, 'Hellenic Identity, *Romanitas*, and Christianity in Byzantium,' in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. K. Zacharia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 127–47. See also above, nn. 3, 10.
- 79 Lucy, 'Ethnic and Cultural Identities,' 96, 97.
- 80 Harlow, 'Clothes maketh the Man.'
- 81 Consider, for instance, the Georgian pyramidal hat worn by Andronikos I Komnenos prior to his ascendance to the throne in the late twelfth century, or the variety of foreign fashions worn by youths at court in the fourteenth century: Parani, *Reconstructing*, 68–69; Parani, 'Encounters,' 272–73.
- 82 See above, n. 51.
- 83 See the classic articulation of these ideas by O. Grabar, 'The Shared Culture of Objects,' in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997), 115–29.
- 84 In daily life and in non-official contexts the situation may have been different. The fad for shoes pointed at the toes among Byzantine male aristocrats in the late twelfth century may have been inspired by contemporary Western styles, see Parani, *Reconstructing*, 71.
- 85 See, now, Drocourt and Kolditz (eds.), *A Companion to Byzantium and the West* (n. 29).
- 86 See Jennifer Ball's discussion on 'Fashion and Industry: The Byzantine Fashion System' in the present volume.
- 87 See, for example, Parani, 'Cultural Identity.'

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