
REVIEWS

STUDIES IN CLASSICAL AND BYZANTINE MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION. By *Kurt Weitzmann*. Edited by *Herbert L. Kessler*. Introduction by *Hugo Buchthal*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971. xxii, 346 pp. \$22.50.

This collection of Kurt Weitzmann's "studies" is an important volume dealing with the main problems, and many of the key monuments, of Byzantine illumination and icon painting. The author stands in the first rank of today's Byzantinists; this prominence is chiefly due to his having elaborated a system which reconstructs in detail the genesis and antecedents (both classical and Jewish) of Greek manuscript illumination from late antiquity through the latter Middle Ages.

Hundreds of illuminated Greek manuscripts have been preserved from the period between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, but only a handful have come down to us from the sixth century, and smaller yet is the number of survivors from the fourth and fifth centuries, when the great revolution in book-making—the transition from roll to codex—was accomplished. This disparity of numbers, and Weitzmann's concentration on genetic questions, have dictated the choice of method for which he is justly renowned. This method tests the assumption that all Byzantine narrative art comes ultimately from book illumination (p. 49); it is parallel to the method used by philologists: illuminations are treated as if they were textual passages, and illuminators as if they were scribes, given to conflations, shortenings, and interpolations. The method aims at reconstructing lost illuminated archetypes with the help of surviving witnesses or groups of witnesses (recensions).

Weitzmann developed his views early in his career, and kept them essentially unchanged. This in itself might have been a shortcoming. However, he combined his adherence to a well-defined framework with a mastery over all kinds of evidence beyond that of medieval manuscripts: papyri, antique statuary, reliefs, ivory plaques, textiles, representations on small objects such as terra-cotta bowls, mosaics, and an ability to absorb new material—the study of some two thousand Sinai icons, which he undertook in the 1960s, is a case in point. In short, if Weitzmann's message remains essentially the same, the evidence on which it is based becomes progressively richer.

Weitzmann's method is best reported in his own words about early manuscripts: "the history of book illumination of the fourth century cannot be written on the basis of the few stray manuscripts remaining from this period, . . . we can hope to reconstruct this history only by the archaeological method of inference. . . . Later manuscripts, which reveal themselves as copies of very early models, provide our main evidences—notwithstanding the possibility of errors and pitfalls which the use of such a method entails" (pp. 96–97).

If Weitzmann himself is aware—as this last clause shows—of the difficulties inherent in his method, his critics have been even more aware of them. Two of the "pitfalls" come readily to mind. First is the tendency to postulate a large number of illustrated—but no longer extant—manuscripts, for instance of illustrated

works by fifth-century church historians, on the basis of scanty evidence. Second is the necessity—built into the method—of assuming that the original cycles of illustrations were larger than the sum of their presumed reflections preserved in later manuscripts (see p. 48). For all that—and this is an indication of Weitzmann's importance—historians of Byzantine art have been able to offer no more than qualifications and partial corrections to his system, such as proposing a different provenance for some key manuscripts. As yet, no one has offered a valid counterpart to that system, equaling it in scope.

The present volume of twelve studies, written between 1941 and 1969, is a skillfully selected Weitzmann primer. It not only offers individual cases of the application of his system, which focuses on iconography (study 3, "The Illustration of the Septuagint," 1952–53), but also shows his interest in problems of style (study 6, "The Classical Heritage of the Art of Constantinople," 1954) and in various modes of expression—classicizing and spiritualizing—adopted by artists of the same period, even by the same artist within one work of art (study 7, "The Classical in Byzantine Art as a Mode of Individual Expression," 1966, a brilliant piece which goes beyond mere description and discusses—sometimes boldly—the intentions behind an artist's choice of modes).

The volume is more than the sum of its twelve components. Its 320 illustrations are more numerous than those which appeared in the original articles; in some cases, better photographs have been chosen for reproduction. Footnotes have been brought up to date, both in terms of bibliography and of substance, by the editor, Professor Kessler; four articles have been translated into English (unfortunately not always felicitously); a bibliography of Weitzmann's writings has been appended; and the whole has been indexed. In combination, the editor's preface and Professor Buchthal's introduction give a loving, but scrupulously fair, scholarly profile of the author.

Nowadays, collected essays, sometimes put out by people in their forties, are reports of work in progress, rather than retrospective exhibitions of scholarship, and the reviewer may no longer adopt the obituary mode. Weitzmann, although long past forty, provides a good illustration of this trend. Half of the items reprinted in this book were written within ten years of its publication, and the two best pieces in the collection (study 5, "Book Illustration in the Fourth Century," and study 8, "The Character and Intellectual Origins of the Macedonian Renaissance") are among the most recent ones, dating from 1969 and 1963, respectively. Incidentally, the first piece ("A Tabula Odyseaca," 1941), along with the third of the series mentioned above (study 7), gives a good insight into Weitzmann's method, while the second study ("The Greek Sources of Islamic Scientific Illustrations," 1952) sums up one of his main contributions to scholarship (going back, in its initial form, to 1929): his stress on the importance for Byzantine art of the tenth-century classicizing revival.

The chapters in this volume not already mentioned are study 4, "The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources on Old Testament Illustration" (1964), study 9, "The Mandylion and Constantine Porphyrogenetos" (1960), study 10, "The Narrative and Liturgical Gospel Illustrations" (1950), study 11, "Byzantine Miniature and Icon Painting in the Eleventh Century" (1967), and study 12, "Constantinopolitan Book Illumination in the Period of the Latin Conquest" (1944).

Weitzmann's bibliography printed in this book is already in need of revision.

In the three years that have elapsed since its cut-off date (1969), he has published four more studies, has seen the appearance of the second revised edition of his *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (1970), and has sent fourteen articles—two more than the number published in the present book—to the printer. All this happened between his sixty-fifth and sixty-eighth years. At this rate his *Studies* should be the first among several volumes reflecting his unity of purpose and ever-youthful willingness to reach out for new material.

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CENTRAL ASIA: TURKMENIA BEFORE THE ACHAEMENIDS. By V. M. Masson and V. I. Sarianidi. Translated and edited by Ruth Tringham. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1972. 219 pp. \$12.50.

Surveys in English of the culture, history, and archeology of Soviet Central Asia in the historic period (from the time of the Achaemenid Empire) have appeared in recent years by Aleksandr Belenitsky (*Central Asia*, Cleveland and New York, 1968) and Gregoire Frumkin (*Archaeology in Soviet Central Asia*, Leiden, 1970). Neither of these useful volumes, however, gives more than brief and cursory treatment of the prehistoric period. Extensive field work in postwar years has recovered a wealth of data showing that the course of development in earlier times is no less interesting and significant. Now at last two of the most active and competent Soviet archeologists in this field have provided an up-to-date account of man's efforts and successes in exploiting the deserts and mountain valleys from the first Pleistocene traces to the middle of the first millennium B.C.

The area covered is Soviet Central Asia in the strict sense (excluding Kazakhstan), but inevitably the bulk of the book is devoted to southern Turkmenia, where the most significant developments took place and the remains are most abundant. Similarly, it is the village farming cultures and early urban manifestations that receive major attention. The book is designed for the nonspecialist or interested general reader but contains sufficient detail to be useful to the serious student or to serve as assigned reading for an advanced course. It is well illustrated and has selected chapter bibliographies through 1969, which include relevant Western publications and give Russian titles in translation.

In prehistory, as later, the area was an outlier of the Near East for the most part, with far-flung relations and trade links, which contribute to our understanding of the larger picture. But the area also followed its own course and poses its own problems, such as the unexplained fading away of the promising early development of urbanism. Prehistoric Soviet Central Asia is thus of interest in its own right to students of human cultural history.

The authors' treatment of their subject is sophisticated and devoid of the parochialism affecting some Soviet scholarship. They are fully aware of the outside relations, and at all times view the area in its larger setting. As much as possible they endeavor to stress cultural processes and evidence of socioeconomic life, rather than material objects for their own sake, although the necessary evidence is provided.

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